

HLPF 2020 – Written Statement – Belgium

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us start with an understatement: we are **not on track** and business as usual will not get us there either.

At last year's SDG Summit we recognized that important progress has been made on the SDGs, but that, overall, the world was not on track to deliver by 2030. **Progress has been insufficient and uneven.** Since then, the **COVID-19 crisis** has only exacerbated the already existing challenges.

Moving forward, it is essential that recent gains are safeguarded and that a **truly sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis** is pursued. One that reduces risks of future crises and brings much closer the inclusive, digital and sustainable development required to meet the goals of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

It requires strengthening the science-policy interface, supporting education systems to build community resilience and taking holistic, multi-sectoral and cross-disciplinary action. The post-COVID-19 response should not be limited to short-term responses. An accelerated effort is therefore also needed to support the structural strengthening of social protection systems worldwide, with specific attention for those hit hardest by the COVID-19 crisis. This is the first task of the **Decade of Action**, to which Belgium reaffirms its full support.

The Agenda 2030 underpins our Belgian values and the SDGs will therefore be at the heart of our path of this transformative recovery. This requires taking into account the inherent **transversal nature of the Agenda 2030**. The social, economic and environmental challenges of our time can only be met if we tackle them through **an integrated and whole-of-government approach**. Achieving zero poverty on a global level will not be possible without taking into account how climate change exacerbates the challenges of people who are living in the most vulnerable situations. Likewise,

successfully fighting climate change will require us to ensure that the transition is just, or we risk leaving people behind.

Belgium wants to stress, however, that this also requires an **approach based on human rights, participative democracy and rule of law**. We especially want to bring to the attention the importance of gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights and the fundamental principle of non-discrimination, as well as the necessity to recognize the importance of social protection and social services worldwide, including for the achievement of gender equality. The Agenda 2030 cannot be realized and people will be left behind if the approach is not based on these principles.

Belgium also stands ready to assist the rest of the world to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. As part of the EU and Member States led **Team Europe approach** we are there to support our partner countries worldwide. In line with our earlier commitments, we will continue to support especially Least Developed Countries with the reinforcement of their health services. We also stress the importance of promoting and guaranteeing **equitable global access to an eventual vaccine** against COVID-19.

Lastly, in our interdependent and interconnected world the only effective response to the current crisis and to the Decade of Action is one that is **collective and multilateral**. The COVID-19 crisis has been a serious test, but we believe that it has made multilateralism more relevant than ever. We need to guarantee health as a public good and we need to close the digital divide on a global level. These challenges and more in general the full and timely realization of the Agenda 2030 cannot be achieved without a **global leadership and a strengthened rule-based multilateral system**.

We have less than ten years to realize the future we want. Let us **make use of the current momentum** to ensure that this soon becomes our common reality.

Thank you.