

Remarks at the side event on “Partnering with Faith Based Organizations to chive Sustainable Development in Africa”

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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to participate in this event on “Partnering with Faith Based Organizations to chive Sustainable Development in Africa” and to share my thoughts on “Lessons from the HLPF 2019 and Outcomes from the SDGs leaders’ Summit”.

The role of faith-based organizations such as Caritas includes advocating for those left behind, supporting peace and justice, effective and accountable institutions as well as ensuring that the SDGs remain high on the international, regional and national agendas.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The spirit of human endeavor has demonstrated our shared ability to deliver the extraordinary. The 2030 Agenda is our road map for the world we want. The SDGs are our best hope – for people, for planet, for prosperity, for peace and for partnerships. In the case of Africa, we also have the AU Agenda 2063.

However, the world is not on track to meet the SDGs by 2030.

We are now left with ten years to transform our world.

The international community needs to step the speed and ambition that is required to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. And in the case of Africa, the same applies to the AU Agenda 2063. These two Agendas offer a unique opportunity for African countries to achieve inclusive and transformative development with equity.

Since 2015, the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) has established its central role in the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

In September 2019, Heads of State and Government met for the first time at the United Nations High-level Political Summit on Sustainable Development (HLPF) to follow up and comprehensively review progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals as well as to identify actions to accelerate implementation. This was the first UN summit on the SDGs since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September 2015.

Based on the experience of DESA as the secretariat of the HLPF, as well as what we have heard from the Member States and stakeholders in the past four years, several lessons can be drawn from the HLPF 2019 and Outcomes from the SDGs leaders' Summit.

First, we learnt that political commitment matters, especially a clear renewal of the commitment to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The task ahead cannot be achieved until and unless political leadership at the highest-level commits to dedicate the necessary financing to implement national policies and strategies.

Second, there is broad consensus that the HLPF has posted some significant achievements, in particular the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Over the last four years, it has had an in-depth review of all 17 SDGs and has helped to mobilize partnerships for the SDGs. The engagement with civil society, the private sector, youth, faith-based organizations and other stakeholders around these goals is advancing national implementation.

Third, the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are one of the great successes of the HLPF with 142 countries having done a review so far. These reviews were built on the outcomes of vibrant regional forums on sustainable development such as the ARFSD as well as other intergovernmental processes.

Fourth, reviews of the HLPF have underscored the importance of addressing better, the interlinkages among the SDGs as well as improving the VNRs. This includes avoiding the creation of silos by ensuring that countries more systematically report on all 17 SDGs, rather than on the SDGs under review in a particular year and ensuring that the VNRs include more in-depth, evidence-based analysis of progress and the impact of measures taken. It is also important for VNRs to highlight not only successes but also challenges, and areas where the countries need assistance.

Fifth, the HLPF has proved to be an important platform for partnerships and the promotion of UN system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies.

Sixth, the HLPF provides a critical platform for an improved science-policy interface, and in the provision of high-level political leadership and guidance for sustainable development. The Global Sustainable Development Report 2019 provide 6 “entry points” that can accelerate progress towards the goals, viz; human well-being and capabilities; sustainable and just economies; food systems and nutrition patterns; energy decarbonization with universal access; urban and peri-urban development; and global environmental commons.

Finally, the voices of people living in poverty, those left behind and in vulnerable situations, including women, children and youth, indigenous peoples and local communities, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons also matter. Their rallying cry of “nothing for us without us” should be taken into consideration when designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating national development plans and strategies.

Excellencies,

Now, let me turn to the outcomes of from the SDGs leaders’ Summit.

The Summit adopted a Political Declaration, **“Gearing up for a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”**. The political declaration reaffirms the transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda, expresses concern that progress is slow in many areas, launches an ambitious and accelerated decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, and pledges to strengthen the effective and participatory character of the HLPF. It also encourages the peer-learning character of the voluntary national reviews.

In that regard, the Secretary General has issued a global appeal for a Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs by 2030. This will require a transformation of society and the economy as well as strong commitment of the international community to the 2030 Agenda and to multilateral collaboration for achieving the SDGs by 2030.

The Decade of Action has three pillars: mobilizing everyone everywhere; demanding urgency and ambition; and shining the light on solutions.

By the terms of the declaration, Governments reaffirmed their pledges to end poverty and hunger, combat inequality and build peaceful, just and inclusive societies — all enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Political Declaration of the 2019 SDG Summit stresses the urgent need for concerted, accelerated action by Governments, local authorities, the private sector, civil society, academia and the scientific community at all levels to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

In the lead up to the SDG Summit, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs set up an online platform to capture new and ambitious SDG Acceleration Actions. Moving ahead on the Decade of Action for SDG implementation by 2030 called by the Secretary-General, this platform will continue to mobilize ambitious actions and track their progress.

SDG Acceleration Actions are initiatives voluntarily undertaken to accelerate the SDG implementation by national governments and any other non-state actors - individually or in partnership. Any new action or action that builds on existing efforts (scaling up, new phase, etc.) could be considered as an SDG Acceleration Action.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs will continue to support all Member States and looks forward to working with all stakeholders, to achieve our shared vision to end poverty, rescue the planet and build a peaceful world.

Thank you.
