



Intervention by Sri Lanka at the Informal Consultations on the political declaration of the SDG Summit, 16th March 2023

Let me begin by thanking the co-facilitators, Ambassador Mythen of Ireland and Ambassador Alya of Qatar for convening this meeting. Sri Lanka associates itself with the statement made by the four coordinators of G77 and China

We note the comments made by the President of the General Assembly this morning. My delegation also thanks the co-facilitators for the elements paper which we believe forms a useful basis upon which to begin discussions on elaborating the political declaration.

We meet at a time when the achievements made so far in progressing towards the realization of the sustainable development goals have backslided in the last two years. The global average of the human development indicators have declined. Therefore, as indicated in the elements paper, this aspect along with the multiple interlinked crises we face need to be acknowledged in the declaration along with the fact that if corrective action is not taken now, the global development agenda would be seriously prejudiced.

The political declaration will need to reflect a very well developed understanding of what changes need to be undertaken, as the Secretary-General himself pointed out, to “turbocharge” SDG implementation. We would like to emphasize the following points, which should underpin our whole approach to the political declaration:

- We need to address the issue of the deepening to unsustainable levels the external debt of many developing nations, aggravating a problem that predated the pandemic taking into account that according to the UNDP’s finding that 54 countries face this predicament;

- It is a fact that a widening finance divide has sharply curtailed the ability of many developing countries to invest in recovery, climate action and sustainable development. In this context, it is important to underscore the need to reform the international financial architecture, foster enablers of SDG acceleration such as digitalization and access to finance including climate finance;
- If we are to restore faith in multilateralism it is important to emphasize the need for a more networked, inclusive, and effective UN for SDG acceleration, avoid obstacles to SDG implementation, including improvements in the area of UN Development Cooperation and financing, especially the financing of public good;
- While special assistance should be provided to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS as being the most vulnerable to the multiple shocks we face today, special attention should also be given to Middle-Income Countries (MICs) in their transition to higher income level countries, considering MICs are exposed to a greater risk of being eliminated as recipient countries of development cooperation and financial flows.

Mr. Chairman, we must also guard ourselves against a pessimistic posture and pursue the goals as far as we could, after all we have another seven years ahead of us. We must be conscious of the inequalities in our international system, appreciate that the goals are top down. We must guard ourselves from being bureaucratic, ignoring local context. We must appreciate that the goals are not binding, unclear as to who will implement and they do not hold the decision-makers to account for their actions. We must also ask for more data as we do not have enough to maximize the use of the goals. The good news of course is that the SDGs are positively ambitious, collective, universal and have a strong commitment to end poverty and have the objective to reduce inequality.

Finally, Co-facilitators, credible support for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, including concrete improvements in the area of UN development cooperation and financing, will be important, primarily for rebuilding trust in international cooperation, which has taken a battering in many developing countries, and thereby work towards a more effective multilateral system.

My delegation stands ready to engage constructively on the critical dimensions of people, prosperity, planet, partnership and peace, economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection which are at the core of the SDGs.

I thank you!