



**Statement by H.E. Juan Alfonso Fuentes Soria
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Interactive Dialogue**

**“Tackling inequalities, empowering women and girls and leaving no one behind”
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In the context of greater political participation in the United Nations, we are here today a few hours after the adoption of the most ambitious development agenda: Transforming our World, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It not only takes into account the unfinished work within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals but goes beyond the scope and areas covered: it is now universal and includes reducing inequality between countries and within them, as well as an ambitious agenda to protect the planet.

That inequality is a part of a Universal Agenda is due to progress in reducing world poverty, the broadening of a more vocal middle class and the changes that are required of democratic institutions in order to respond to a comprehensive development agenda.

For Guatemala, a middle-income country, with insufficient progress in reducing poverty and with high levels of inequality, the adoption of the 2030 Agenda is an opportunity to implement actions to accelerate the achievement of a society where poverty is eradicated and greater opportunities are available to all. Societies demand it: Today, Guatemala has an active citizenry that demands results and transparency in the actions of the state. As leaders we must respond to this call and live up to the demands.

Inequality is much harder to reduce because it not only has to do with achieving a decent income level: among other things, it requires removing an entrenched culture of discrimination that causes high degrees of marginalization and a lack of access to services. It also requires that States be able to provide quality opportunities to all members of our societies, bridging one of the biggest gaps that still remains, which is inequality between men and women.

Guatemala has shown progress in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women: we achieved educational parity at all levels and women went from 39% to 51% of the electoral roll. Nevertheless, the conditions that allow women to obtain a true

level of autonomy are still far from being achieved: access to health care, decent employment, real political participation and culturally appropriate justice system.

In fact, one of the biggest gaps and debts that Guatemala has is with indigenous women in rural areas, in whom all of the inequalities are concentrated and reflected due to their gender and indigenous status. We cannot make them wait any longer, we can not let another generation of girls face discrimination, migration and displacement as their sole future. We must be able to enhance the capacities that today are lost because of a lack of access to opportunities.

As stated by His Holiness Pope Francis, it is time to take care of those who have little or nothing, we will be judged by it, and for that reason we are called upon to make efforts so that in 15 years, we are able to tell our children, we did the right thing, we took care of those who had the least.

Thank you.