

## HLPF 2022 Highlights: Wednesday, 13 July 2022

The high-level segment of ECOSOC and ministerial segment of the HLPF opened with statements from leaders of the UN, governments, and youth. Eight VNRs were also presented.

### *Opening of the High-level Segment of ECOSOC/ Ministerial Segment of the HLPF*

ECOSOC President Collen Vixen Kelapile opened the High-level Segment and noted the many deep challenges the world faces, including the COVID-19 pandemic, increased conflict, the economic, energy, and food crises, poverty, setbacks in gender equality, and the climate and biodiversity crises. He nevertheless called for optimism and using this period for transformation. He highlighted the 2030 Agenda, Addis Ababa Action Agenda and Paris Agreement as providing the blueprint for building back better and achieving sustainable development for all.

Emphasizing “our world is in deep trouble, and so are the SDGs,” UN Secretary-General António Guterres called on the world to “rescue the SDGs.” Among areas for immediate action, he highlighted: investing in equitable vaccine access, including through license sharing to allow countries to produce vaccines and other medically important products; tackling the food, energy and fertilizer crises; investing in people, including through the Transforming Education Summit; the need to “keep 1.5°C alive,” including by ending the addiction to fossil fuels and investing in renewable energy; and reviewing access and eligibility for concessional finance for developing countries.

UN General Assembly President Abdulla Shahid urged reflecting on whether current recovery policies are conducive to the SDGs. He emphasized the need for: increased investments in innovation, technology and behavioral change; protecting the most vulnerable; reforming the international financial system; advancing a Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index; and renewing commitment to Africa’s sustainable development.

Mokgweetsi Masisi, President, Botswana, urged staying resolute in advancing the 2030 Agenda, including through partnerships to finance it. He highlighted Botswana’s commitment to achieving universal health care coverage and approval of a manufacturing plant for a patent-free COVID-19 vaccine; acceleration of digitalization to create enabling conditions for the private sector; and investments in innovation, education, and creativity to promote employment.

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President, Portugal, Co-host of the UN Ocean Conference, lauded the successful outcomes of the Ocean Conference and called for innovative financing for the 2030 Agenda. Stressing Portugal’s strong commitment to the SDGs, achievement of 60% share of renewables and its aim of 30% marine protected areas, he urged everyone to act now as the next five years will be key to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Huang Runqiu, President of the Convention on Biological Diversity’s fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CBD COP 15), Minister of Ecology and Environment, China,

highlighted China’s achievements, including on eradicating poverty 10 years ahead of schedule and commitments to achieve its carbon peak by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2050. He stressed the decrease in energy intensity of China’s economic growth and said China’s afforestation amounts to one-fourth of the global effort. Noting China’s commitment to the COP 15 presidency, he hoped for the adoption of an ambitious, balanced, and pragmatic global biodiversity framework.

Alok Sharma, President of COP 26 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Minister of State at the Cabinet of Office, UK, stressed that climate and environmental security are interlinked with energy and national security and that the future is not in fossil fuels. He noted that despite Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh work programme commitments, progress remains too slow and called for redoubling implementation efforts.

Sima Sami Bahous, Executive Director, UN Women, stressed that while women faced a global increase in gender-based violence during the pandemic, they were also on the frontlines representing the majority of healthcare workers. She noted that vaccination rates are below 70% in most countries and called for: increased investment in social protection, strengthened institutional capacity and female leadership, adequate financing for gender equality, robust data, an enhanced role for civil society, and increased space for women in decision making.

Khaled Emam, Organizing Partner of the Major Group for Children and Youth, and Anja Fortuna, Vice President of the European Youth Forum, noted that youth are at the forefront of the pandemic while struggling with low job security and remuneration. They called for increased and meaningful youth participation in decision making, protecting youth to ensure safe expression of their views, and financial opportunities. They also called for a new binding instrument for youth rights with effective monitoring and implementation, and for the Global North to stop overconsumption.

The session concluded with performance of the song “Dream big, speak loud” by a children’s choir “Sing for Hope” from New York City.

### *Voluntary National Reviews*

Vice-President Félix Ulloa, El Salvador, underscored the government’s work to address security challenges (SDG 16), including bringing down the homicide rate. He also highlighted actions to decrease the infant and maternal mortality rate (SDG 3), address food security (SDG 2) through a master plan for agricultural development, and encourage participation in SDG implementation through a digital monitoring platform for SDG indicators.

Edite Ramos da Costa Tenjua, Minister of Foreign Affairs, São Tomé and Príncipe, noted progress on: a decrease in poverty (SDG 1); a decrease in childhood malnutrition (SDG 2); a drop in infant and maternal mortality and in malaria and HIV rates (SDG 3); improved literacy rates and class attendance (SDG 4); gender parity in basic education (SDG 5); improved access to clean water (SDG 6); increased access to electricity (SDG 7); and the country’s blue economy transition strategy (SDG 14). However,

she noted climate-related challenges (SDG 13) hampering growth in certain sectors including agriculture and mobility.

Sharmarke Farah, Director General, National Bureau of Statistics, Somalia, drew attention to gains in achieving: a decrease in maternal mortality (SDG 3); the revival of the education sector (SDG 4); increased access to clean water and enhancing sanitation (SDG 6); and an increase in internet access towards industrialization (SDG 9). He drew attention to challenges related to: “marginal food insecurity” affecting more than 70% of the population (SDG 2); a decrease in energy access (SDG 7); and floods, droughts, and locust invasions as a result of climate change (SDG 13).

Responding to questions from DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, ARGENTINA, and SIERRA LEONE, Ulloa (El Salvador) noted SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) as a priority for her government and emphasized the country’s: social development plan; national policy for early childhood development and efforts to address violence affecting students; and its agricultural plan, which aims to ensure food security.

Responding to questions from the WOMEN’S MAJOR GROUP, PORTUGAL, MEXICO, and SIERRA LEONE, Ramos da Costa Tenjua (São Tomé and Príncipe) highlighted the many ways in which climate change is negatively impacting the country; the country’s Blue Economy Strategy; and the need to address maritime piracy and crimes through bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Responding to questions from FINLAND, the WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS MAJOR GROUP, the PHILIPPINES, NORWAY, SWITZERLAND, DENMARK, SWEDEN, and SIERRA LEONE, Farah (Somalia) highlighted efforts to support urbanization while strengthening rural areas; raising domestic revenue as a key priority; the challenge of fragmented data availability; the establishment of a research center on climate change; and the administration’s commitment to “one person, one vote,” as well as employment creation.

Presenting Dominica’s VNR, Vince Henderson, Minister for Planning, Economic Development, Climate Resilience, Sustainable Development and Renewable Energy, stressed the alignment of Dominica’s climate resilience and recovery plan 2020-2030 with the SDGs and a goal of becoming “the golden standard” for SIDS climate resilience and disaster risk management. He said Dominica is on track to achieve all SDGs and cited the unfair financial global system as a challenge.

Responding to questions from MOROCCO, CANADA, GEORGIA, the CHILDREN AND YOUTH MAJOR GROUP, VENEZUELA and ECLAC, Henderson underlined lessons from Hurricane Maria including the promulgation of new building codes. He also: highlighted building of 5000 homes with targets to ensure climate resilience; outlined creation of the Kalinago Upliftment department to include Indigenous Peoples in national planning; discussed work on green energy; underlined the multistakeholder nature of the VNR development; and said the country is engaged in waste management towards a circular economy.

Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Djibouti, outlined actions to achieve SDG 14 (life below water) and SDG 15 (life on land), including the designation of 83,000 hectares as marine protected areas. On education (SDG 4), he shared an 89% school attendance rate and noted a reduction of female genital mutilation (FGM) (SDG 5). He called for investment (SDG 17) to diversify the economy and promote post-pandemic recovery.

Responding to MOROCCO, SENEGAL, and the CHILDREN AND YOUTH MAJOR GROUP, Ali noted that the development of the VNR was multistakeholder and participatory; highlighted that desertification and poverty-driven deforestation are painful realities for the country; and underlined the severe laws to curb FGM.

Albert Ramdin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation, Suriname, highlighted

investment in education infrastructure (SDG 4); noted the challenges of being a highly indebted country (SDG 8), linking this to 35% youth unemployment; shared various national plans related to climate change (SDG 13) including its journey to REDD+ Readiness; and called for reform to enable high middle-income countries to access concessional financing (SDG 17).

Responding to MOROCCO, LGBTI STAKEHOLDER GROUP, SINGAPORE and the UK, Ramdin noted: the country would build capacity to ensure it is prepared for any mishaps in oil and gas exploitation; its VNR coordination platform is open to participation from all stakeholders; the country’s increased support to the vulnerable during the pandemic; and the adoption of sustainable forestry plans.

Ricardo Nsue Ndemesogo Obono, Director General, National Institute of Statistics, Equatorial Guinea, highlighted, *inter alia*, progress on improving equality, including through programmes for: women entrepreneurs; assisting persons with disabilities; and promoting equity among children. He also noted its national food security programme; strategies against malaria and sexually transmitted infections and for preventing HIV; the country’s involvement in the Central Africa Forestry Initiative; and an inclusive VNR process that brought together different stakeholders. He emphasized a need for further progress on social protection, education, and health, among other issues.

Samuelu Laloni, Permanent Representative of Tuvalu to the UN, noted many alignments between the country’s development plan and the 2030 Agenda, and highlighted the country’s focus on upholding its culture and values. Among challenges, the country highlighted: climate change, a lack of doctors and nurses both generally and during the pandemic, and lack of educational resources and qualified teachers. Laloni called on countries to: invest in disaster risk reduction as part of climate adaptation, support the right to a clean and healthy environment; and support Vanuatu’s initiative to seek an advisory opinion on climate change at the International Court of Justice.

Responding to MOROCCO, NAMIBIA, the INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MAJOR GROUP, NIGER, and VENEZUELA, Nsue Ndemesogo Obono (Equatorial Guinea) highlighted the legal framework on forest preservation and REDD+ projects; inclusive processes for civil society engagement; progress towards combatting malaria; improved schooling, inclusion of women, and energy production; data improvement through household surveys; and non-discrimination of all Indigenous groups.

Responding to AUSTRALIA, CHILE, the NGO MAJOR GROUP, the PHILIPPINES, UK, DENMARK, VANUATU, and the MARSHALL ISLANDS, Laloni (Tuvalu) stressed the importance of using the MVI instead of GNI for measuring SIDS’ development to ensure proper financing. He noted that climate adaptation, rather than resilience, is a priority given rapid sea-level rise; highlighted efforts on building data collection and analysis capacity; and noted efforts to include all stakeholders in decision-making.

### ***In the Corridors***

Given the lengthy high-level statements that can accompany UN conferences, several observers welcomed the succinct 90-minute high-level session that took place on Thursday. As the midway point in the 15-year SDG implementation period draws closer, and with Secretary-General Guterres sounding the alarm that “we are in deep trouble,” the high-level session offered a moment of reflection. Considering the multiple, parallel crises the world is facing, it was perhaps fitting that, rather than dwelling on formalities, the rest of the day focused on the critical question of national SDG implementation as delegations continued to present their VNRs. Meanwhile, some expressed concern that, compared to pre-pandemic levels, attendance of the HLPF from some capitals seemed lower than usual, with delegates choosing not to take up the opportunity for in-person connections and learning to drive the transformative change we all seek. Others diagnosed “conference fatigue,” with several big meetings having occurred in the last six months, and more still to come.