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» Opening Remarks at Harnessing Climate & SDGs Synergies to Recover Better and Stronger from the Covid-19 Pandemic

Mr. Liu Zhenmin Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

Harnessing Climate & SDGs Synergies to Recover Better and Stronger from the Covid-19 Pandemic

Webinar 1: Thinking ahead for a sustainable, just & resilient recovery

28 May 2020, New York

Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you to the first of three UN DESA and UNFCCC-hosted webinars. We will focus on harnessing climate change and SDGs synergies for recovering better and stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to our co-organizer, UNFCCC secretariat, especially Executive Secretary, Ms. Patricia Espinosa. I also extend my special thanks to all leading and participating organizations and individuals, for their support and contributions during these challenging moments.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The COVID-19 pandemic is the unprecedented global crisis since the end of World War two. We must stand together to address this pandemic decisively, and recover better and stronger. No country can exit from this pandemic alone.

At the same time, we must not lose sight of our collective responsibility towards present and future generations. This is a core principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Even before this pandemic, we were not on track to achieve many of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. While COVID-19 is the most urgent threat facing humanity today, climate change remains the biggest threat over the long term. Indeed, how we overcome the pandemic can also determine our chances of succeeding at the SDGs and climate change.

Stimulus packages can pave the way towards recoveries that accelerate progress towards a more resilient, sustainable and equitable world.

That is why UN DESA and UNFCCC have decided to bring together all stakeholders again this year. Together, we will learn how to leverage climate and SDG synergies to recover better and advance implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Achieving the SDGs and addressing climate change must go hand-in-hand. Policies and partnerships must be designed to work together – across sectors and stakeholders – to achieve synergies and reduce or eliminate the trade-offs.

It is vital to ensure more coherence across Nationally Determined Contributions and National Development Plans, as well as National Adaptation Plans and National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies.

Forthcoming UN conferences – including the Global Sustainable Transport Conference, the UN Ocean Conference, the Biodiversity Summit, the Food Systems Summit, and the Conference of Parties UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will provide major opportunities for enhancing synergetic approaches.

Achieving such convergence is especially important amid the pandemic. Indeed, countries are seeking to save lives and livelihoods now, while building a more resilient, secure and sustainable future for all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is possible to scale up ambition when we recognize how our shared goals are moving towards a single end. That is why we are proud to co-convene this virtual conference. Our contribution, through a series of webinars, will help to promote such joined-up action, following the successful first Global Conference on Climate-SDG Synergies in Copenhagen, last year.

We envision several specific outcomes this year.

First, this virtual conference, along with responses to a widely disseminated survey, will generate concrete recommendations. These will work to strengthen synergies and advance implementation action, thus maximizing co-benefits and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Second, these results will inform the deliberations leading up to the High-Level Political Forum in July. They will also inform forthcoming processes towards the UNFCCC COP and other major UN conferences, including the important updating of Nationally Determined Contributions.

Third, we will continue to strengthen the dynamic global knowledge network and platform on the Climate-SDGs synergies.

DESA will soon be concluding a Memorandum of Understanding with UN Climate Change Secretariat to strengthen our mutual commitment to advancing the Climate-SDGs synergies.

We look forward to working with all of you to support the accelerated implementation of both the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

Thank you.

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