

**High Level Conference on “*Tackling the COVID-19 crisis:
Restoring sustainable flows of capital and robust financing for
development*” – July 8, 2020**

Dear Minister, dear Mohammed Al-Jaadan,

Dear Managing director of the IMF, dear Kristalina Georgieva,

Dear President of the World Bank, dear David Malpass,

Dear Ministers, dear friends,

It is a great pleasure for me to be seeing you all today, although there are still screens standing between us. I look forward to welcoming you again in Paris. We had met last year in Paris on May 7th, with my friend Taro Aso who was then president of the G20, to discuss how sustainable debt can lead to sustainable growth.

These discussions we have under the joint patronage of the Paris Forum and the G20 presidency have never been more relevant and I am very happy to be hosting this virtual event today with my friend Muhammad Al-Jadan.

The COVID-19 pandemic is making us go through a health and economic crisis that is more serious than any crisis we have ever gone through. The impact of the pandemic on our economies is already massive.

Since our economies have never been closer, never been more connected the one with the others, we have no choice but to work together. No country will succeed alone. If one country fails, it will threaten the recovery of us all. I would like to quote my friend Kristalina in saying that, without any doubt: “We are all in this together”.

Many of us have taken swift and massive domestic measures to support our companies, our employees and our households. In France, we did not hesitate and we did not count. We took all necessary measures, including through partial unemployment schemes, in order to protect incomes and our workforce.

However, it is our common responsibility to ensure that all countries have what they need to do whatever it takes to support their economy. We cannot let the crisis destroy years of constant efforts to attract investors and support growth. These countries need international financial support and need concrete solutions to face this unprecedented crisis.

This is precisely why we are all here today. To design concrete solutions together.

In that regard, I praise the G20 and the Paris Club for having been so quick and efficient in their reaction to the crisis.

The decisions they took as early as April are historic. Not only did the international community agree on a significant increase in the level of financial support provided by the IMF, the World Bank, and other Multilateral Development Banks; but for the first time ever, Paris Club creditors and Non Paris Club creditors decided together to launch a debt moratorium, the “Debt Service Suspension Initiative”, to the benefit of the 73 poorest countries in the world.

But we now need to go further:

1/ First, we need to ensure that the Debt Initiative is implemented fully, forcefully and immediately. 41 countries have already requested to benefit from the Initiative. This is a good result. But we have to make sure that on the creditors side, all public creditors are fully involved. All public creditors, should they be ministries, development institutions, export credit agencies, or any other type of agency acting on behalf of a government, should implement the Initiative as one.

2/ Second, we need to start thinking about what comes next. We will have to take decisions at the end of 2020. We could decide to extend the initiative by a few months, or we could decide to already start a new phase that could involve deeper debt restructuring for some countries, on a case-by-case basis and in a multilateral framework.

Ensuring and enforcing robust multilateral rules will be critical.

It is a core condition for the debt treatments to come.

But we should also work together to avoid new situations when countries are stuck with excessive debt. New sources of financing should be fair and sustainable.

3/ Third, we need to ensure that we have the appropriate toolkit to finance countries suffering from capital outflows, and adjust this toolkit if need be.

Some countries now need help to stabilize their economy.

Some IMF instruments might not be fully adapted to this unique crisis. We might also need instruments to help investors come back and restore market access.

Going forward, we should find ways to strengthen resilience and reduce the excessive dependency of some countries on external financing, which is a real vulnerability.

4/ Fourth, we should keep focusing our efforts on Africa.

The economic development of Africa is one of the highest priorities for France and Europe.

I will be very honored to chair the panel dedicated to this issue in a few minutes and I look forward to hearing your thoughts and reporting them back to the Président de la République, Emmanuel Macron.

The crisis is jeopardizing the Sustainable Development Goals that we had set for 2030. Our ability to live up to this challenge depends on our collective energy and determination.

Africa cannot wait. We have to be quicker. Public financing flows should be more focused on the poorest countries and they should leverage more private financing. We should also launch a collective initiative to support the African private sector, in particular SMEs.

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This is only a few of the numerous items that we have on our plate today. I wish all of us a very productive and fruitful Conference, with the view to be as concrete and operational as possible.