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UNGA76 SECOND COMMITTEE GENERAL DEBATE

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Statement by H.E. The Hon. Mitch Fifield, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations, on behalf of CANZ

Thank you Madam Chair,

I am very pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of Canada, New Zealand and my own country, Australia.

Madam Chair, it is great to see you presiding over deliberations.

Congratulations, and I am sure you will discharge your duties magnificently.

We also applaud this historic moment when the Second Committee Bureau is comprised of all women. With three Vice-Chairs from Poland, the Dominican Republic and Eritrea, and a Rapporteur from Nepal.

We thank the Bureau for giving due consideration in its working method deliberations for the safety of delegates and staff, as we continue to face the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in New York and around the world.

CANZ strongly encourages all delegates to adhere to the working methods, especially with regard to working hours for the Committee.

We assure you of Canada, New Zealand and Australia's full support to ensuring our work is conducted in an inclusive and respectful manner, in both formal and informal meetings. We count on all delegations for their support.

We express our sincere thanks to Ambassador Rai of Nepal for his committed and effective chairmanship over the last year. We also extend our gratitude to the Bureau of the Second Committee during UNGA75.

In particular, we recognise its efforts to establish modalities to take into account the context of COVID. These modalities enabled the Committee to continue to operate in 2020, despite the constraints of a virtual negotiating environment. They laid the foundations for the arrangements under which the Committee will work this session.

Madam Chair,

There has been no more important time for UN Member States and partners to share our experiences and double-down on collaboration. This time last year, our group spoke of the devastating impact of COVID on our global efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We were not on track to deliver the Goals before COVID. But the road ahead is now even more difficult, given the wide ranging and deep impacts of the pandemic on all aspects of sustainable development.

Madam Chair,

The world faces many challenges, not least responding to the social and economic impact of a global pandemic. But we should not lose sight of the long game, the issues which must be addressed if we are to achieve a prosperous and stable global community.

We should learn the lessons of COVID and look to strengthen health systems and build our collective response to future pandemics through a One Health approach. An essential part of that response will be supporting equitable access to safe and effective vaccines.

We must respond urgently to the global challenge of climate change, as the world makes the transition to a net-zero global energy economy. Climate change risks rolling back many of the development gains we have achieved over many decades.

We must be acutely aware of the special and differentiated needs of countries in special situations. Particularly Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries. Our development efforts must respond to their needs and their unique circumstances.

And fundamental to a stable and prosperous global community is achieving gender equality. Our families, our communities and our economies benefit when women and girls are safe from violence, are economically secure and meaningfully represented in all levels of decision-making. Gender-responsive COVID-19 recovery efforts are critical in regaining lost ground, and in taking us further.

Madam Chair,

The UN development system must be fit for purpose if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and guide our collective recovery from COVID.

As delegates of the Second Committee, we have a duty to protect and ensure the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement, and the Sendai Framework. These landmark documents represent the international community's agreed priorities for international development. They followed lengthy and extensive consultations.

To seek to re-prosecute, redirect or roll back these agreements will undermine the purpose and the spirit of this Committee, at a time when the international community needs us the most.

Madam Chair,

We have now entered the Decade of Action. But time is limited. Our challenge is to advance ongoing efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets, including on gender, poverty, climate change and environmental protection, justice and human rights. This Second Committee is a critical platform to drive collective efforts to get there while ensuring no one is left behind.

However, improvements can and must be made to ensure this Committee is fit-for-purpose and more effective.

We must improve the working methods of the Second Committee and take practical steps to adapt our work to meet today's realities and challenges.

Madam Chair,

We appreciate that revitalisation of the Second Committee remains on the agenda for UNGA76. Aligning the work of the Second Committee cannot and should not be solely about adding new issues and resolutions. It must be about updating and restructuring the Committee's agenda, moving away from historical accretion.

At a meeting of the Second Committee on revitalisation in February, CANZ called on members to restructure the agenda of the Committee based on one criterion: relevance to the new agenda as articulated through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda – which combined – form the global development roadmap. These are and should remain the principal frameworks which guide the focus of our work.

Madam Chair,

In these challenging times, Canada, New Zealand and Australia are deeply committed to accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda, together with all of you.

Thank you.

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