

# **76<sup>TH</sup> UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

21 September 2021

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- **Excellency, Abdulla Shahid, President of the General Assembly**
- **Excellency, Secretary-General António Guterres**
- **Excellencies, Heads of State and Government**
- **Distinguished Delegates**

**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 77<sup>th</sup> 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.**