Fighting the Covid-19 pandemic has challenged the international system like never before.
However, alongside unfortunate examples of inequality, we have also seen evidence of the spirit of global solidarity and fairness, exemplifying the best values of our organisation.

The COVAX mechanism, despite its limitations, is one such case. Without this system, Africa’s vaccine deficit would be even more severe.

But we can and must do more, to speed up vaccine distribution in Africa. Doing so benefits the entire world.

The positive steps from various partners and companies toward building local vaccine manufacturing capacity is also very welcome.
We must harness this positive momentum to build long-term pandemic resilience, where it is needed most.

The cooperation at the G7 and G20 to issue new Special Drawing Rights is another positive example.

A further voluntary reallocation of new SDRs to countries that need them most, will help create the fiscal space required for a faster and more equitable recovery from the pandemic.

Nevertheless, the world is seriously off-track with the Sustainable Development Goals.
In fairness, we were behind schedule with the SDGs even before the pandemic hit. But there is now increased attention to figuring out how to refocus our efforts, and catch up.

We need to convert this sense of urgency into a durable political commitment to achieving the SDGs.

That commitment must put climate change mitigation at the centre of our efforts.

The severity of weather-related disasters is increasing year-by-year.

We cannot afford for the result of COP-26 in November to be inconclusive or divisive.
We also need to re-emphasise the importance of citizen-centred governance and accountability.

This not only guarantees well-being and material progress, but also security, stability, and confidence in the future.

The extremist ideologies that drive terrorism and genocide must be named, identified early, and dismantled, without ambiguity or hesitation.

On that, we cannot afford to play politics.

I wish to conclude with a strong endorsement of the Secretary-General’s Report on Our Common Agenda.
The Secretary-General is right to warn of a possible breakdown in the multilateral system, in the face of the Covid pandemic, worsening conflict, the climate emergency, and chronic poverty.

This would have disastrous consequences for all of us, and the risk should be taken seriously.

The Secretary-General’s Action Plan merits our full support, particularly the need for a global vaccination plan, a renewal of trust between governments and citizens, more focus on the needs of youth, and a rejuvenated commitment to fact-based reasoning and science.
Whether we are able to convene physically for the 77th General Assembly in 2022, or for the Secretary-General’s proposed Summit of the Future, depends on the actions we all take in the coming months.

With determination and focus, it can be achieved.

Thank you for your kind attention.