

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honor and a pleasure to address you here in Rio at this important event, which marks the 20th anniversary of the original Earth Summit, and which is likewise poised to influence the direction of sustainable development for our generation.

The United Arab Emirates is proud to be part of the global effort to enhance the sustainability of global development.

In many ways, the Rio process has marked important **milestones** in the UAE's development story.

When the first Earth Summit was held in Rio in 1992 the UAE as a country was just **20 years old**.

Now, **20 years on**, we have the opportunity to reflect on the progress we have made, and the challenges we still have ahead of us. I want to reflect on the UAE's progress on each of the pillars of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental.

On **economic** development we have made great progress. Since the first Rio summit the UAE's economy has grown by over **400 percent**.

Perhaps more importantly, we have made great progress in **diversifying** the base of our economy. Oil and gas production, while still very important, now accounts for only about **a third of GDP**. I will come back in a moment to the role that sustainability has played in this diversification.

On the **social** front, the UAE is now among the **top 30 countries** in the world as measured by the UNDP's Human Development Index. Great advances in health, education and prosperity underpin this progress.

I want especially to point to the active role that the UAE has taken in the **empowerment of women**. Twenty years ago women formed barely 10% of the workforce. Today, 77% of Emirati women continue to higher education from high school, and around **60% are in employment**.

The UAE has 4 women cabinet ministers, and women are represented in government, the private sector, the judiciary and even the armed forces.

The **environmental** pillar has also long been important to us. Well before the first Rio summit the UAE had set aside significant areas for conservation.

But today that commitment to the environment is much further-reaching. **Clean energy** is a central plank of our development strategy. And we are innovating solutions in energy efficiency, water efficiency, building standards, and sustainable cities that we hope will have beneficial applications in our region and the world.

These ambitious activities have come together in the announcement this year by the UAE's Prime Minister, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, that the UAE is embarked upon a strategy of pursuing a Green Economy for Sustainable Development.

Today, this vision is driving a range of important initiatives across the UAE. Let me point to a few examples:

- The UAE has adopted the first mandatory building efficiency codes in the region, and mandatory efficiency standards for cooling.
- Abu Dhabi and Dubai have set the region's first renewable energy targets, and this year we are opening a 100MW concentrating solar plant, one of the largest in the world.
- We are building Masdar City, a world-first low-carbon urban development powered by renewable energy and a test bed for cutting edge clean energy and efficiency technologies.
- The Masdar Institute, established together with the Massachusetts Institute for Technology, is the world's first postgraduate university solely dedicated to clean energy technology.
- The Emirati student body is roughly half women, and these students are already generating new clean energy technology and intellectual property today. Some of those students are with us here in Rio.
- Dubai has implemented the first light rail system in the region, which now carries more than 40 million passengers per year.

The UAE's commitment to sustainable development extends to international efforts too.

The UAE is a generous donor of international assistance.

Significant parts of our aid has driven progress on the Millennium Development Goals, particularly on issues such as health and education.

Increasingly, we are also putting our development assistance behind the wider deployment of renewable energy, with supported projects in Afghanistan, Tonga, Seychelles and others.

In addition, we are a major investor in clean energy internationally, for instance a new concentrating solar power plant in Spain opened last year as part of a joint venture between Masdar and Sener.

This commitment to international sustainable development efforts is underlined by our support for the International Renewable Energy Agency, which is headquartered in Abu Dhabi.

This is part of a wider effort to help bring the world together on innovation and sustainability issues. Dubai hopes to be the host of the World Expo in 2020 under "Connecting Minds, Creating the Future" theme. Yesterday, we have announced " Abu Dhabi Sustainability week" that will take place Next January, bringing together the World Future Energy Summit, the International Water Summit, the International Renewable Energy Conference, IRENA's General Assembly and the Zayed Future Energy Prize Award Ceremony. We believe that such gatherings can help foster the deeper international cooperation essential for tackling the world's major challenges especially the Energy-Water Nexus.

So our commitment to sustainable development shapes both our domestic policy and our international cooperation. Both are rooted deeply in the values of our country, shaped above all by our founding father the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nayhan. These values include a respect for nature, an emphasis on education, a stress on rights and opportunities for women, and an open and tolerant society.

Much remains to be done. For instance, the UAE is working to reduce its' greenhouse gas emissions. This is challenging due to our cooling needs – a basic necessity in a hot arid environment – the need to desalinate water, and an energy intensive industrial base.

But we are committed to taking action to mitigate this effect, and the significant progress we have made in so many other areas of sustainable development gives me confidence that we can be an active contributor to the global solutions required here too.

We want the process beyond Rio to build on this kind of progress. I want to comment briefly on what I think has been achieved here in Rio, and where it take us next.

First, I welcome the launch of a process to develop **Sustainable Development Goals**, building on and complementing the existing MDGs. The UAE has been an enthusiastic supporter of this concept, and we intend to remain active in their further development.

It is no longer acceptable that more than 1.3 billion people do not have access to electricity, or that over 780 million people still lack access to safe drinking water. Let us therefore agree to a set of priority areas, including energy, water, education and food security, to provide guidance to the SDG process. These themes are the corner stone in our global coordinated effort to eradicate poverty.

Second, we welcome the formal recognition of the **Sustainable Energy for All initiative**, for which Masdar's CEO Dr. Sultan Al Jaber serves on the High Level Panel. These initiatives should generate a range of targeted and ambitious programs to drive clean energy and other sustainable sectors. We should build on the work of this initiative to drive access to energy around the world, using ever cleaner technologies.

Third, I am encouraged to see the Rio text recognize the central role that **education and empowerment** plays in any successful strategy to promote sustainable development. We should seek ways to enhance the empowerment of **women**, which has been such a central part of the UAE's success story.

Fourth, the recognition of the **Eye on Earth** network is an important endorsement of the important role played by high quality environmental information. We invite all countries to join us in this initiative, which helps deliver on goals set at the last Earth Summit in Johannesburg in 2002.

We also welcome the attention given to **water** issues in the text. It is clear to me that this raises questions about international governance of water that need further discussion. I would like to extend to you an invitation to participate in the next International Water Summit in Abu Dhabi next January as an important forum for taking what we have discussed and agreed upon in RIO into a concrete plan of action.

The scale of the sustainable development challenge ahead of us is undoubtedly large. But the experience of countries like the UAE provide practical, positive examples of what can be achieved in 20 years.

I look forward to meeting again in 2032 and sharing our experiences and hearing about yours. I have no doubt that we will still speak of formidable challenges ahead.

But I also believe that we will hear stories of human ingenuity creating a better world.

Thank you for your attention.