

**Webinar on Building Resilient Societies Post-COVID-19 in the Global South
held during the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**

**Closing Remarks of Mr. Tarik Iziraren
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Takeaways from the discussions:

- This was a very rich discussion. I would like to thank all our distinguished speakers and panellists for their insightful presentations.
- It will be impossible to do justice to the richness of the discussion today. In my closing remarks, I will therefore be focusing on what I consider as the major takeaways from this meaningful exchange of national experiences, insights and ideas about the resilience of countries of the South and the North in facing the COVID-19 pandemic and its social and economic consequences and what lessons are to be learned from this pandemic.
- I will also share some ideas about the partnership that the Office has with the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and how we can move it forward.
- *The first takeaway:* Countries of the South have been able to put in place sound and meaningful policies to face the COVID-19 pandemic and its social and economic fallout. This meeting has been an opportunity for countries of the South and of the North as well to share and learn from one another's experiences as an important aspect of the collective resilience of the South and the international community as a whole to this pandemic.
- From the perspective of UNOSSC, we will continue supporting these policy dialogues and sharing of experiences and peer learning among the partners of the South and other partners.
- *The second takeaway:* All the presenters emphasized the need for active South-South cooperation and international and multilateral cooperation in the context of this global crisis.
- The Secretary-General of the UN highlighted that "No country will be able to exit this crisis alone", and this is an important lesson that we have learned from this pandemic. This is a global crisis and a global challenge that require a global and coordinated response. "Global response" means that we not only have to rely on the countries and their governments as they remain key actors in fighting this pandemic but we also have to engage in partnerships with other stakeholders such

as international financial institutions, the private sector, civil society organizations, academia and research institutions.

- Another important lesson from this crisis is that scientific cooperation and technology are central elements of the response to the pandemic and for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- *The third takeaway:* Southern solidarity was also maintained in spite of the crisis. Many Southern countries provided vital support to other countries of the South.
- Information and communications technologies (ICTs) and connectivity are important factors of resilience. They are playing a vital role, saving many lives by limiting the spread of the pandemic. They also enable business continuity, schooling and education, and facilitate the provision of so many basic services to the people. This positive change, triggered by this crisis, should be further strengthened through closer cooperation between the countries of the South, with the support of stakeholders from the North through triangular cooperation.
- There is also a need to close the digital divide because, according to recent statistics, 46 per cent of the world population – almost 3.6 billion people – are still without the Internet and lack connectivity. Often this lack of connectivity is translated into missed socioeconomic as well as learning opportunities, thus widening even further the digital divide and inequality in our societies. It is important to leave no one behind in this digital revolution.
- As Prof. Maloka highlighted, preparedness is a key component of resilience and recovery. Building back better should promote the kinds of investments and societal changes that will reduce the likelihood of future shocks and also improve the resilience to those shocks whenever they happen.

Partnership between UNOSSC and APRM:

- I take this opportunity to commend APRM for co-organizing, with the Office, this important event.
- I would like to say a few words about the partnership between APRM and UNOSSC, which will be formalized very soon.
- I would like to thank APRM for its very active engagement in promoting South-South cooperation on the African continent. APRM itself is an important mechanism for the sharing of experiences and peer learning on good governance and effective institutions in Africa. APRM is looking at the issues of governance which addresses political, economic and corporate interaction in a very holistic way.

- The APRM mandate has been extended to follow up and monitor the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda in Africa.
- APRM has been very active during the BAPA+40 process.
- APRM contributed to the preparation of BAPA+40 by holding a preparatory regional meeting in Africa in collaboration with our Office in Johannesburg in May in 2018. The meeting aimed to raise awareness of the importance and the objectives of the Conference and to contribute to the formulation of the position of the African countries.
- In January 2020, APRM organized, within the follow-up process to the BAPA+40 recommendations, an important technical workshop in Egypt in order to deliberate on the operationalization of the BAPA+40 recommendations in Africa.
- I would like to commend Prof. Maloka for his personal commitment in making South-South cooperation one of the main parameters of engagement of APRM, and to thank Sara Hamouda for all the support provided to this endeavour.
- UNOSSC and APRM are in the process of formalizing their partnership, and we foresee that it is important that we reinforce our cooperation. One of these actions could be the organization of regional forums to promote South-South and triangular cooperation on the continent that would enable countries in Africa and beyond to bring policymakers and practitioners together to discuss policy options and share knowledge and experiences for the achievement of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.
- We also believe that the development of the capacities of the African countries in different areas of sustainable development can be a key aspect of this partnership. The Office will be more than happy to engage with APRM and other partners in this regard.
- UNOSSC looks forward to a fruitful partnership that will contribute to the empowerment of the African countries, the enhancement of their resilience to shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the African Agenda 2063.
- I would like, once again, to thank all the speakers for their important insights and all the participants for their presence and active participation.