



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

26 April 2019

Excellency,

I have the honour to attach herewith a letter dated 25 April 2019 from the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, including an “informal contribution from the United Nations system to support coherence and a common narrative for the sustainable development-related Summits and mandated high-level meetings of high-level week 2019.”

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'MF Espinosa', is positioned above the printed name.

María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

25 April 2019

Dear Madam President,

This September, alongside the General Debate of its seventy-fourth session, the General Assembly will host the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and three major high-level meetings on sustainable development matters. In addition, I will convene an all-important 2019 Climate Action Summit.

These meetings take place at a critical juncture: at the end of the first cycle of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and just over one year out from important milestones related to the Sustainable Development Goals and climate action.

In recent months, some Member States have stressed, both bilaterally and during intergovernmental consultations, the need to maximize coherence across these meetings. They have also noted that a unifying narrative could support capitals, stakeholders and the wider public to better appreciate how these meetings can, together, contribute to the implementation of our historic agreements from 2015. This is a matter that you have also highlighted on a number of occasions.

In response, I requested the United Nations system HLPF task team, guided by the Deputy Secretary-General, to prepare a short document that highlights the connections between the issues being addressed and provides an overarching narrative for the discussions to take place throughout the General Assembly week. I am now pleased to share with you the product of this work which I view as an informal contribution to support overall preparations, to be drawn upon by Member States and others as they deem appropriate.

Overall, this informal contribution describes the opportunity provided by the 2019 high-level week as one of taking stock of progress made since 2015, instilling much needed ambition and urgency into the next phase of implementation, and highlighting some of the most impactful and scalable solutions. It notes also that these meetings can showcase the important contribution that multilateralism can make to help governments respond to complex and interconnected challenges.

Her Excellency
Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés
President of the General Assembly
New York

I would like to thank the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme for co-chairing the HLPF task team and I also appreciate your engagement, that of the co-facilitators of the relevant intergovernmental processes and that of the President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council on this work.

I would be most grateful for the onward transmittal of this letter and the enclosed informal narrative document to Member States and Permanent Observer Missions. I stand ready to further discuss with you and Member States regarding any additional support that the United Nations Secretariat and wider United Nations system can provide to ensure the successful convening of these critical meetings.

Please accept, Madam President, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'António Guterres', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

António Guterres

**A world gathering for SDG Acceleration and Climate Ambition
United Nations Headquarters, New York, September 2019**

Informal contribution from the United Nations system to support coherence and a common narrative for the sustainable development-related Summits and mandated high-level meetings of high-level week 2019

This September, world leaders will gather at United Nations Headquarters, New York, for the General Debate of the seventy-fourth Session of the General Assembly. Alongside the meeting of our global townhall, a series of Summits and mandated High-level Meetings¹ will be held, aimed at *inspiring ambitious action to end poverty, respond to the climate threat and secure healthy, peaceful and prosperous lives for all*.

This is a time of great uncertainty in our world. Polarized political discourse, a slow-down in the global economy, growing inequalities, protracted conflicts, rapid technological change and global environmental crises, all present major challenges. This world gathering provides a special platform to strengthen multilateralism and to demonstrate how our working together can generate practical solutions that ultimately deliver benefits and results where it matters most: in the lives of all people.

Each meeting is unique yet inter-connected and each embodies the central principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: universality, leaving no one behind, and a strengthened global partnership.

Through the Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit, we can create renewed ambition and momentum in response to an existential threat to people and planet alike. The well-being of the world's most vulnerable is also at the core of a High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage that will launch new efforts to provide access for all to affordable, inclusive and resilient health systems. With the General Debate of the General Assembly and the historic High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the General Assembly (SDG Summit), Member States will take stock of where we are and what we need to do to achieve the 2030 Agenda. A High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development can help unlock the resources and the partnerships needed for this transformation. Finally, throughout the week and during the review of the SAMOA Pathway in particular, a renewed focus can be placed on partnerships and actions that will benefit Small Island Developing States – some of the most vulnerable countries in our world.

The clock is ticking, and the stakes are high. Overall, the world gathering provides leaders with a unique opportunity to:

- take stock of progress made since the historic agreements of 2015
- increase ambition and commitment for our collective response and
- highlight scalable, just and tailored solutions to some of the world's biggest challenges.

Taking stock, with current realities

The 2030 Agenda calls upon all governments and all stakeholders to embrace transformation. The past four years have unleashed a wave of SDG and climate action. Over 75% of Member States have already presented their own response to the 2030 Agenda through voluntary national reviews at the ECOSOC High-level Political Forum. 182 parties to the Paris Agreement have submitted their first nationally

¹ The General Debate of the 74th session of the UN General Assembly will begin on 24 September. The Secretary-General convened Climate Action Summit (23 September), the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development under the auspices of the General Assembly (24-25 September), and three high-level meetings of the General Assembly on Universal Health Coverage (24 September), Financing for Development (26 September) and a review of SAMOA Pathway (27 September) will take place over the course of the week. A high-level event to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons will also take place (26 September).

determined contributions (NDCs). Cities and local authorities have been to the fore of a dynamic global movement for transformation, joined by many in the private sector and civil society. The United Nations development system has embarked on an ambitious reform to provide the best possible support to countries as they implement this far-reaching Agenda.

Progress has been made on several SDGs, such as on poverty and access to health, education, and basic infrastructure but the emerging evidence indicates we need to dramatically accelerate action to meet all the goals by 2030.²

Global hunger and forced displacement are on the rise. Countries in conflict have experienced some of the sharpest reversals in progress. Inequality has risen within some of the world's most populous countries and global growth in real wages is the lowest since 2008. Achieving gender equality remains a persistent challenge for countries worldwide. And millions of people are at great risk of being pushed behind by an increase in disasters, unemployment, inadequate policies, human rights violations, an absence of meaningful participation and accountability, and deep-rooted discrimination.

In many places, rapid economic growth has come at the cost of considerable environmental degradation, exacerbating tensions over depleted resources and increasing the risk of conflict. Runaway climate change, coupled with unsustainable consumption and production patterns, threatens to undermine progress on all SDGs, with the effects being disproportionately felt by the poorest and most vulnerable.

Overall, mobilizing sufficient financing remains a major challenge in implementing the 2030 Agenda and investments that are critical to achieving the SDGs remain underfunded. Trade restrictive measures have also accelerated, and debt risks are rising, hampering the ability of many countries to invest in the SDGs.

What needs to be done – Ambition, Urgency and Solutions

We are at a pivotal moment for the 2030 Agenda. The SDG Summit will provide the setting to review the global response thus far as the first cycle of implementation comes to a close.

We know what works and what needs to be done. We know which measures can trigger progress on multiple SDGs and advance implementation at a much greater scale. We have the tools to manage complex risks by addressing them systematically across sectors through innovative policy mixes and financial measures.

What is abundantly clear is that each and every country and stakeholder must aim higher. Political will and delivery on our commitments under the Global Partnership for sustainable development, especially for countries in special situations, will be crucial.

The SDG Summit can therefore serve as a launchpad for the second phase of SDG implementation. It can provide a space for all actors, across all regions and all sectors, to identify actionable commitments that will accelerate the transformation of our societies and economies, as we move towards a decade of delivery.

The Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit can set the tone for the week ahead, generating a surge in climate ambition and highlighting a range of impactful solutions that will drive this transformation.

The Climate Action Summit provides an opportunity for governments to present concrete, realistic plans to enhance nationally-determined contributions (NDCs) by 2020, in line with a temperature rise of 1.5 degrees. It will also help developing countries and the most vulnerable get the support they need. And it will bring together governments, the private sector, civil society, local authorities and other international organizations to focus on ambitious solutions in six areas: global transition to renewable

² The Global Sustainable Development Report, produced by an independent group of scientists, will serve as a key input to the SDG Summit and will be officially launched in September. A Special Edition of the Secretary-General's annual SDG Progress Report will be released in May 2019.

energy; sustainable and resilient infrastructures and cities; sustainable agriculture and management of forests and oceans; resilience and adaptation to climate impacts; and alignment of public and private finance with a net zero economy.

The High-Level meeting on Universal Health Coverage will galvanize global commitment to ensure health for all, recognizing the strong links to climate action and the fact that health is a human right and a precondition, outcome and driver of sustainable development.

Achieving universal health coverage requires a people-centered approach and access to effective, safe and affordable health services that provide financial risk protection for all, particularly the poor and most vulnerable. The High-level Meeting will therefore serve to increase political buy-in, multi-stakeholder action and sustained financing.

The High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development will bring together finance ministers, policy makers, businesses, financial sector representatives and others behind our global financing framework - the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

As the first such high-level engagement since 2015, this dialogue is an opportunity to take stock of progress made in implementing the Addis commitments and to put financing for development challenges front and center, building on recent ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum follow-up. The Dialogue can also bring forward concrete deliverables and key initiatives that can help unlock the resources needed for to advance the 2030 Agenda.

Building on the focus placed on the most vulnerable throughout the week's deliberations, the High-Level Review of the SAMOA Pathway will judge our progress in delivering on the promises we made to SIDS in the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway.

This meeting will galvanize actions to help SIDS implement their sustainable development priorities including combating the devastating impact of climate change, responding to oceans stresses, building their economic and environmental resilience and addressing their other complex challenges such as non-communicable diseases or resource mobilization. Only if we reach the SDGs in SIDS and in other vulnerable countries, will we have succeeded to deliver on the 2030 Agenda overall.

The various meetings of high-level week will also provide a platform to foster strategic and durable partnerships. They can help to harness engagement between governments at all levels; the power and commitment of the world's children and young people, and dynamic coalitions among the private sector, business community, civil society, academia and others. New forms of collaboration can help overcome persistent gaps of information, leverage new technologies and manage the associated risks, and harness cutting-edge solutions and difficult to reach resources to address our interlinked challenges.

A reinvigorated response

At the end of high-level week 2019, world leaders should return to their countries, cities and communities ready to redouble efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and emboldened by the actions of their fellow members of the United Nations General Assembly and by the availability of concrete scalable solutions to the biggest challenges we face.

Together, united through multilateral action, we can achieve the 2030 Agenda for this generation and the next. We can win the fight against climate change. We can transform our societies and economies in a way that unleashes the potential of the people left furthest behind.

It is time to move into a decade of delivery, from commitments to action and onwards to results, with a greater sense of solidarity, ambition and urgency.