



## **Speech**

**Professor Dr. Hala Helmy El Said**

**Minister of Planning and Economic Development**

**High-level Political Forum Side Event**

**Building Resilient Societies Post-COVID-19 in the  
Global South**

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> of July 2020**

**From 14:00 to 15:00**



***Prof. Eddy Maloka,***

***Ambassador Dr. Adonia Ayebare,***

***Mr. Jorge Chediek,***

***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

Greetings from Cairo, it gives me great pleasure to be amongst you today in a side event organized by two main instruments that Egypt is a strong supporter of, namely the South-South Cooperation and the African Peer Review Mechanism, together with the Permanent Mission of Uganda to the United Nations.

Egypt is keen on the acceleration of the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, and the enactment of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA+40) that was adopted at the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation in 2019, both supporting African Countries in the attainment of the Africa Agenda 2063 “The Africa We want”.



In this regard, Egypt hosted the APRM Expert's meeting post BAPA+40 to foster South-South Cooperation in Africa in January 2020, which also aimed at promoting the implementation of both Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063, as well as exploring the means of how the APRM can be best positioned to pursue these efforts within its expanded mandate.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The circumstances that we are witnessing with the COVID-19 pandemic and its vast health, economic and social implications, especially on developing countries, has proven that South-South Cooperation is of extreme importance, making this side event very well timed.

Achieving resiliency and sustainability to our economies and social fabrics as well as acceleration in implementation of the SDG's are needed now more than ever.



Human well-being is the entry point for maximizing progress towards the implementation of the SDG's and Africa Agenda 2063. Increasing access to social protection and safety nets, eradicating poverty and hunger, creating a strong health care system as well as investing in our human capital through quality education, eradicating poverty and hunger, reducing inequality and provision of decent work are on the top of our agenda.

Priority is also given to Digitalization, Innovation and Technology for their indispensable role in shaping the post Corona-Virus “new normal”. We believe that greater collaboration and global knowledge sharing in science and technology as well as an agile-adaptive approach, a policy of transparency in communicating risks, and citizens' voluntary cooperation are critical factors in dealing with COVID-19.



In order to mitigate the impacts of this pandemic, the government of Egypt has proactively taken almost 332 policies and measures, that were distributed among three main packages: a comprehensive stimulus package of around 100 billion EGP (2% of the GDP), monetary policies including cutting interest rates and facilitating access to credit as well as adopting initiatives to support negatively affected economic sectors such as Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, health, industry and tourism.

In 2016, “Egypt’s Vision 2030” the national version of the UN SDGs was released with a participatory approach between the government, private sector and civil society. Egypt also embarked in the same year on a comprehensive economic and social reform program, that gave dire attention to expanding financial inclusion, mitigating multidimensional poverty, developing the digital infrastructure and automation of public services and the education system. This comprehensive reform package led to the stabilization of the economy, improved the standards of living and created resilience in facing external shocks like the Corona-virus crisis.



A national committee was recently established and presided by the Prime Minister with myself as the rapporteur, with the main purpose of coordinating national efforts exerted by the government, financial institutions and civil society aiming at supporting informal workers. Accordingly, a national database for the informal sector was created that will be updated on regular basis. Compiling employment data on the informal sector will enable us to fill a vital gap in Egypt's statistics and support the ongoing efforts to train these workers and incorporate them into the formal sector. This also helped create a base for the government to identify genuine beneficiaries to be targeted for social security. As a result of these coordinated efforts, approximately two million informal workers received a stimulus package.

In order to monitor and assess all these initiatives and procedures, MPED developed a **policy tracker**, and linked it to the SDGs and Egypt's Vision 2030.



In 2019, Egypt also adopted a National Strategy for Development of Statistics in order to integrate the statistical data into the national planning process and policy making to ensure that all decisions taken are evidence based.

Despite all these efforts, this crisis has shown that much more still needs to be done. Egypt has given significant priority to the health sector, which already had an increase of 42% in the FY2020/2021 compared to last year and to expanding the coverage of existing social protection initiatives in 2020/2021, such as “Decent life- Hayah Kareema” initiative to cover more than 500 villages, benefiting more than 56% of the population of the targeted 1000 villages. Egypt will also provide priority focus on addressing the internal development gaps by localizing SDGs in the different Egyptian governorates benefiting from the comparative advantages of each one, and in this regard MPED is developing a regional competitiveness index.



In addition, the digital infrastructure will be further enhanced in order to respond to the increasing demand and the traffic on the internet and digital services, public investments in this regard will be increased by 300% in the FY 2020/21 compared to last year.

More attention will be given to green economy initiatives. MPED and the Ministry of Environment agreed that 30% of the developmental projects should be entitled to environmental sustainability and green economy concepts, and this percentage will be raised to 100% during the upcoming three years.

Egypt is also currently working on economic structural reforms focusing on 7 priority sectors that are labor intensive and have significant contribution in achieving economic growth namely (manufacturing, agriculture, telecommunication and information technology, retail and wholesale, tourism, mining and extraction, real estate).



The participation of the private sector in the economy has been always highly encouraged. In this regard, the government of Egypt established Egypt's Sovereign Wealth Fund as a mechanism that aims to create new partnerships with local and foreign private sector. Egypt's Sovereign Wealth Fund successfully joined the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds in May 2019.

***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

The General Assembly has described South-South cooperation as “an important element of international cooperation for development, which offers viable opportunities for developing countries in their individual and collective pursuits of sustained economic growth and sustainable development,” emphasizing that South-South cooperation is not a substitute for but is complementary to North-South cooperation.



This is why Egypt has taken a strong lead in South-South Cooperation through the Egyptian Agency for Partnership for Development as well as through tripartite cooperation with the Islamic Development Bank and Japan. Which resulted in more than 250 experts visits to 30 African countries for training and facilitation of knowledge-sharing in a variety of sectors, including water resources, health, agriculture and education.

Egypt has also launched “The Centre for South-South Industrial Cooperation” for transferring technology and promoting innovation-based industrial development among African States. The aim is to establish itself as a significant provider of South-South Cooperation in information and communication technologies (ICTs), giving its vast expertise in utilizing this sector in community development, agriculture, education, health and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises as well as for people with disabilities.



Furthermore, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development in collaboration with the World Food Program will establish a knowledge platform that facilitates the identification and sharing of lessons learned and best practices in job creation as well as in building resilience, social protection, food security, and nutrition strategies. Under this initiative, the following activities will take place: aligning national, regional development agenda with SDGs, provision of technical support in the production of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and enhancing job creation in Africa through the implementation of the “One million Job Initiative” that seeks to create one million new jobs in Africa.

The current pandemic represents an opportunity for each and every country to localize industries and to maximize its participation in value chains. The need to expand trade among our countries is mandatory and given Egypt’s unique position, it is ready to facilitate exports between the different regions in the Global South. We also stand ready to share our best practices in mitigating the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and build capacities in SDG planning, monitoring and evaluation.



*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

**Only with** real commitment, political will and solidarity among various stakeholders across governments, international financial institutions, businesses, and civil society **can we** come out of this pandemic stronger.

Let me conclude by saying “Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress and working together is success”

***THANK YOU and STAY SAFE***