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Statement

by

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of

the Republic of Austria

High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

under the auspices of the ECOSOC

“Strengthening integration, implementation and review – HLPF after 2015”

Opening plenary

New York

26 June 2015

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Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

first of all, I would like to thank you for inviting me to this Forum. It is a great honor to address you on this important occasion.

2015 is a crucial year for **sustainable development** as the end of the year also marks the end of the **Millennium Development Goals**. The MDGs have helped to mobilize collective action and international cooperation, producing remarkable successes. Extreme poverty has been halved, more than 3 million deaths from malaria have been avoided and more than 20 million lives have been saved from tuberculosis.

But there is plenty of work left to be done. In addition to poverty, hunger and diseases, the pressing challenges we still face include growing inequality, as well as rising unemployment and precarious employment situations, to name just a few.

As you know, we are in the middle of elaborating a **new global development agenda for the period after 2015**. The Open Working Group on sustainable development goals defined 17 sustainable development goals its report last year. These goals cover all three dimensions of sustainable development, namely its social, economic and environmental pillars. Based on this report, the Secretary General has presented his vision of a

universal, integrated and transformative agenda for sustainable development. At the end of September the Heads of State and Government will convene in New York to adopt the post-2015 agenda,

Ladies and gentlemen,

one thing is certain: For the implementation of this new development agenda to be successful, an effective follow-up and review mechanism is necessary.

It is this forum, the **High-Level Political Forum**, which will take on this important function on the global level, together with the Economic and Social Council. The Forum will play a decisive role in following up on the implementation of sustainable development commitments and reviewing the progress made. Multi-stakeholder cooperation, as well as the participation of all major groups and all relevant actors, are essential in this context.

The High-Level Political Forum will have to play a key oversight role in order to maintain political commitment, provide guidance, share best-practice, and make recommendations for further action at the national, regional and global levels. Great importance must also be given to developing **suitable indicators, as well as providing reliable data and statistics.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

as **Minister for Social Affairs**, allow me to share with you some thoughts regarding the **social dimension** of sustainable development.

The Open Working Group's report contains ambitious goals in this respect. After all, the global challenges are enormous. Personally, I attach great importance to the following four issues:

Firstly, eradicating poverty in all its forms must be at the heart of all our policies. According to recent World Bank statistics, 1 billion people have to live on less than 1.25 US dollars a day. Tackling poverty, social exclusion and inequality – across and within countries – must be at the top of our political agenda. And our anti-poverty strategies must reflect the multi-dimensional nature of poverty. We must develop effective policies through which poor people can improve their livelihoods and get access to health and social services, as well as education.

Secondly, we need decent work and full, productive employment for all. Employment and an adequate income are the best protection against poverty, and they are key in addressing inequality and social exclusion. Worldwide, over 200 million women and men are currently unemployed; 74 million young people were looking for work last year. Youth unemployment is almost three times as high as unemployment

in adults. Women, young people, migrants and other disadvantaged groups are overrepresented when it comes to precarious work and insecure jobs, often in the informal sector.

We must promote the Decent Work Agenda and the implementation of the ILO's Global Jobs Pact. We need strong international cooperation in order to develop employment-promoting strategies. And youth employment must be a top priority.

Social dialogue is very helpful in this context. In Austria, for example, trade unions and employers' organisations successfully cooperate with each other and the government in developing social, economic and employment policy.

Thirdly, social protection is fundamental for sustainable development. Some of the world's most advanced economies are successful because they have good social protection systems. ILO Recommendation 202 regarding "**social protection floors**" puts forward the concept of a fundamental basis for social protection for all citizens in accordance with national conditions.

Investment in social protection pays as the money spent on it eventually flows back through increased demand. In addition to revenues, this requires sound national policies, strong institutions and the rule of law. International cooperation and support can effectively contribute to capacity and institution

building. The informal sector needs to be formalized, and fiscal and social policies must be coordinated. Social protection for all by 2030 is feasible, ladies and gentlemen – it depends entirely on political will.

Finally, we must promote the social inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

This is a crucial strategy in fighting poverty as it affects large segments of our societies. For example, nearly 50 per cent of all people of pensionable age do not receive a pension. Many children and young people lack access to high-quality education and vocational training. People with disabilities are overrepresented among the poor. Women do not find a level playing field in many areas.

The social exclusion of these and other groups means a waste of potential and high costs for society as a whole. Non-discrimination, equal rights and social inclusion must therefore be our guiding principles in implementing sustainable policies.

In conclusion, I am deeply convinced that social policies are just as important as economic and environmental policies in connection with sustainable development. I appeal to you, ladies and gentlemen, to ensure that the social dimension plays a key role in the upcoming **follow-up and review process**. This will be crucial if we want to reach our common goal – **life in dignity for all**.

In this spirit, ladies and gentlemen, let me wish you rewarding discussions over the next two weeks. Thank you very much for your attention.