

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Collen Vixen Kelapile,
President of the Economic and Social Council
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on the Economic and Social Council
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**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

1. It is a pleasure to be with you today at this annual UNITAR Orientation Course on the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It is important for all delegations to have an overview of the crucial work of ECOSOC, so as to prepare for their active engagement in delivering the important mandates of the Council.

2. I therefore thank the Executive Director of UNITAR, Nikhil Seth, and Marco Suazo, the head of the UNITAR Office in New York for convening this orientation.

Role of ECOSOC in today's world

3. Let me commence by highlighting the role of ECOSOC in today's world, particularly in view of the crises and challenges confronting us. These challenges include COVID-19 and its multidimensional effects, rising poverty, hunger and debt, climate change, and persistent conflicts, which are all threatening our ability to deliver on the promise of a better life for people and a healthy planet as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

4. Therefore, ECOSOC's mandate is more indispensable than ever as the world strives to recover from COVID-19 and move on to realize the SDGs. We now have only eight years left to fully implement the 2030 Agenda. As a result, we really need to turn the tide and make this decade one of action and delivery, as we decided in the political declaration of the SDG Summit in 2019.

5. This is the very theme of this year's ECOSOC Session and High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: *"Building back better from COVID-19 while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development."* This theme is at the heart of the lives of people across the world.

6. It is thus all the more important that ECOSOC plays its role in strengthening multilateral cooperation and international solidarity for supporting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

7. The Secretary-General, in his recent report on *Our Common Agenda*, recognized this important role of ECOSOC when he proposed to hold a Biennial Summit between the G20, ECOSOC, the Secretary-General and the international financial institutions. Ever a strong supporter of the role of ECOSOC, the Secretary-General informed me recently that, thirty years ago, he had championed the idea of turning ECOSOC into an economic security council.

8. Many of his other proposals also relate to the work of ECOSOC, such as on designing measures of progress that complement GDP; ensuring meaningful youth engagement in UN deliberative and decision-making processes; the reform of the international tax system; universal social protection coverage; the review of the working methods of the Commission on the Status of Women; the proposed Summit on Transforming Education: the Summit of the Future; and the proposed World Social Summit.

9. The High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF), has also been recognized as the primary global gathering for sustainable development. It provides an inclusive platform for monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, while promoting peer learning. It expands the global movement for Sustainable Development through the engagement of multiple stakeholders.

10. In this connection, the fact that Our Common Agenda report was well received by Member States by adoption of resolution 76/6 testifies to their support to the work of ECOSOC and HLPF.

Distinguished Colleagues,

11. The task of building back from COVID-19 is daunting. But, having seen the world come together around the ambitious vision of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, and having seen how much people and countries can achieve when they join forces, guided by a common vision, evidence and science, I am confident that, together, we can overcome this crisis.

12. We can do this by utilizing ECOSOC to its full potential, to support a breakthrough in recovering from COVID-19, even before this session ends in July. Let us utilize its ability to assess the global situation on the SDGs, develop policy guidance based on our combined experiences, leverage action by the UN system

and multiple actors and help to put us on a track to achieve the SDGs through our very response to the pandemic.

13. This is my commitment as ECOSOC President: I will strive to ensure that the Council fulfils its role as a unique platform for inclusive dialogue among governments, youth, the UN system including international financial institutions, NGOs, the private sector, women's groups and multiple other actors to find solutions and launch cooperation towards an SDG-guided recovery and a healthy planet.

ECOSOC Strengthening

Distinguished Colleagues,

14. ECOSOC and its vast subsidiary machinery play an important role in supporting the work of the UN. Therefore, part of my responsibilities as President is to continue efforts aimed at strengthening of ECOSOC for effective mandate implementation. In this regard, I am working with the Bureau to strengthen ECOSOC and enhance the HLPF, by implementing the decisions adopted by the General Assembly last June (see GA/RES/75/290, A and B).

15. In two weeks, we will hold the new Coordination Segment and the strengthened Partnership Forum. These important events will guide and inspire the work of ECOSOC and its functional commissions and subsidiary bodies, leading up to the HLPF in July.

16. Also important to note is that the General Assembly recently stressed the Council's role in assisting countries emerging from conflict to return to long-term sustainable development. With that in mind, I am strengthening cooperation between ECOSOC and the Peacebuilding Commission, following our joint meeting last December on recovering from COVID-19 in post conflict contexts.

17. The Council's oversight role, and as an accountability mechanism, is also being strengthened. I am working with ECOSOC Vice Presidents to ensure that the various segments, forums and other events of ECOSOC deliver clear guidance and oversight on the various activities of the UN system.

Priorities for this year's ECOSOC

Distinguished Colleagues,

18. Allow me to also share briefly some of the priority areas that will guide the work of the Council during the 2022 session.

(i) Dealing with the impacts of COVID-19 and a Sustainable Recovery

19. ECOSOC supports multiple aspects of the response to COVID-19 and the pursuit of the SDGs. It needs to mobilize international solidarity and combined actions to help the world to reach our common goals. This will be the objective of each segment and forum of ECOSOC, and of its vast subsidiary machinery as well as the focus of the HLPF. The Forum will therefore address the shortcomings in multilateral cooperation, that were revealed by the response to COVID-19 and efforts to ensure equitable access to the vaccine.

(ii) Tackling the Climate Crisis

20. As we battle the COVID-19 pandemic, we should not lose sight of other pressing challenges, such the existential threat of our time – the Climate Crisis. Fast action now is needed to prevent the most severe disruptions from climate change. We need to build a truly global coalition committed to net zero emissions – including countries, cities, regions, businesses and financial institutions.

21. Countries need to implement commitments made at the COP26 Climate Conference in Glasgow and strive for bolder commitments at the COP27 which will be held in Egypt. ECOSOC will continue to provide platforms for Member-States stock-taking on commitments and mobilizing further action. Developing countries, in particular Least Developed Countries and climate vulnerable countries, should have access to adequate finance in order to build resilience to the climate crisis and future pandemics.

(iii) Science, Technology and Innovation

22. Equally important is the sharing of the benefits from science, technology and innovation. This too is necessary to ensure universal access to the vaccine, given that the vaccine is a product of advances in science and thus qualifies as a common good. The Multistakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation will examine how STI supported the response to the crisis and identify the lessons we learned, the risks we face and offer creative solutions.

(iv) Inequality within and Between Countries

23. We must redress the inequalities that have been revealed and aggravated by the pandemic, deepening the divide between rich and poor countries and people. In this context, ECOSOC needs to ensure that developing countries in particular have access to the resources they need for their COVID-19 response and recovery,

and for implementing the SDGs. I expect the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development to deliver ambitious recommendations and build agreement. The event on Debt Sustainability, that I will jointly convene with the President of the General Assembly, will build on its outcome.

24. Furthermore, I will also convene a special meeting to explore how measures to respond to COVID-19 are impacting on inequalities, including those related to discrimination and race. We will also give special attention to the development of Africa and the situation of the poorest countries in the world at a dedicated joint meeting with the President of the General Assembly.

(v) Partnerships, Inclusivity and Youth Engagement.

25. The Council gives voice to youth, through the ECOSOC Youth Forum in April. This year, it will allow youth to contribute to international decision-making at the UN, dialogue with Member States and share their vision and solutions for recovering better and realizing their priorities.

26. On 2 February 2022 the Partnership Forum will reinforce the engagement of stakeholders in the work of the UN, on shaping a better recovery. A strengthened, and more inclusive ECOSOC and HLPF, will better complement and bolster the work of the General Assembly.

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and ECOSOC High-Level Segment.

27. Distinguished Colleagues, before I conclude I should indicate that the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and ECOSOC High-Level Segment are the annual highlights of the ECOSOC calendar. This year will be no different. I look forward to hearing from Member States on their efforts to foster an SDG-led recovery.

28. The follow-up and review work of the HLPF in July is essential. It will discuss ways to relaunch accelerated SDG progress as part of a sustainable recovery from COVID-19; and review in-depth SDGs 4, 5, 14, 15, and 17. It also will build on the experiences and lessons to be shared by the 45 countries presenting Voluntary National Reviews. Inputs from all UN system entities, countries and other stakeholders will contribute to defining political guidance and accelerated actions.

29. It is important now more than ever that the HLPF and ECOSOC adopt a strong declaration by consensus, as a demonstration of international solidarity

and renewed commitment to gear the recovery towards building a fairer and safer world.

Distinguished Colleagues,

30. In conclusion, let me reiterate that the ECOSOC is an essential pillar of the United Nations. As I said during my inaugural statement on 23 July last year, its work is no less important than its peer Principal Organs such as the General Assembly and the Security Council.

31. It should therefore continue to promote integrated approaches to sustainable development policies, identify solutions, promote transformative change and equality, facilitate mutual learning and support, and coordinate international cooperation to realize our common goals.

32. I will look to you for your active and dynamic engagement in the Council to deliver on the high goals of the UN Charter. You can be reassured of my commitment as President of ECOSOC to proceed with you in this journey.

Thank you.
