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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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REMARKS AT ZÜRICH DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

Zürich, 22 January 2016

Your Excellency Mr. Didier Burkhalter, Foreign Minister of Switzerland,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bonjour. C'est un honneur d'être ici. Merci pour cette invitation.

Gruessech mitenand. Es ist mir eine Ehre hier zu sein. Danke für diese Einladung.

I am delighted to be back in Switzerland.

Switzerland is a dynamic United Nations Member State, consistently promoting multilateral cooperation for the common good.

It is a major UN hub and a reliable partner across the United Nations agenda, from mediation to humanitarian action ... the birthplace of international humanitarian law.

We are all outraged at terrible violations around the world. I have strongly denounced these breaches of international humanitarian law, most recently in Syria, where I warned that starvation is a war crime.

While we work to end impunity and heal traumatized societies, we are also responsible for addressing the root causes.

Last year was a momentous one in terms of gaining agreement on how to tackle those root causes.

Switzerland played a key role in the development of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Its negotiators were active in promoting SDG 5 on the empowerment of women and girls, SDG 6 on access to water and sanitation and SDG 16 on good governance. And one of your nationals, Assistant Secretary-General Thomas Gass, was deeply involved in the process of shaping the integrated vision.

I am especially grateful to Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter – and his staff – for engaging throughout the process.

He has also shown valuable his leadership on challenges to international peace and security. I particularly welcome his mediating role in Ukraine as Chairman of OSCE.

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a triumph of multilateralism at a critical time in human history.

All countries, civil society and interest groups collaborated together. They forged a transformative vision of the way forward for the planet and all people. They channeled the emotional intelligence of humanity yearning for a responsible stewardship of our world.

The Millennium Development Goals were historic. They taught us that the international community can set concrete targets. The MDGs endured as a reminder of our responsibility during the political and economic crises of the last 15 years. They were a pact between donors and recipients.

Now we go much further. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must become the basis of a new social contract. Governments made a universal promise to all people – and citizens of the world can now demand that governments honour their promises.

All States and all actors own this Agenda, which aims to finally end the tyranny of poverty.

Where the MDGs were carried out through the development system, the SDGs must become the object of a dialogue between the State and its people, between duty-bearers and rights-holders, between those with resources and those in need.

The new Goals are integrated, and they incorporate crucial factors such as institutions and the rule of law. The SDGs include important new Goals on cities, energy, sustainable consumption and production, and access to justice.

These factors were always considered important. And now, with the SDGs, we have a monumental milestone for international political consensus.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The 2030 Agenda commits to leaving no one behind – and reaching the furthest behind first.

This is a pledge that resonates well here in Switzerland.

The preamble of your Constitution perfectly expresses this spirit by affirming that “the strength of a people is measured by the wellbeing of its weakest member.”

This applies to cantons in Switzerland – and it also applies to the most vulnerable in the international community.

This is for the least developed, fragile and failed States – but also applies to struggling people in any society.

Even in the most developed democracies, people still die from poverty, hunger and hate crimes. Refugees escape terrible atrocities only to face xenophobia by those who associate these victims with the very perpetrators they fled.

Even where there are safety nets in place, too many people fall through, especially those on the margins of society. Physical disability, sexual orientation, race and other differences obscure our common humanity. The result leaves minorities of all kinds exposed to discrimination.

All development efforts – national and international – begin by identifying the most vulnerable and understanding how to empower them.

This is a change in the old development paradigm.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The job of taking care of the most vulnerable members of our human family has never been more urgent.

More people have fled their homes than at any time since the Second World War. Humanitarian appeals are five times higher than a decade ago. Funding gaps have never been larger. Generous donors are doing their part, but we need a new push for global solidarity.

That is why I am convening the World Humanitarian Summit this May in Istanbul. It will be our opportunity to reshape the international response to crises by addressing root causes, including the divide between humanitarian and development aid. It will sound an alarm about the need to respect international humanitarian law. And it will generate real improvements in the global response to emergencies.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The only challenge greater than achieving agreement on the SDGs is the one we face now, namely carrying them out.

Each and every Government needs to show strong ownership by aligning policies, legislation and resources in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.

I commend Switzerland for already starting the concrete implementation of the 2030 Agenda, nationally and internationally.

We need visionary political leadership that sees beyond the national borders. We need effective institutions that break silos.

The recent Paris Climate Change agreement represents a first of many steps the international community will have to take to achieve the SDGs.

Markets now have the clear signal they need to scale up investments that will generate low-emissions, climate-resilient development.

The solutions are increasingly affordable and available, and, after the success of Paris, many more are poised to come.

And we need a real partnership between business, public sector and civil society – a partnership based on equality, inclusion and a fair sharing of risks.

SDG 17 calls for a revitalized global partnership for sustainable development.

All have a role to play, but the richer countries have a responsibility to show solidarity.

A revitalized global partnership means wealthy countries meeting the agreed commitment to allocate at least 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income for Official Development Assistance.

And it means building on the framework for development financing agreed in Addis Ababa.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda features a comprehensive set of policy actions, with a package of more than 100 concrete measures that draw upon all sources of finance. This includes better management of national resources and strong cooperation in tax matters.

In the face of multiple crises, development cooperation should not be diminished or diverted. That would be like burning your house down to stay warm. We need to protect those in crisis while strengthening their societies.

We must move from delivering aid to ending need. At the same time we must address the grave threat that conflict poses to sustainable development and the entire 2030 Agenda.

We must do far more to end the conflicts that beset the people of Syria, Yemen, South Sudan and elsewhere. The price of neglecting prevention is plain to see: widening sectarian tensions, shrinking democratic space in many places, and an arc of crisis stretching from the Sahel to the wider Middle East.

One day of fighting – when a hospital is bombed, a bridge is destroyed and hate becomes entrenched – causes damage that can take years to repair.

The SDGs will promote peace, but peace is also essential for the SDGs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 2030 Agenda is visionary – and we have to build practical mechanism to make it work. That requires accountability through solid follow-up, review and a stronger emphasis on good data.

The annual High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development must become the dashboard for driving this process.

Switzerland is an important UN Member State that helped to raise international ambitions and inspire global values – and I count on this country to do even more as we advance to a new future.

Thank you.

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