



Statement by

the Republic of Latvia

at

**the United Nations High Level Political Forum on Sustainable
Development and
the High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Affairs
Council**

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Madam President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

We welcome the thematic focus of this year's HLPF on accelerating action in a time of COVID. *We have a decade* to accelerate progress toward achieving the SDGs ahead of us. Given the impact of the pandemic on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, we must harness the lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis to recover better, to adjust our pathway, and to be ready for and prevent other similar crises.

Latvia has fared well during the **COVID-19 response phase** due to our decisive actions and dedicated efforts in *strengthening human resilience*. First, we tried to ensure predictable income for all. Second, our media (both private and public) provided reliable information for people in overcoming daily challenges. Third, our civil society and private sector stepped up to help each other, achieving mutual cooperation and trust. Finally, the government provided straightforward and constructive information to citizens and support, not punitive measures, steering society away from fear and towards positive action.

Latvia's success was also ensured by solidarity, coordination and decisive action at the regional level.

The response phase jump-started the digital transformation in Latvia.

- We upscaled e-solutions to ensure the continuity of public and private services, including ensured e-learning for all students.
- Latvia's Parliament was among the first in the world to fully shift to remote work in a newly developed e-platform that everyone can follow online.

- We were the first country to launch a Google-Apple friendly application “Stop COVID” created by Latvian IT companies designed to limit the spread of the virus. It meets democratic standards, is voluntary, free of charge and safe.

Let us now use the “rebuilding phase” to accelerate change towards a digital and climate friendly economy, leaving no one behind.

We warmly thank the UN Secretary-General for his continued leadership on **digital issues**. The Roadmap for Digital Cooperation includes ensuring universal digital access, fully respecting human rights online, as well as mitigating the risks related to the use of new technologies. One of such risks is the spread of “infodemic” we have witnessed since the COVID-19 outbreak. Latvia alongside a cross-regional group of countries has called for action to fight misinformation and disinformation. This initiative was supported by 130 countries. We also strongly support the “Verified” campaign announced by the Secretary General. It is critical that our societies have access to free, reliable and evidence-based information through free media.

At the same time climate crisis is still here and remains one of the greatest challenges of our time. Action at global and national level remains as urgent as ever.

Latvia welcomes the ongoing work under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This year we expect all countries, who have not yet done so, to submit to the UNFCCC enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and long-term low greenhouse gas emission strategies to ensure that we remain committed to the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement.

At a national level, we have changed our climate policy course towards more ambitious climate pathway by setting a goal of climate neutrality for 2050 in line with the goal of limiting the global temperature increase to 1,5°C.

Transitioning towards climate neutrality cannot take place without a significant shift in investment flows and financing. We will be working hard to scale up investments in innovation, research and technologies to truly ensure that Latvia can be one of the frontrunners on climate change.

Moreover, we are looking forward to the upcoming Summit on Biodiversity. We must use this momentum to demonstrate ambition and accelerate joint action in order to adopt a purposeful post 2020 global biodiversity framework at the UN Biodiversity Conference.

Finally, the COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated **international solidarity and the role of multilateral institutions** in coordinating and providing global response. This is exactly what is the most needed today – more solidarity and co-operation. To show solidarity with the most vulnerable, Latvia responded to the global appeal of the UN Secretary-General by contributing to the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 through the World Health Organization.

Latvia together with Barbados had the unique experience to co-facilitate the first virtual negotiations in ECOSOC history on Financing for Development this April. We are glad that the first universal UN agreement to finance the immediate response to COVID-19, and a longer-term sustainable recovery was reached.

Latvia also aligns with EU's Team Europe response. Recognizing Latvia's ODA commitments, in April the Government of Latvia in principle agreed to increase development cooperation financing in the next five years to address both the negative impact caused by COVID-19 pandemic and Agenda 2030. We are now re-orienting bilateral development cooperation to support partner countries in addressing those COVID-19 challenges in the health, social and economic sectors which also accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

Madam President, Latvia is grateful for your active leadership of ECOSOC for the past year, including during this challenging time. As a member of ECOSOC, Latvia will work together with other UN Member States in the spirit of solidarity and multilateral cooperation to advance the decade of action.