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President: Mr. Massari (Vice-President) (Italy)

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In the absence of Ms. Stoeva (Bulgaria), Mr. Massari (Italy), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 5: High-level segment on accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels (continued)

(b) High-level policy dialogue, including future trends and scenarios related to the Council theme and the long-term impact of current trends (E/2023/33, E/2023/78 and E/2023/89)

1. **Mr. Li Junhua** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels” (E/2023/78), said that the report contained seven key recommendations.

2. First, countries must strengthen the social contract by reducing poverty and inequality, including gender inequality. Second, they must also combat the threat of climate change by investing in clean energy infrastructure and renewable energy sources to ensure a smooth energy transition and keep alive the target of 1.5 degrees Celsius. Third, developing countries at the early stages of demographic transition must increase their investments in education and skills development, while also engaging in economic and structural reforms to attract foreign direct investment and allow for technological diffusion. Fourth, closing the gender gap in the labour market would drive higher economic growth and output in many countries, including those facing an ageing population. Fifth, the international community must commit to multilateral debt relief and development cooperation, including official development assistance (ODA). Such measures would be critical to restore the fiscal spaces of developing countries facing the aftermath of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and other crises. Sixth, countries should capitalize on the digital revolution by investing in the individual and infrastructure capacities required to leverage new digital technologies. Seventh, multilateral cooperation must urgently be strengthened to accelerate recovery and the full achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Long-term future trends and scenarios: impacts on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals” (E/2023/89), he said that technological and

scientific breakthroughs could radically accelerate sustainability, but that unprecedented levels of global cooperation and policy coordination would be necessary to harness those possibilities for all. While digitalization promised new opportunities for leapfrogging, 3 billion people still lacked basic Internet connectivity, or access to the necessary skills and technology. As great technological progress had been made, new digital gaps had emerged.

4. However, the Goals and the world’s climate targets could still be achieved if the world adopted the right policies and stepped up investment, research and technology-sharing. The sustainable development pathway proposed a globally coordinated package of policies and actions, including increased resource efficiency, climate change mitigation, more sustainable land and food systems, healthier consumption patterns, and the overall raising of eco-efficiencies.

5. The Council was where the world came together to find solutions for sustainable development, for rebuilding differently and for supporting the achievement of the Goals. Heads of State and Government would soon meet for the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit, marking the halfway point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: all stakeholders should come together with ambition, resolve and solidarity to plan for long-term sustainable development.

6. **Ms. Fukuda-Parr** (Chair of the Committee for Development Policy), introducing the report of the Committee for Development Policy on its twenty-fifth session (E/2023/33), said that the message and work of the Committee was more urgent than ever: fulfilling the potential of the Sustainable Development Goals would require transformative action in the form of coherent, integrated and inclusive strategies and policies that addressed the root causes of inequality, poverty and environmental degradation.

7. The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine had negatively impacted the Goals, whose achievement was already threatened by inequality and climate change. Given that its analysis of voluntary national reviews had showed little evidence of transformative action, the Committee had several recommendations to ensure a just transition to sustainable and inclusive development. It was not sufficient to conceive of transitioning solely within national borders: the global consequences of national policies and historical responsibilities must also be addressed. Although compensation for loss of income and livelihoods would be required, a just transition should also change unacceptable inequities, such as the confinement of developing countries to the primary stages of global

value chains, and the severe underrepresentation of women in certain sectors of the economy, including the energy sector. A just transition would require inclusive processes of social and political dialogue; financing, technological and intellectual property rights frameworks that benefited developing countries; policy space for the latter to develop productive capacities and upgrade their economies; and the need to avoid measures that effectively shifted the burden of the transition onto poorer countries, instead formulating mitigation strategies that promoted the participation of developing countries in emerging value chains.

8. The Committee had also examined the escalating external debt distress and financial constraints faced by many developing countries. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, high food and energy prices, rising international interest rates and currency depreciation, the number of least developed countries and low-income countries in debt distress or at high risk of debt distress was now higher than in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, and more than double the number in 2013. Many middle-income countries were also facing worrisome levels of debt, which impacted the ability of their Governments to address poverty, hunger and climate resilience. Member States and the international community must urgently improve the method, process and speed of debt relief to developing countries. Countries should take the necessary actions to avoid future debt crises and be incentivized to increase their debt management capacity, have full legal and financial details of all their debt (including those of State-owned entities) and regularly interact with their creditors. Different financing sources, including compensation for losses and damages and provision of concessional financing for both climate adaptation and mitigation, must be efficiently allocated, and a mechanism for developed countries to transfer resources as payment for historical carbon debt must be developed.

9. The Committee had analysed the voluntary national reviews annually from 2018 to 2022. Taking stock of the lessons learned therein, it currently recommended launching a new generation of reviews that would reflect improvements in evidence-based analysis of progress, policy successes and failures; assess the core elements of the 2030 Agenda; outline the lessons learned and incorporate feedback mechanisms to ensure the latter informed future policy actions; and ensure greater space for civil society contributions, both in national processes and for the presentation of shadow reports at the high-level political forum on sustainable development. More systematic and comprehensive

voluntary peer review arrangements with partner countries were also recommended.

10. The Committee had begun preparing for the 2024 review of the list of least developed countries, refining the criteria used as well as their application procedure, with a view to being able to make the most accurate recommendations for graduation. Current and upcoming graduations would occur against a deteriorating global backdrop: the Committee thus continued to work on its enhanced monitoring mechanism for graduating and graduated countries, in accordance with the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. All eight countries it had monitored had been affected by the multiple and cascading crises, and had limited, albeit varying, policy space to address both short-term challenges from current shocks and long-term development objectives; two countries had seen significant setbacks on their graduation pathway. The Committee expressed support for the recently adopted draft resolution that recommended an extension of the preparatory period for the Solomon Islands and the deferral of Angola's graduation. That draft resolution demonstrated the effectiveness of the enhanced monitoring mechanism.

11. The international community must provide targeted and innovative support to graduating and recently graduated countries, including increased financing for development, to enable the expansion of productive capacities and resilience-building. Such support also meant extending, for an appropriate time beyond graduation, trade-related international support measures such as special and differential treatment in World Trade Organization agreements.

Panel discussion: "Strengthening United Nations system institutions for resilient sustainable development"

12. **Mr. Maloka** (Chief Executive Officer, African Peer Review Mechanism of the African Union), moderator, said that the panel discussion would seek to obtain a better understanding of the lessons learned from the United Nations response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as how to strengthen the Organization's institutions to scale up and replicate such efforts in the future. Panellists would discuss necessary improvements to international norm-setting and institutional support for sustainable and resilient recovery, as well as how to better integrate resilience across policies, programmes and activities.

13. **Ms. Grynspar** (Secretary-General, United Nations Conference on Trade), panellist, speaking via video link, said that the response of the United Nations

to the COVID-19 pandemic had achieved some real measure of success, providing information, aid and support where desperately needed. Shortcomings had also been observed, however, resulting in damaged global trust.

14. The Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance offered some lessons thanks to its response to the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The Group had set a groundbreaking example for fast, inter-agency action. Via the agreements signed in Istanbul, Türkiye, in 2022, the United Nations had shown that it could convene parties despite geopolitical tensions and a lack of trust. The Group had also been able to provide research and analysis that was ahead of the curve and offered clear and effective guidelines for action at both the global and country levels.

15. Resilience was a matter of equality and empowerment. The more unequal the system, the more disastrous the impact of shocks and the weaker the recovery. While inequality bred fragility, closing gaps would foster resilience.

16. **Ms. Khan** (Assistant-Secretary-General and Coordinator of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement), panellist, said that she could not imagine going to her job without enough nutrition to function or think clearly, but that was the experience of hundreds of millions of people every day. The COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the flaws of the international system as well as the severity of food and nutrition insecurity, with global hunger levels rising from 7.9 per cent of the global population in 2019 to 9.2 per cent in 2022. Conflicts, climate change, compounding public debt and spiralling food prices limited the ability of Governments to ensure food security and imperilled the achievement of the nutrition-related Sustainable Development Goals. Women and girls bore the disproportionate impact of those food-related problems.

17. The United Nations system provided an opportunity for the international community to work together to implement targeted policies and maximize resource utilisation. However, Governments and the United Nations system must also work directly with youth, civil society and the private sector. The Scaling Up Nutrition Movement embedded focal points within national Governments, with several countries such as Tajikistan and Rwanda reporting successes thanks to intersectoral linkages in their voluntary national reviews. There would be multiple opportunities to address nutrition, including the United Nations Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment and the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties

to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

18. **Ms. Maalla** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children), panellist, said that sustainable and resilient development could not be achieved without investing in children; the protection of children cut across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, given the intersectoral nature of violence against children and its overlap with gender-based violence. Given that such violence was estimated to cost up to 5 per cent of national gross domestic product, investing in cross-sectoral violence protection and prevention programmes could secure long-term dividends and ensure resilient development. People-centred development starting in early childhood must be embedded in all humanitarian and crisis responses.

19. To that end, sustainable and unified support from the United Nations would be essential. She had observed several promising trends involving United Nations country teams, such as increased participation in voluntary national reviews, common country analyses and the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Country teams were also supporting data collection, assessment, and sharing to address geographical disparities; estimating the cost of violence against children and its potential dividend if addressed; strengthening national and local systems and capacities; and mobilizing a diversity of partners, including civil society, local and faith-based communities, the private sector and financial institutions.

20. However, the United Nations response at the country level must still be strengthened, as many projects remained siloed with no local ownership. Funding was in short supply, and challenges such as political instability, external shocks and limited State capacities also led to competing agendas. A bottom-up approach was needed and multilateral cooperation must move to context-specific, results-oriented partnerships that fostered South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation.

21. **Ms. Davis** (Board Member, Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations; and United Nations Representative, Congressional Black Caucus Political Education Institute), lead discussant, reading a statement on behalf of Mr. Bautista, President of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations, said that the Conference was celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary at the same time as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Both were governed by same universal principles: the Conference promoted

interactions between civil society and the United Nations by prioritizing a revitalized multilateralism that was people-centred, representative, equitable, transparent, networked and accountable. She called on all Governments to endorse those principles and act on the proposals issued by the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism.

22. In order to strengthen the role of the Council, Governments must explicitly and enthusiastically engage civil society organizations in full and productive consultations at all stages. Competent input from civil society organizations enhanced the competent output of Governments and the United Nations system as a whole.

23. The Conference worked to localize the language of the United Nations system into myriad native and Indigenous languages, and to adapt its follow-up actions to local contexts.

24. **Mr. Maloka** (Chief Executive Officer, African Peer Review Mechanism of the African Union) said that the African Union highly valued consistent and continuous coordination with the United Nations at all levels.

25. **Ms. Nurbaya** (Indonesia) said that the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, combined with the devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic downturn, had hindered the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. International cooperation and multilateralism would be essential to remedy those negative trends.

26. Indonesia had secured access to a COVID-19 vaccine using multilateral diplomacy. In 2020, the country had also introduced an economic recovery plan that had grown its economy by 3.6 per cent in 2021 and by 5.3 per cent in 2022. To ensure sustainable and resilient economic growth, Indonesia had also engaged in water quality monitoring and increased measures to ensure hygiene and water access. The country had achieved 63 per cent of its 222 national Sustainable Development Goals indicators, and 15 per cent more were on track.

27. **Ms. Hovnik** (Slovenia) said that the triple economic, health and environmental crisis called for stronger linkages between science and evidence-based policymaking, as well as increasing capacity for transformation, applying new knowledge, ensuring better coordination and conflict resolution and enhancing institutional flexibility. Civil society organizations, think tanks and non-governmental organizations could all play an important role in the process. To address the new reality, competent public

servants would be needed. It was necessary to think both horizontally across sectors and vertically across regional and local government structures.

28. Slovenia was working to move from a linear economic model to a circular one; it was also reducing emissions, tackling social and environmental challenges and identifying areas for decarbonization. Global partnerships between Governments, businesses, science and civil society were needed to fully implement the 2030 Agenda.

29. **Ms. Qereqeretabua** (Observer for Fiji) said that the scars left behind by the COVID-19 pandemic on national socioeconomic sectors were proof that the international community must ensure the resilience of the development system, including by providing vaccines, medicine, medical equipment and consistent access to good public health care. Development efforts should adopt a coordinated, sustainable and resilient approach to the interconnected triple crises of climate, pollution and biodiversity loss. Access to finance was also critical for sustainable recovery, especially for small island developing States. A financing support system must be able to provide adequate and affordable liquidity to meet the enormous development needs of States which, like Fiji, were increasingly vulnerable to external shocks and climate change.

30. The report of the Secretary-General entitled “Our Common Agenda” provided a road map for future multilateral cooperation that was inclusive, networked and effective. Her delegation hoped that the upcoming Sustainable Development Goals Summit would reflect the special circumstances of small island developing States, including by recognizing the multidimensional vulnerability index and pushing for its integration into the programme activities, projects and partnerships of the United Nations system. The Council had an evolving role as a review and reporting platform to measure the progress of the Goals.

31. **Ms. Rodríguez Mancia** (Guatemala) said that it was important to break down silos and work preventively across the three pillars of peace and security, development and human rights. Without peace there could be no development, and without development there could be no peace.

32. Her delegation supported the initiatives outlined in the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Our Common Agenda” to strengthen the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and combat hunger and the negative effects of climate change, with an emphasis on social development and the inclusion of vulnerable populations such as migrants, youth, women and girls, Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities. It also

supported proposals to strengthen international cooperation, including South-South and triangular cooperation, and to provide additional support for middle-income countries.

33. Guatemala had been the first country to present its fourth voluntary national review; it would continue to take ownership of inclusive monitoring with a view to achieving its national Sustainable Development Goals. Notwithstanding such commitments, an inclusive people-centred recovery would require strengthening the funding architecture to mobilize greater resources. As a country with a large youth population, Guatemala also called for greater protections for children and youth.

34. Heading towards the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, it was necessary to assess whether the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income was being met for ODA to developing countries. Effective and transparent cooperation that targeted the specific needs of countries was urgently needed. Multilateral financial institutions should act consistently with regard to climate-related objectives and consider vulnerability when attributing funds. Scientific, technical and technological knowledge should also be integrated in processes across all sectors, leading to evidence-based decision-making, the strengthening of national statistical systems and integrated risk management. Partnerships had a strategic role to play with regard to development, allowing for greater resource mobilization thanks to the active participation of the private sector, civil society organizations and academia.

35. **Ms. Buenrostro Massieu** (Mexico) said that halfway to 2030, only 12 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goals had been achieved. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, only one fourth of the Goals had been or would be achieved by 2030 in the region. Without increased commitment, political will and accelerated actions, it would be impossible to put an end to poverty, reduce inequalities or protect the environment. The international community must go beyond the lowest common denominator and leave behind its differences to achieve the Goals.

36. Millions currently faced poverty, hunger and malnutrition, as well as the increasing effects of climate change, and inequalities were only growing. To overcome those crises, her delegation suggested recognizing different territorial realities; adopting a shared perspective on challenges and possible solutions; strengthening multilateral action, especially by promoting the inclusion of diverse social organizations, groups and movements with ties to sustainable

development; and providing support for science, technology and innovation. To build a sustainable future for all, it was necessary to target asymmetries and inequalities.

37. To implement the 2030 Agenda, the Government had undertaken several transformative actions at the national level, with social and economic inclusion as its guiding principle. It had adopted a multidimensional approach to poverty, strengthened gender equality and women's empowerment as cross-cutting factors of development, and worked to combat climate change and biodiversity loss.

38. **Ms. Nguyen Cam Linh** (Observer for Viet Nam) said that as a responsible member of the United Nations, Viet Nam was considered a pioneer for adopting the "Delivering as One" initiative in 2006 with the "One United Nations" approach for greater harmonization and impacts of United Nations operations in the country. The country had just elaborated its fourth United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and its national development priorities.

39. It was important to provide United Nations agencies with adequate, predictable and sustainable funding at the national level. Her delegation supported increased funding from the regular budget so that resident coordinators could ensure their independence, impartiality and accountability while leading country teams. While attempting to deliver as one, each United Nations agency still retained its own procedures for financial approval; they should adopt a uniform set of procedures to reduce administrative costs and increase efficiency. United Nations country teams must strengthen the specific skills and expertise needed to support national energy and food system transitions and well as the digital transformation of national economies. Collaboration between the United Nations and regional organizations should be enhanced to leverage the full range of regional expertise.

40. **Ms. Grynspar** (Secretary-General, United Nations Conference on Trade), speaking via video link, said that collective efforts and the implementation of social protection networks at the national level were necessary to prevent worsening food insecurity. To ensure that protection systems reached the most vulnerable, fiscal space was required, as well as addressing the world's debt problem. The Multidimensional Poverty Index had been presented as an important tool to better understand the situation of children and youth. The way in which a problem was measured informed the policies and interventions that would be designed to address it. If the international

community did not have access to adequate measurements, that would hinder its ability to intervene effectively.

41. **Mr. Maloka** (Chief Executive Officer, African Peer Review Mechanism of the African Union) said that the energy and water crisis had not been adequately discussed, but the focus on nutrition was very important.

42. **Ms. Khan** (Assistant-Secretary-General and Coordinator of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement) said that access to clean water was a fundamental part of good nutrition. With regard to financing, it was important to develop adequate tools to monitor national budgets and domestic investments, and to identify financing gaps, with a view towards making investments that were transformative, sustainable and resilient. Financing for nutrition was a pivotal element for the development of human capital, and especially for children, youth and women: for every \$1 invested in nutrition, there were \$16 of benefits reaped in terms of health and productivity.

43. Business, civil society and academia should be better integrated into the United Nations system; the adjustments made to the voluntary national review process were an improvement to that end.

44. A coherent approach to poverty must be multidimensional and include the strengthening of national capacities through technical assistance and resources provided by the United Nations system.

45. **Ms. Maalla** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children) said that the world had been behind on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals even before the COVID-19 pandemic. To leverage the pandemic and other ongoing crises as an opportunity, all actors must be self-critical and assess how to simultaneously target hunger, poverty and climate change. The international community must act urgently and not just repeat the same statements. People must be seen not just as passive recipients of services but as key partners who were intimately familiar with the problems on the ground.

46. There was a lack of trust in multilateralism and cooperation, exacerbated by important geopolitical divisions. The United Nations system must ensure a continuum of services and remain people-centred and transparent, but it could not operate alone. Women, children and youth must be included: they had shown during the pandemic that they could imagine innovative solutions to real problems. Greater investments must be made in children and their caregivers.

47. She asked how development could be quickly linked to humanitarian responses so that endemic and chronic humanitarian crises could be forestalled.

48. **Ms. Davis** (Board Member, Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations; and United Nations Representative, Congressional Black Caucus Political Education Institute), speaking on behalf of Mr. Bautista, said that the COVID-19 pandemic had revealed the massive scale of global interdependence, the brutality of climate change, and the widespread disparities that existed across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals worldwide. COVID-19 had not just set the world back in terms of implementing the 2030 Agenda: it had compounded existing obstacles manifold.

49. The world's horrified reaction to the murder of George Floyd and the war in Ukraine had demonstrated that human rights were essential to the full and successful achievement of the Goals. By stripping away the facade concealing systemic racism and colonialism, the pandemic had revealed many disparities already hampering marginalized communities. But COVID-19 was not the only pandemic that must be addressed: the international community must also consider the pandemics of violence, race, health and forced migration. Building back better must include justice in law and policies designed to triumph over adversity, both human and natural.

50. **Mr. Alfadi** (Observer for the Saudi Green Building Forum) said that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals was a collective responsibility. The construction sector accounted for 38 per cent of greenhouse emissions globally, thus having a significant impact on climate change and the Goal indicators. Since 2017, the Saudi Green Building Forum had contributed to such discussions thanks to its advisory status with the Council; since 2020, it had enjoyed the same status with the United Nations Environment Programme. The Forum worked hand in hand with municipal and rural authorities as well as the housing sector to tackle challenges and reinforce the principles of sustainable development. Green areas and public spaces should be accessible to all, including children, women, older persons and persons with disabilities.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.