



Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of Belgium
to the United Nations
in **New York**

One Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza
885 Second Avenue, 41st Floor
New York, NY 10017
T +1 212 378 63 00
newyork@diplobel.fed.be
newyorkun.diplomatie.belgium.be

HLPF 2024 – High-level Segment – General Debate

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Statement delivered by Mr. Filip De Maesschalck, Minister Counsellor

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We gather here at an unfortunate crossroads.

Sustainable development is hampered by deep uncertainties. The triple planetary crisis is compounded by shocks and conflicts. The poorest and most vulnerable countries are suffering the most.

UNDP's latest human development report states that polarization and distrust are on a collision course with an ailing planet. Yet, however challenging, geopolitics are no excuse for getting stuck. There are ways forward.

These ways are difficult and require leadership, cooperation, empathy and solidarity. No country can do it alone. We should all play our part.

Let me highlight four points:

First, we remain committed to the 2030 Agenda.

It must remain our roadmap. We strongly believe that the Summit of the Future provides an opportunity to 'future-proof' our commitments to the SDGs.

Second, we must protect and promote the rule of law.

The SDGs are inherently linked to peace and security, and to human rights. Without peace, none of the other goals will be achieved. We welcome that the Ministerial Declaration to be adopted today recognises as essential the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in peace processes.

The proliferation of conflicts and fragility around the world and the global backsliding of the rule of law and democracy are of deep concern. We are determined to protect and promote rules-based multilateralism, with a strong UN at its centre, and international norms and standards in accordance with the UN Charter.

Third, we believe in honest partnerships.

More than ever, we need to build trust. We need sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships that work in the long term.

For the past 6 months, Belgium has held the Presidency of the EU Council. During this time, we have been working with Africa on Global Health. We looked at health as a global public good and a prerequisite for social development. Through active listening, ownership and co-creation we have been able to advance the EU-AU partnership on global health.

Fourth, we need to accelerate the green and just transition.

Getting broad support for such transition may be a challenge. But it will also be the key to success. By promoting decent jobs, healthy livelihoods, equality and social inclusion, and thereby contributing to the eradication of poverty.

The transition to climate-neutral, resilient and nature-positive development must be fair and inclusive, putting the most vulnerable first.

This principle is at the heart of our international partnerships, because no one, no country, should have to choose between fighting poverty and saving the planet.

I thank you.