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Sustainable Development Goals can help with post-COVID-19 recovery – UN deputy chief

When Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) Ms Amina Mohammed presented an open lecture titled, 'Decade of Action: so what?' at the University of Cape Town (UCT) there was a sense of hope that prevailed.

Hope that out of this pandemic there will be a renewed focus and commitment to using the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to reduce poverty and inequality, achieve the eradication of sexual and gender-based violence and provide everyone with access to their basic human rights.

"The crisis has opened the eyes of the world to inequalities and other injustices. And so, it has also opened a door towards a future in which we do things differently, in ways that benefit all people. That means we can use the recovery from the pandemic as a springboard to change course, re-engineer our economies, and create a more prosperous, equitable and sustainable world.

"Indeed, any recovery that fails to address the roots and causes of our present vulnerabilities will only condemn us to more acute crises in the future. That makes this the perfect time to talk about the SDGs," she said.

Mohammed believes that the SDGs can help with the post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery as they address the very fragilities and shortcomings that COVID-19 has exposed. She shared that South Africa was a key player in the process that articulated the global targets and objectives, and has embraced the SDGs at home.

When the South African government shared its progress with the UN last year, it reported important gains on clean water, electricity, sanitation, education and health and it was particularly notable that social protection has expanded six-fold in recent years, she shared.

"But the review also showed the persistence of high levels of inequalities, and continuing violence against women – a challenge that has only worsened in recent months," said Mohammed. She said that the UN will continue to support the country's efforts in all these areas.

Violence against women and girls was a key focus of Mohammed's speech and she shared how she too had been touched by the murder of young UCT student Uyinene Mrwetyana in 2019.

"I know this violence has touched UCT in the most wrenching way. Last year, I visited to express my sorrow and to sign the condolence book for Nene, following her horrific murder. Since then, femicides and gender-based violence have continued at an alarming rate. The UN is determined to end such violence and enable all women to live lives of safety, opportunity, dignity and participation in decision-making. This is one of the biggest and most essential battles of our times," she said.

Mohammed emphasised that men are needed to stand with women and girls in order to transform our world and relegate violence against women and girls to the pages of history.

"That is the only way we will create lives of dignity and opportunity for all."

Mohammed urged everyone to play a part in achieving the SDGs as that is crucial to their success. "If we are to raise our ambition, inspire a massive movement, localise and socialise the SDGs, there is yet another indispensable ingredient: you."

She believes that it is this cooperation and global solidarity that will help to achieve the SDG's by 2030.

[Read the UN DSG Ms Amina J Mohammed's full speech.](#)

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