

Opening High-level Political Forum, Deputy Secretary-General Envisions 'Transformation, Prosperity and Dignity for All'

Following are UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson's remarks at the opening of the ministerial segment of the High-level Political Forum, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, and the Council's high-level segment week, in New York today:

We gather at this important meeting at a time when the international community is defining a new universal development agenda to guide us on the path to 2030. This is a moment to reflect on and envision the world 15 years from now. What will the world look like when, in September 2030, the United Nations probably hosts a Summit meeting to take stock of the agreement reached 15 years earlier?

Will the participants be proud of the road travelled? Will presidents and prime ministers hail the contribution made to the well-being of humanity? Will they see 2015 as a turning point — when the path shifted trajectory towards a future where men, women and children around the world were given a chance to live lives in dignity on a safe planet?

Our legacy to our children and grandchildren will depend in no small part on whether the agenda we adopt at the September Summit is ambitious and transformative and whether we live up to it.

We are clearly heading in the right direction. Member States have proposed 17 transformative sustainable development goals. These goals aim high. They mirror the challenges and complexities of our world. They shape a holistic vision of development focussed on people. They address socioeconomic progress and the health of planet Earth.

The goals recognize the importance of peaceful societies and the crucial role of institutions. They have poverty eradication as an overarching goal and sustainable development as the vehicle for the way forward. And the goals are interrelated; progress on one goal will advance others.

The litmus test for the new agenda will be its implementation. We have learned much from implementing the Millennium Development Goals. The new agenda will have a strong basis to build on. Soon we will hear from Oslo about the launch of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Report. We are grateful for the active role of the MDG Advocates, chaired by President [Paul] Kagame [of Rwanda] and Prime Minister [Erna] Solberg [of Norway].

One of the lessons from the MDGs is that we cannot work in silos. Focusing on one goal, without considering the links to other goals, is not optimal. For example, much can be achieved for child mortality, maternal health and girls' education through decent sanitation. That is why we need an integrated vision of implementation, in which interlinkages are well understood and utilized.

Yet, substantially transforming societies and economies on a global scale is not a road we have travelled before. We need more than a new toolbox of policy measures. We need an essential "rethink" of the way we make and implement policies. We must learn how to shape, implement and review development plans reflecting economic, social and environmental dimensions.

We must innovate, work hand in hand and learn from each other. We must institutionalize the participatory and cross-cutting approaches which have characterized the work on the post-2015 development agenda.

The new agenda will also require building national capacities and mobilizing finance and technology on a new, larger scale. Sustainable development requires strengthening the global partnership for development.

We hope that the Addis conference on financing for development will do just that. Here I would like to express the hope of the Secretary-General and myself that the ongoing negotiations on the text for the Addis meeting will be concluded urgently under the leadership of the President of the General Assembly.

This High-level Political Forum (HLPF) is the platform to promote and review implementation of the new agenda. The HLPF must be guided by the same ambition and forward-thinking as the agenda. We need to shape this forum to serve the needs of future generations.

The HLPF must be able to track progress and accelerate changes in people's lives. It must be equipped and allowed to make course corrections as well as to update policies and the agenda itself. It must be able to identify new issues and shape new responses. It must be a place where we assess the long-term implications of today's decisions.

But change must not be confined to this new forum. Positioned under the General Assembly and ECOSOC, the HLPF can help renew the United Nations system, instil new ways of working and build on the work of each platform. We have recently strengthened ECOSOC and must fully use this power to spur integration and mobilize a range of actors inside and outside the UN system. We must orchestrate reviews and shape follow-up mechanisms for the post-2015 development agenda.

To do all this, we need to be both visionary and practical. We should utilize the evident enthusiasm and resolute commitment we see around us to make change happen. This we should do both in the interest of our nations and of the international community and multilateralism. We need your ideas and vision to shape this forum and engage in the United Nations at large so that we can deliver on the ambitious objectives we will set for ourselves at the end of September.

We have a grave and commanding responsibility to advance a model for development for the next 15 years. We must embrace the path charted by this agenda towards transformation, prosperity and dignity for all on a healthy planet. This requires our strong and genuine sense of global responsibility, solidarity and willingness to take the necessary action for achieving the future we want. I wish you a successful meeting.