

Opening remarks by Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-  
General

at the Opening of the High-Level Segment

16 July 2018, Conference Room 4

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Your Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajcak, President of the General Assembly,  
Your Excellency Ms. Marie Chatardova, President of the Economic and  
Social Council,  
Honorable Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the 2018 High-level Political Forum.

Almost three years have passed since world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda, a roadmap for peaceful and prosperous societies on a healthy planet.

The HLPF is our annual opportunity to take stock of implementation efforts responding to that roadmap. The six goals in focus this year are an engine for driving inclusive and sustainable growth.

Above all the HLPF is an opportunity to respond to two central questions:

First, are we on track to achieve our Goals by 2030?

And second, what do we need do differently over the coming years to deliver better results?

Over the next three days, you will be reflecting on these questions – drawing on messages from last week’s deliberations, engaging in the increasingly enriching Voluntary National Reviews and listening to a diverse set of SDG stakeholders.

On the positive side, it is already clear that we are seeing evidence of progress in some areas – such as maternal and child mortality, tackling childhood marriage, expanding access to electricity, addressing global unemployment, and cutting the rate of forest loss around the globe.

But, it is equally clear that in other areas, we are either moving too slowly, or losing momentum.

For the first time in a decade, the number of people who are undernourished has increased – from 777 million people in 2015 to 815 million in 2016 – fundamentally undermining our commitment to leaving no one behind.

Poverty is becoming increasingly urban, with most of the world’s extreme poor projected to live in urban settings by 2035.

Young people remain three times more likely to be unemployed than adults.

Access to water is improving, but basic sanitation remains off track.

The rate of progress on access to energy, including renewable energy, is not fast enough to meet our target. We need to also double our efforts on energy efficiency.

250 million more people in Africa have no access to clean fuels for cooking compared to 2015.

We are seeing alarming decline in biodiversity, rising sea levels, coastal erosion, extreme weather conditions and increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases.

And we know that reducing biodiversity loss and stopping land degradation will require more than increasing protected areas and forest coverage.

At the same time, we have not yet managed to unlock and direct the scale of the resources needed, towards the financing of the sustainable development agenda.

Indeed, ODA commitments of 0.7 percent of gross national income remain unmet by many countries. Therefore, even the call to leverage private finance using ODA would remain hollow if it remains unmet.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have 12 years to realize the Sustainable Development Goals. That's just 4,551 days left, or just over 3,000 working days if you insist on taking weekends off.

The clock is ticking but the transformation towards resilient and sustainable societies is not only still possible -- it is an absolute imperative.

The SDGs have already had a major impact on the thinking and actions of a wide range of stakeholders across the world.

Governments have adapted plans and policies with the 2030 Agenda as their guiding light.

New multi-stakeholder initiatives have emerged. New institutions have been established.

Cities, local and regional authorities and some private sector actors – actors with immense influence on peoples' everyday lives – are increasingly taking ownership of the Goals.

But to move forward, at the speed and scale required, we need much deeper and much wider action.

Just over one month ago, member states approved an ambitious reform of the UN Development System, to ensure that the United Nations can offer governments the right response and new tools to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda. This re positioning of the UN development system at all levels will ensure better integration and coordination of UN entities and our partners. It will also reinforce our collective responsibility to be transparent and accountable for results in the lives of all people.

We will work with our partners to see a similarly deep embedding of SDG action across the ecosystem of SDG actors – at the local, national, regional and global levels.

We must avoid an SDG-light approach, one that pays only lip-service to the 2030 Agenda's call for transformation.

That means truly realigning our plans, budgets, laws, business processes and personal decisions with the core emphasis of the 2030 Agenda on inclusion and sustainability.

It means recognizing that even though 109 countries have national policies on sustainable consumption and production, more needs to be done to change existing patterns of behavior and established practices.

It means investing more in the prevention of crises and delivering support to the world's most vulnerable countries to enable them to build resilience and to move to the next phase of development.

And it means expanding strategic partnerships with civil society, the private sector, academia, and young people.

To truly embrace and deliver the SDGs, we must place the advancement of gender equality at the forefront of everything that we do.

We must revolutionize our methods for acquiring reliable, timely, open and disaggregated data to inform our actions and to confidently chart our investment path forward.

Finally, we must begin to put our money where our spoken word is—taking tangible actions to redirect major investment towards the SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In a little over one year, Heads of State and Government will gather for the first major HLPF under the General Assembly.

Let us resolve to use the time available to dig deeper and adapt new approaches and tools to SDG implementation.

Let us resolve to build on the lessons emerging from this year's Voluntary National review and to make the necessary steps over the coming year

so that we can demonstrate that the 2030 Agenda has generated genuine positive momentum for change in the lives to people and the health of our planet.

Let us work urgently in unity towards the world we must see in 2030 where all 17 of our promises to people will achieve a more peaceful and prosperous home for all.

Thank you.