

Final Remarks, SDTF 2020/2021 – Jean d’Aragon

Ambassador Faber, distinguished guests, panellists, colleagues, and participants — Ladies and Gentlemen.

Today we have come to the end of our remarkable journey together in the Sustainable Development Transformation Forum: the sixth edition.

This year’s SDTF, as the former participants and those familiar with the Forum know it and often refer to it, had a particular focus placed on Building Back Better and Greener — Sustainable, Low-Carbon Industrialisation.

Despite the restraints and the hazards of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have managed to produce a very successful event!

Those who are familiar with the SDTF also know that addressing this theme under SDG 9 made us slightly move out of our comfort zone. And I am glad we did so.

It was indeed a première for the Forum to address only one theme, and particularly this theme. However, as some of the speakers and participants told us, it was very timely.

Through the excellent presentations and panel discussions during the whole week, the Forum succeeded to bring to light ideas and experiences of low-carbon transition across the economy, with a strong emphasis on decarbonisation of the industrial sector, particularly in least developed countries.

What is interesting is that many of these ideas and experiences can also be implemented to help “build back better and greener” or, if you prefer, for a sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist, Elliott Harris, emphasised during the first segment of the first session, the endeavour to support countries to “build back better and greener” means to ensure they are on a truly sustainable and inclusive development path to shared prosperity.

He also noted that many low- and lower-middle income countries will need support for their structural transformation towards more productive activities and sectors, while also contributing to tackling global challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, and degradation of the world's oceans.

It was mentioned a few times, and particularly by Ms. Fatima Denton, Director of the UNU Institute for Natural Resources in Africa, that some developed countries who are greening their industries at home, but are also sometimes transferring their old, polluting, energy-intensive technologies to developing countries.

Of course, some may say that we could have talked more about the importance of Leaving No One Behind in our efforts for Sustainable, Low-Carbon Industrialisation.

In that sense, I appreciated very much the idea that Ms. Denton put forward as she called us to “take the informal sector with us in this process of green and sustainable industrialisation.”

We all know that the informal sector is a major contributor to the economy and especially in times of crisis, where the informal sector is particularly innovative.

Throughout the week we also learned about innovations in various parts and scales of the industrialisation, including housing, agriculture, and even innovative ways of promoting and supporting such innovations at the household, city, country and region levels, and up to Official Development Assistance (ODA), Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), diaspora investment and other forms of investments from within (the countries) and from abroad.

And today, we have also heard about Moving To Zero Waste/Circular Economies, which some speakers had also (slightly) touched upon during other sessions, particularly yesterday's.

Of course, we could not, in a so short period of time, examine deeply all these sub-themes of Sustainable, Low-Carbon Industrialisation.

For that reason, we need to continue our conversation.

This will occur through the next activity of the SDTF, which we would like to convene in person in Incheon City, when the situation allows.

As well, as some of you know, we are also already working on a publication where the presenters and speakers of this Sustainable Development Transformation Forum that took place in virtual format this week, will be invited to develop and share further their ideas in the form of articles to be integrated in the 2020-21 SDTF Publication.

We produced such a publication last year and I invite you to look for it on the UNOSD Website. The next one, based on this last week SDTF, will be on-line, on our Website again, in the next couple of months.

Before closing, I would like to thank again all the presenters and panellists, who generously gave their time to share their ideas, knowledge, and experience on the themes explored.

I would also like to thank Mr. David O'Connor and Mr. Colm Foy, the two invited Co-Conveners of the SDTF who acted in turns as Moderators and Rapporteurs.

The Forum would not have been possible without the dedicated support and selfless dedication of the staff of the UNOSD and our stagiaires who helped us master the technology, keep in touch with the presenters and participants, and supplied us with a constant stream of information, and support.

On behalf of the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development, I would also like to thank our long-time partner in the Sustainable Development Transformation Forum, the Asia Europe Foundation.

Finally, I would like to thank you, the participants, who followed us over the week. I look forward to meeting you in person for our next SDTF activity, which we hope to hold in person when the situation gets better.

Meanwhile, stay safe and healthy. — Keep courage and hope. — We'll get out of this (together) soon! — Thank you!