HLM OECD Development Centre 6 October 2020
State Secretary Tone Kajzer, MFA Slovenia

- Covid 19 represents a challenge of our lifetime so it is natural that this HLM focuses on the effects of the pandemics. This meeting is happening at a crucial time as the second wave of virus is spreading in several parts of the world. This continuing existence and effects of the virus is a testimony not only of its resilience but also a confirmation that we cannot fight it within the national or regional borders alone. Like the climate change, the virus transcends the borders. We have therefore a better chance of succeeding in overcoming its effects if we address them together.

- Only together, we can rebuild international and national systems that will be more resilient to future shocks and future crisis.

- Only together, we can rebuild the international system in a way that will not increase inequalities and consequently tensions on a global level.

- The fight with or against the virus is changing societies and economies to a new normal. At the same time, a pre-existing vulnerabilities and limited fiscal space of developing countries are increasing inequalities on a global level. This is bringing forward the need for a new Deal for Development, which is the need to work together on a resilient recovery of all and everywhere.

- In order to build resilient societies against future challenges, it is not enough to reconstruct and rebuild our systems but indeed to build them back better. We need to build international system that will be more resilient, more sustainable, fairer and greener.

- This will require us at national level and in multilateral organizations to help:
  
  o reinforce capacity of the health system so it doesn't get overwhelmed,
  o build a better socio economic protection system and adjust the support packages for most vulnerable, especially women,
  o build an international financial and tax rules to enable developing countries to support the economy during the crisis and
  o build a better educational system that will not increase inequalities among the societies.

- From our Slovenian experience, I want to focus on two areas.
- **Education**: In Slovenia during the pandemics, we moved education to distance learning. We noticed that because of different family conditions, the differences in knowledge among students increased – better off students performed better than students whose family struggle. We considered these lessons when devising learning model during the second wave.

- The same applies to differences on a global level, including due to a digital gap. Gaps in educational system are maintaining or increasing the development gaps between societies. Pandemics exacerbated further the situation. In order to prevent the whole generations being lost in pandemics, there is urgent need to close these gaps and enable all students to access to educational online platforms. Otherwise, we will face increased migration pressures on one side and lack of skilled force on the other. This is a mutual problem. We need to address it together.

- Second issue I want to mention is support for the economy and social support for most vulnerable during the pandemics. Similar to several OECD and EU members, Slovenia provided a significant financial stimulus to companies in order to keep the jobs and keep the economy running, and a special support to the tourism industry through vouchers for citizens. These measures were successful and enabled the companies to wither through the pandemics.

- Developing countries however do not have fiscal space for such stimulus, as it would increase liquidity, solvency and debt problems. Multilateral approach and funds are needed for a new deal for Development that will help developing countries finance the recovery.

- In terms of development cooperation, both the immediate, as well as long-term responses are important.

- In response to the Covid-19 crisis, we have reprogrammed our entire portfolio of bilateral development assistance projects to ensure that at least 20% of this year's development and humanitarian projects focus on assisting partner countries in confronting the Covid-19.

- Along with the donated in-kind medical equipment to partner countries and financial contributions to international organizations, our assistance for immediate response measures to the pandemic already exceed half of the total humanitarian assistance previously provided globally on an annual basis.

- A special focus of the reprogramming has been on assistance to vulnerable groups, especially through provision of stay at home meals and the prevention of domestic violence. The latter is important to mitigate the danger that the pandemic deepens existing inequalities and reverses progress made on gender equality and women’s rights.

- Our immediate response has therefore been decisive, but we understand the challenge of addressing the longer-term socio-economic consequences of the crisis. The fragility of our economy and societies that has been accentuated by the pandemic demands of us an even greater focus on achieving an
effective, inclusive and just transition to sustainable development, reducing the likelihood of future shocks and increase resilience.

Let me conclude by supporting the Center's Plan of Work and Budget for the next two years. We support the future focus of the Center on mitigating the consequences of Covid 91 and on helping building sustainable, inclusive and resilient societies and international order based on a respect for the environment and climate, paying special attention to vulnerable groups.

Thank you.