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Dr. İhşan Karaman's speech

The role of civil society in building public support for equitable and sustainable development

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

In today's world, where our economic and natural resources have become more fragile and scarce than ever, development cannot be considered separately from the concept of sustainability. Development is and should be for people of not only this generation, but also of future generations. The Brundtland Report, released by the United Nations in 1987, defines sustainable development as 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

Sustainable development has many benefits both for the people and for our planet, some of which include building stronger communities, empowering people to meet their own needs, benefiting local and global economies and being good for the environment and for the future in general. It envisages a better living for all, contributing to advancing policy recommendations on international trade and investment, economic policy, climate change, measurement and the assessment and management of the natural resources of the world.

We should always remember that sustainable development should be a global effort. One society affects another, one country's practices affect neighboring countries, and eventually these interactions can change the world. It is critically important that, in order to turn sustainable development from an ideal into reality, members of the international community cooperate and help each other.

In our national and international efforts, we should concentrate on doing our best to make sure the outcomes of the development projects, no matter where in the world they are carried out, are sustainable. These projects should aim at improving the infrastructures for the wellbeing of related communities and countries, while at the same time sticking to the principle of sustainability. This is the only way for development efforts to be beneficial for many generations.

The importance of sustainable development rises by the day and constantly increases the need to embrace civil society and encourage public participation in the development processes.

Citizens and civil society organizations play a vital role in improving social and economic conditions. The path that reaches sustainable development goes via broader inclusion of civil society involvement in identifying and resolving issues, and promoting action on the ground. In economic, social, political, in every area of life, citizens have the right to full participation. The role of civil society in the development process is also crucial in the sense that it demands and secures governmental accountability, pushing governments for transparency in their actions. In order to foster this vital role of civil society, capacity building programs and activities should be encouraged and supported. This will result in ensuring that

civil society has the increased technical capacity, financial resources, access to information, and secured political space necessary to carry out its advocacy function.

Another very important function of civil society is to educate the public. Sustainable development is only possible when efforts and activities are embraced and supported by the public. And long-term public support can be provided through increasing public awareness of the importance of sustainable development by educating the public and providing transparency through inclusion of civil society in the processes.

Thank you very much for your attention.