

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**WRITTEN MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY
FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY**

17 October 2021

Poverty is a moral indictment of our times.

For the first time in two decades, extreme poverty is on the rise.

Last year, around 120 million people fell into poverty as the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on economies and societies.

A lopsided recovery is further deepening inequalities between the Global North and South. Solidarity is missing in action – just when we need it most.

For example, vaccine inequality is allowing variants to develop and run wild, condemning the world to millions more deaths, and prolonging an economic slowdown that could cost trillions of dollars. We must end this outrage, tackle debt distress and ensure recovery investment in countries with the greatest need.

On this International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, we commit to ‘Building Forward Better’. This requires a three-pronged approach to global recovery:

First, the recovery must be transformative – because we cannot go back to the endemic structural disadvantages and inequalities that perpetuated poverty even before the pandemic. We need stronger political will and partnerships to achieve universal social protection by 2030 and invest in job re-skilling for the growing green economy. And we must invest in quality jobs in the care economy, which will promote greater equality and ensure everyone receives the dignified care they deserve.

Second, the recovery must be inclusive – because an uneven recovery is leaving much of humanity behind, increasing the vulnerability of already marginalized groups, and pushing the Sustainable Development Goals ever further out of reach.

The number of women in extreme poverty far outpaces that of men. Even before the pandemic, the 22 richest men in the world had more wealth than all the women in Africa – and that gap has only grown. We cannot recover with only half our potential. Economic investments must target women entrepreneurs, provide greater formalization of the informal sector, focus on

education, social protection, universal childcare, health care and decent work, as well as bridge the digital divide including its deep gender dimension.

Third, the recovery must be sustainable – because we need to build a resilient, decarbonized and net-zero world.

Through it all, we need to listen far more to the views and guidance of people living in poverty, address indignities and dismantle barriers to inclusion in every society.

Today and every day, let us join hands to end poverty and create a world of justice, dignity and opportunity for all.
