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President Fernando Ponce Leon,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here today in Quito with Ambassador Williams to discuss what I believe to be the most consequential document of our time: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

For those of you who are not fully familiar with this document, I thought I would begin my remarks with a few words on what the 2030 Development Agenda is; how it came to be; and why it matters so much to you and to our world.

Many of you would be familiar with the Millennium Development Goals, the MDGs, that came into being at the turn of the Century, and which aimed to achieve eight central goals in developing countries, by 2015. These goals ranged from halving extreme poverty rates, to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, and providing universal access to primary education.

In anticipation of the MDGs coming to an end, countries came together at the United Nations to begin negotiating a new universal plan – one that would apply equally to all nations – developed and developing – setting out to transform our world for people, planet and prosperity for a sustainable future.

In September 2015, after two years of intense negotiations, world leaders came together in New York to adopt by consensus, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Agenda is a universal, integrated, and mutually reinforcing plan that comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and 169 targets, all to be met by 2030.

Through the 2030 Agenda – taken together with the subsequent Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the Paris Agreement on climate change, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction – which were all adopted in 2015, humanity is provided with a comprehensive masterplan for a sustainable way of life on this planet.

The Agenda will improve the lives of people by:

- eliminating extreme poverty and hunger;
- improving access to clean water and sanitation;

- promoting good health and well-being;
- improving access to education; and
- empowering women and girls.

It will increase prosperity for all by:

- driving economic growth and decent work;
- promoting social inclusion; and
- reducing inequalities.

It will protect our planet by:

- restoring the health and resources of our Ocean and terrestrial ecosystems;
- combatting the effects of climate change;
- increasing access to affordable, clean and renewable energy;
- fostering responsible patterns of production and consumption; and
- creating inclusive, sustainable and resilient cities.

And, it will build and sustain peace by:

- creating peaceful and inclusive societies;
- supporting effective institutions;
- improving global governance;
- promoting the rule of law; and
- ensuring access to justice for all.

A fundamental principle of the 2030 Agenda is the mantra of “leave no one behind”.

What this means in practice is that we must ensure development gains reach the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized, and that our SDG implementation plans target those in greatest need as a priority.

As I’ve said, there are 17 SDGs. The final goal of the 2030 Agenda – Goal 17 – specifically addresses how to implement the Agenda and achieve each of the Sustainable Development Goals. It concentrates on:

- enhancing the mobilization of domestic resources;
- intensifying international cooperation;
- promoting fair trade, capacity building and technology transfers; and
- creating effective and efficient public-private partnerships.

One year on from the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, progress to implement has begun. Most national planning agencies around the world have aligned and incorporated the 2030 Agenda into national planning. It is clear, however, that much much more must be done to translate the powerful commitments world leaders made in the 2030 Agenda into concrete action and meaningful transformation of our world.

This is where you – as young people – have an essential role to play.

It is true that at a national level, governments have the primary responsibility for driving achievement of the SDGs, including by aligning national development plans with the 2030 Agenda, and creating conditions that drive and catalyze implementation.

But the success of the 2030 Agenda depends on all parties playing their part. This means governments at all levels, the United Nations, international financial institutions, civil society, community groups, the private sector and, yes, each and every individual.

The stakes are very high and you need only to look at SDG13 on Climate Change to realize that the 2030 Agenda is about the security of humankind on this planet.

Achievement of the goals of the 2030 Agenda requires that we all consider ourselves as partners in this global effort to secure a sustainable future.

This means forging new modes of collaboration, inclusive, coherent, efficient and effective modes, and in a way that avoids waste and duplication; that complements the work of others; that leverages each other's comparative advantages; and that is based on relationships of trust and transparency.

The 2030 Agenda is an intergenerational imperative. As young people, I say to you today that this document is essential to your future.

Essentially, the 2030 Agenda is about the sustainability of our way of life, about the health of the planet. It is about the opportunities that lie ahead for you, and it is about ensuring that the violence, conflict, and suffering that have affected so many on our planet for so long, do not continue into the future.

“There will be no sustainable peace without sustainable development”, that is another mantra worth dwelling on.

I'm calling upon young people around the world to take ownership of the 2030 Agenda, to serve as agents for change, by driving innovation and new ways of achieving the goals; by holding Governments and others stakeholders to account for the progress of the Agenda, and by spreading the word on the Sustainable Development Goals and what they represent for humanity's future.

As President of the United Nations General Assembly, I have created a team of professionals committed to doing all we can to drive urgent action to implement the 2030 Agenda.

I have made the principal objective of the 71st Session of the General Assembly to be a universal push for meaningful progress in implementing all 17 Sustainable Development Goals by September next year.

A key element of this push for progress is connecting with young people like you to promote global awareness of the SDGs. We look to your leadership. We want to connect young people through our campaign for the message of the SDGs to reach every classroom around the world.

I call on each and every one of you today to help us in these efforts – to be voices that amplify the message of the SDGs; to be educators who share understanding of why the 2030 Agenda is so important; to be motivators and examples to family, friends and communities as to what sustainable living embodies; rewarding socially and environmentally conscious companies; and being active citizens demanding responsible change from those around you.

This brings me to the reason why the world is meeting in Quito this week.

Tomorrow, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development – known as Habitat III – will open. It will bring together tens of thousands of stakeholders – including Heads of State and Government, UN officials, local community representatives, civil society, indigenous groups, the private sector and academic experts to discuss how to build inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities as part of our efforts to transition to a sustainable world.

Across our globe we are witnessing a transformational trend through mass urbanization of populations, as people leave rural villages and remote communities in search of opportunity and security.

By 2030, around 60 percent of the world's population is expected to be living in urban areas.

Our efforts, to implement the 2030 Agenda must adequately account for the impacts of urbanization and you will find that we have done so specifically in SDG11.

At tomorrow's meeting, the New Urban Agenda will be adopted by national Governments. The New Urban Agenda sets out commitments to achieving urban environments that: encourage civic engagement; fulfil their social functions; promote gender equality; further inclusive and sustained economic growth; drive sustainable urban development; promote socially-responsive planning; build resilience; and conserve and restore the environment.

The New Urban Agenda will be an important piece in the masterplan driving sustainable development and achieving the overall aims of the 2030 Agenda.

I understand that there will be an interactive session now, and the opportunity for me and Ambassador Williams to respond to questions, so I'll end here with one message that I cannot over-emphasize – you here today and young people around the world are the main stakeholders when it comes to the

Sustainable Development Goals. You and those that come after you will be the main beneficiaries, you have the most to lose, therefore it is you who must be the champions of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The SDGs are part of a hugely ambitious agenda, but the stakes are far too high for them not to be achieved – for the sake of each of us here today, for our children, for our grandchildren, and the environmental integrity of our beautiful planet.

I thank you.