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Social Drivers of Sustainable Development

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Keynote Speech:

Introduction

- Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen – I would like to acknowledge the previous speakers and thank the organizers for inviting me to address this commission.
- I am delighted to be here today and glad to have the timely opportunity to discuss with you the post-2015 development planning process.

State of the post-2015 debate

Transitioning from the MDGs...

- The legitimacy of the post-2015 agenda rests with the MDGs. The Millennium Development Goals have been the most successful global anti-poverty push in history and have contributed to achieve significant and substantial progress.
- Targets for halving extreme poverty, improving access to safe drinking water, and improving the lives of 200 million slum dwellers have been met. More children than ever are attending school and gender parity in primary education has been achieved. Child deaths have dropped dramatically (close to four million children are living who would otherwise have died), and targeted investments in fighting malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis have saved millions of lives.
- Yet, while there is much to celebrate, much remains to be done. We are now less than 700 days to the 2015 target date and more than 1 billion people still live in extreme poverty. Prospects for achieving all the MDGs also differ sharply across and within regions and countries.
- This can partly be explained by the fact that new challenges have emerged while some old ones have intensified. These critical issues include: conflicts and fragility, employment (especially for the youth), inequality, demographic dynamics, environmental challenges and knowledge gaps.

- However, in more than a decade of experience, we have learned that focused global development efforts can make a difference. Through accelerated action and unrelenting efforts, the world can achieve the MDGs and generate momentum for an ambitious and inspiring post-2015 development framework.
- Now is the time to step up our efforts and confront the persistent inequalities people and the planet have been facing – to build a more secure, just and sustainable future for all.

...to sustainable development

- As we stand today at the threshold of significant opportunity, there is a general consensus that the world cannot and must not continue on its current course. A business-as-usual approach will not work.
- A paradigm shift must take place to build on the MDGs, continue their aims and arrive at the realization of sustainable development in its three core dimensions (economic, social and environmental).
- As agreed at the Rio+20 Conference, sustainable development, enabled by the integration of economic growth, social justice and environmental stewardship, must become our global guiding principle and operational standard.
- This transition to sustainable development must not mean any diminishment whatsoever in the commitment to ending poverty: poverty eradication is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. As stressed by the Secretary-General, “we must do everything we can to achieve the MDGs.”
- Achieving the outcomes envisioned under the integrated concept of sustainable development requires the eradication of poverty in its multiple dimensions, equality of opportunity and outcome, equity in the distribution of benefits and costs, social inclusion and non-discrimination.
- What is needed are transformative actions to promote inclusive and sustainable growth and decent employment. These actions include achieving economic diversification, financial inclusion, efficient infrastructure, productivity gains, trade, sustainable energy, relevant education and skills training.
- This is what sustainable development is about. Because true sustainable development is the only way to make poverty eradication irreversible.
- If we know that the benefits of growth do not automatically trickle down to generate more equal societies, we need to adopt a new and truly inclusive approach to policymaking that looks at the social as well as the economic effect of policy actions.

Social Drivers of Sustainable Development

- As underscored in the note of the Secretary General titled *Emerging Issues: Social Driver to Sustainable Development*, “the pathway to achieving sustainable development outcomes involves recognizing the importance of the social drivers that are related not only to poverty reduction but also to enhanced productive capacity and employment, social justice and empowerment.”
- Indeed, achieving inclusive, equitable and sustained economic growth requires a focus on social objectives. Inclusive growth means making the best use of all resources, young, old, men and women. Labor market, education and training programs must all work to maximize opportunity and inclusiveness for all and at all levels.
- According to the 2013 Human Development Report, the average loss to human development worldwide due to inequality was 23%.
- The core strategy for achieving inclusive growth and reducing poverty and inequalities is eliminating circumstance-based inequalities in order to ensure equal opportunity.
- This implies inclusive economies in which men and women have equal access to decent employment, legal identification, financial services, infrastructure and social protection, as well as societies where all people can equally contribute and participate in national and local governance. Inequality cannot be addressed solely by social policies, but also needs inclusive, job-rich growth and fairer rules internationally in a range of areas from trade to finance to tackling climate change.
- This is a universal agenda based on a new global partnership. It must apply to all countries while taking into account regional, national and local circumstances and priorities.

Fit for Purpose

- Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen – The global aid landscape has changed considerably over the past 20 years: new emerging economic powers and donors; new technologies and limitations by traditional donors are reshaping our societies.
- Today’s development realities challenge the UN system to work across its own structures and mandates and to better integrate economic, social and environmental concerns into its policy, programmatic and operational activities.
- Achieving sustainable development will require transformative and structural changes at the national, regional and international levels. It will require the international system, including the United Nations, to embrace a more coherent and effective response to support this agenda.

- The international community needs the right institutions and tools. As stated in the Secretary-General’s report “A Life of Dignity for All”, the concept of being “fit for purpose” is one of the key elements of the emerging vision for the development agenda beyond 2015.
- The development community is on the cusp of an historic opportunity, as a new overarching development agenda and accompanying set of sustainable development goals are being developed. The system has to be ready to support their implementation when they are agreed in 2015.
- The High-Level Political Forum, created in Rio, could have a key role in reviewing the SDGs and in spurring integrated approach to economic, social and environmental dimensions throughout the UN bodies and organizations. While the HLPF should help provide coordination and coherence at the highest political level, the UN system must mobilize to support its role in the most effective way.

The way forward: the post-2015 process

- Colleagues and friends. Work to develop a post-2015 sustainable development agenda has begun through a truly open and inclusive process – involving governments, civil society, the private sector, academia, research institutions, and the voices of more than 1.7 million people from over 190 countries.
- Based on all these inputs, as well as individual Reports from the UN Task Team, the SG’s High-level Panel of Eminent Persons, the UN Global Compact, the 5 UN Regional Commissions and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network , the Secretary-General submitted to the 68th General Assembly a report entitled “A Life of Dignity for All”, which summarizes the broad contours of his vision for a future sustainable development framework.
- The Special Event on Achieving the MDGs (hosted by the PGA last September) marked the end of the first phase of the debate on the shape of the post-2105 development agenda. In the Outcome Document of this Special Event, Member States decided to launch a process of intergovernmental negotiations at the beginning of the 69th session of the UN General Assembly (in September 2014), which should lead to the adoption of the Post-2015 sustainable development agenda during a High-Level Summit in September 2015.
- The Stocktaking period of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals also concluded last week (3-7 February 2014). Member States have now moved on to the next phase for prioritizing issues and setting goals/targets. The OWG will meet almost monthly from March onward to come up with a set of SDGs by September 2014.
- Finally, the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing Strategy should complete its work by September 2014. The committee will assess financing needs and review the effectiveness, consistency and synergies of existing instruments as well as new initiatives.

- During the next 12 months, the work of the Member States will be intense as they will discuss and unpack a number of critical issues, including means of implementation; climate change; the concept of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR); and the creation of an environment conducive to stable and peaceful societies.
- The UN System will continue to support the Member States as they deliberate and negotiate, and will also ensure that the voices of the people are lifted up and brought to the attention of the Member States.

Closing

- Ladies and Gentlemen – Ours is the first generation with the resources and know-how to end extreme poverty and put our planet on a sustainable development course before it is too late.
- We must aspire to eradicate poverty, protect the environment and promote economic opportunity for all. Failure is not an option - we must work together to create a world where all people live with dignity and fulfil their potential.
- The cost of action is high, but the cost of inaction is higher.
- I thank you for your attention and look forward to further discussing these important issues with you.
- Thank you.