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**REMARKS AT THE CLOSING OF THE 2019 HIGH-LEVEL
POLITICAL FORUM**

NEW YORK, 18 JULY 2019

Madam President of Economic and Social Council,
Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs,
Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,

I wish to congratulate everyone for the successful completion of the 2019 HLPF.

The High-Level Political Forum is the central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. This year, we welcomed a full constellation of actors critical to SDG implementation.

We had the opportunity to share experiences, lessons, ideas and knowledge; and forge new partnerships.

This year's forum had the added importance of preparing the ground for the SDG Summit in September and the Decade of Action that must follow.

Over the past two weeks, you have held wide-ranging discussions across many different aspects of the 2030 Agenda.

Allow me to touch on three central issues that emerged again and again – first, the inclusion imperative; second, the importance of democratic institutions; and third, the power of political commitment.

First, let me begin with what the Secretary-General called the inclusion imperative.

The Forum's theme this year provided an opportunity to analyze issues of inclusion, empowerment and equality.

It is clear from your discussions and from recent progress reports that the left behind are still being left behind.

We simply must do more — much more — to reach the most excluded and discriminated in our societies — including migrants and refugees, women and girls, and persons with disabilities.

We must respond with greater urgency to the moral shame that is world hunger and to the risks facing hundreds of millions of people living in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

We must channel greater investment towards the full empowerment and employment of young people,

We must speed up – not fall back – on our push for gender equality.

And we truly must come to terms with the requirements of SDG10 – recognizing that extreme inequality is never inevitable.

Second, democratic institutions.

Over the past two weeks, governments, civil society organizations, the private sector and many others highlighted the importance of effective, transparent and accountable institutions in achieving the SDGs.

We also heard of the inextricable linkages between these institutions and the protection of human rights.

And we saw in many Voluntary National Reviews how governments are working to strengthen the analytical capabilities of these institutions – so as to maximize synergies and better manage trade-offs that faithful implementation of this Agenda demands.

Effective institutions – that live by the principles of the 2030 Agenda – will form the bedrock for successful SDG implementation.

This is an area that merits much greater attention in the years ahead.

Third, political commitment.

I congratulate all 47 countries that presented voluntary national reviews this year.

Global reports show us the trajectory of progress but VNRs provide us with much greater insight into how governments are working to overcome both long-standing and emerging obstacles.

They are increasingly providing governments with a basis against which to judge their own performance, and, with the help of an engaged and involved civil society, to push themselves further.

Overall 142 countries have now presented their reviews to this Forum. At a time when multilateralism is being questioned and challenged, it is encouraging to see such strong country ownership of the 2030 Agenda.

Through the five Summits in September, we have an opportunity to build on this commitment with a focus on urgency and ambition.

Climate change permeated so much of the Forum's work this year. At the Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit, leaders can demonstrate their commitment to respond to the climate emergency, with clear plans that are fully aligned with a 1,5 degree world.

At the SDG Summit, governments are called on to bring concrete acceleration commitments that will help get the world on track to success by 2030.

And in the high-level meetings on universal health coverage, financing for development and the Samoa Pathway for Small Island Developing States, we have a chance to identify actions and partnerships to address these critical aspects of the 2030 Agenda.

In each of the five meetings, we need participation from governments at the highest political levels.

We need to hear the voices of our partners from the private sector, civil society, science and technology, academia and many more, to bring our response to the next level.

And we need to listen to the world's children and young people who are telling us very clearly what changes they expect their leaders to deliver.

Excellencies,

This Forum has been very fruitful and enriching. And I congratulate Ambassador King and DESA for your efforts.

Later this year, delegations will have an opportunity to review and further strengthen this Forum. They will start from a good position, but there are of course areas for further improvement.

We have seen some important advances in data analysis and visualization this year but there remains a critical need for clear baselines and better-quality data to judge the effectiveness of our actions.

The engagement of civil society and other stakeholders continues to be one of the defining features of this Forum, but we must ensure that engagement is as meaningful and diverse as possible.

We have also seen some innovations in the VNR process, but more can be done to make these reviews more interconnected from country to regional to the global level and more solution-oriented.

For now, however, our attention turns to the September Summits. We know the clock is ticking, and the stakes are high.

This is the time to put in place the foundations for a decade of action and delivery for the SDGs and a pathway towards peace and prosperity for all on a healthy, thriving planet.

Thank you.