

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
--
CLOSING REMARKS TO THE
HIGH-LEVEL EVENT
ON DEBT AND LIQUIDITY

New York/Online
29 March 2021, 12:15 pm

Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for joining our effort to raise ambition and action for a strong recovery. And thank you to the leaders and governments of Jamaica and Canada for your strong support.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the most encouraging news has been the development of vaccines in record time.

However, even those vaccines are not getting to everyone who needs them.

I will be frank.

From the production and distribution of vaccines, to support for developing economies, no element of the global pandemic response is going as it should.

Only through bold, ambitious action will we put an end to this era of terrible loss – loss for millions of individuals, for communities, and for economies.

The current crisis requires us to provide sufficient liquidity and fiscal space, including through debt relief, so that all countries can obtain vaccines and secure a bridge to recovery.

This means concluding discussions and taking the decision to issue new SDRs; extending the Debt Service Suspension Initiative into 2022; and expanding it to include all vulnerable middle-income countries that request it.

It also means creating new funds, facilities, instruments and mechanisms to provide liquidity and debt relief.

And these facilities and instruments, including the Common Framework on Debt Treatment, cannot penalize those they are intended to help.

We need solutions that work not only on paper, but in real life.

Debt swaps can be used to enable countries to invest in sustainable development and climate action. Buy-backs and cancellations also have an important role.

We need to help governments to invest in a strong recovery that puts us back on track to achieve the 2030 Agenda and fulfil the Paris Agreement.

There have been three previous waves of debt accumulation in the past 50 years. Each ended with a debt crisis.

The current wave, the fourth, must be different.

We must also tackle the systemic causes of debt crises, and create an international financial system that is fit for the challenges of the twenty-first Century.

We will take the work on debt architecture forward with Ministers of Finance, to report back to the Heads of State later in the year.

All the objectives I referred to require important conversations with Governments, investors, market participants, and credit rating agencies.

We will take these messages forward to the Spring Meetings of the International Financial Institutions, to the Financing for Development Forum, and to the meetings of the G7 and G20 later this year.

I encourage you to do the same.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Today, our goal was to turn a shared sense of urgency into a set of concrete actions.

I thank you all for rising to the challenge.

This must be a turning point.

We must apply the lessons of the pandemic to the new and emerging challenges before us, from the climate crisis to the governance of cyberspace.

The pandemic has demonstrated that we are not prepared for the future. We face unacceptable risks and are vulnerable to all kinds of threats.

We will continue to pay a high price until we prioritize global safety, solidarity and resilience.

Let's change the narrative with a strong global, sustainable and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, starting here, starting now.

Thank you.