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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**SIXTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OPEN WORKING GROUP ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

***Needs of countries in Special Situations, African Countries, LDCs, LLDCs, & SIDs as well
as specific challenges facing the Middle-Income Countries (MICs)***

Statement

by

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Excellencies - Ambassadors Macharia Kamau and Csaba Korosi - Co-chairs of the
Open Working Group,
Excellencies and Representatives of member States,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to address the Sixth Session of your Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. I am further delighted to be speaking on the needs of countries in special situations, African countries, LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDs as well as specific challenges facing the middle-income countries.

As you will all agree, grappling with goals for sustainable development is not only a demanding task but also a big challenge. However, it is my firm conviction that enriching the deliberations of the Group with key insights can contribute to a positive impact on the outcomes of your deliberations, a strong element of the Post-2015 development agenda.

We are conscious of the fact that sustainable development seeks to achieve social and economic progress in ways that will not exhaust the earth's natural resources. The world's resources are finite, and growth that is unmanaged and unsustainable will lead to deteriorating conditions for all. We owe it to future generations to explore lifestyles and paths of development that effectively balance opportunities with possibilities. Therefore, creating goals are an important dimension to sustain development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The world has been focusing on the above premises for almost four decades now. The theoretical framework evolved between 1972 and 2012 through a series of international conferences and initiatives. The concept initially was focused on human environment at the UN Stockholm conference of 1972, followed by many fora including

the contributions of the World Commission on Environment and Development, later known as the Brundtland Commission of 1983. That Commission's Report - Our Common Future -published in 1987, led us to the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, that squarely married environment and development. It marked a significant step in the establishment of new priorities at the international level and the establishment of various instruments such as the Conventions on Climate Change, Biological Diversity and to Combat Desertification; the Statement of principles on the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests; all encapsulating a new approach through Agenda 21. In its aftermath the General Assembly created the Commission on Sustainable Development, now part of his common history.

Johannesburg held the first World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, representing a major shift in the perception of sustainable development, away from isolating environmental issues and towards integrating it with social and economic development. This move was driven by the needs of developing countries and strongly influenced by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), only officially endorsed then. Ten years later, Rio+20 introduced new aspects to sustainable development, including the concept of a green economy, as well as a more robust institutional framework for the future. So here we are, with a canvas that has already a lot of paint in it, but still does not provide us with a clear picture. What's next?

When the Secretary General established a High -Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda he was looking to the road ahead. He stressed the need to build on the foundations established by the Rio+20 conference so we could meet "a challenge that no country, developed or developing, has met so far." Similarly, the Secretary General's report on the MDGs and post-2015 emphasizes that a new post-2015 era must be based on "sustainable development - enabled by the integration of economic growth, social justice and environmental stewardship and become our global guiding principle and operational standard."

These two reports have raised the bar. Therefore expectations are high and we

must be imaginative, innovative and audacious in making sure that whatever the goals developed, we learn from the past successes and shortcomings. In fact the reports recognize that sustainable development is a process of transformative change - across scales- and governance regimes, which require an enabling environment, robust institutions and a set of rules. These are not processes that one can "stumble" into and will require continuous direction and focus.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given this historical perspective, I would like to raise five key aspects with respect to the current debate on sustainable development and their impact on the formulation of the SDGs.

First, we need to constantly interrogate the concept of sustainable development in order to account for changing times and ensure we remain alert. When it comes to the needs of countries in special situations sustainable development means different things to different configurations of countries. For the SIDs, the greatest threat to survival (and consequently sustainability) depends on climate change and adaptability, whether it's frequent cyclones, hurricanes, droughts or storms, since much of their infrastructure and population reside along the coasts. For African countries and many of the LDCs and LLDCs, the road to sustainable development depends on their economic structural transformation, underpinned by the need to create jobs massively and increase their share of the world's wealth. There's also growing concern that within the MICs, pervasive poverty is affecting a larger number of people than LDCs, not to mention growing inequality. Even countries with hard-won gains on poverty reduction remain vulnerable to economic volatility. So the question is: how will SDGs address the different needs of these countries, while taking into consideration their hopes and aspirations, from different political, economic and social realities. The only possibility is to identify commonalities that are clear enough to allow differentiation in terms of targets and priorities. After all the principles of universality have always been based in this interpretation.

My **second** point is we need to examine the relationship between sustainable development and the need for a new social contract. When 250 years ago Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote the Social Contract his key contribution was to move the inter-generational level of solidarity from a family to a community and national level. The establishment of modern regional integration projects -such as the European Union or the African Union- increased that level of ambition. We are now conscious the balance between human and nature, as defended by this philosopher, is not different from our discussion of SDGs. In order for us to defend a world global compact -as called for by the SDGs- we need to move up the concept of inter-generational solidarity to its most refined form. It would imply for instance, mimicking Rousseau, to recognize the need of youthness of certain parts of the world by the ones that are ageing. This has tremendous implications on the way we perceive mobility and migration, values chains for industrial production, or regulation of urban life. It will not be possible to attain sustainability at world level without basically understanding demographic trends as much as climate and environmental generation trends.

This then brings me to the third issue, which is to examine the vulnerability and challenges associated with the sustainable development concept. We know that sustainable development gets forgotten once new challenges threaten mainstream views. The recurrent economic and financial crises in both developing and advanced economies undermine all three pillars of sustainable development. The crises is intensifying the pressure for budget consolidation at the national levels, increasing the likelihood of cuts in social services throughout much of the industrialized world. One government after another is bringing forward a budget consolidation program with cuts social protection. Invariably, the financial crisis has led Governments to introduce indicators and measures based on financial concerns rather than social welfare. The situation is leading to new forms of protectionism. This becomes especially obvious when not only conventional tariff and non-tariff restrictions to trade are considered, but also the more subtle, hidden protectionist measures, which has been described as "murky protectionism", such as rescuing firms to safeguard national interests or

manipulating currencies. The tendency of governments is to support production capacities to salvage the economic downturn. Usually under this assumption, any form of sustainable development agenda goes out of the window. In fact we have implicitly been living with an hierarchy of the three pillars of sustainable development: we accept economics as the pillar we have to get right, then once that is done we deal with the social; and, only afterwards, we add environmental concerns. The SDGs have to avoid this capuccino approach of considering coffee has the basis to which we add milk and then sprinkle chocolate. The correct interpretation of green economy should be one that perceives the potential of a humanized and environmentally friendly economy.

Fourth, we need a refreshing of the understanding of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. This principle is one of the milestones of the Rio Declaration from 1992. Its article 7 states: "In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command." For the first time in history, governments recognized their differential present and historical contribution to environmental degradation and, thus, their differential obligation to pay for the remediation and mitigation. Since then it became a key element of the Kyoto Protocol but its application reaches beyond climate negotiations.

In the recent past global negotiation processes got bogged down and often collapse when the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities were contested. This meant that difficult issues were off the table. For instance, despite a perceived break-through in Bali, after almost 18 years without a WTO sponsored agreement, critics have been quick to state that a lot of major issues had to be dropped for countries to settle on a very limited trade facilitation agenda. The same limited agreement scope happened in Warsaw, during the last climate change COP. The lesson is that unless countries refresh their views on common but differentiat

responsibilities they will have difficulties agreeing on any universal set of goals.

Fifth, we know that there is the challenge of data. We also know that measuring sustainability has to be at the core of any sustainable development agenda with metrics for measurements in environmental, economic and social sustainability and how the 3 pillars work together. For instance, GDP is currently the conventional method for measuring the total monetary value of goods and services. Yet it is a measure of raw economic activity and considered to be a very poor instrument for measuring economic development, let alone social progress and environmental regeneration. Despite this fact, GDP has become the dominant economic measure and benchmark of progress, even though it obscures or excludes essential aspects of welfare and sustainability in our economies and societies. On the other hand, the laudable MDGs measurement came with a focus on common targets rather than effort level. It is the equivalent of having the same finishing line with different departing lines. Ultimately local statistical capacity and local demand for statistics must be part of the SDGs and Post-2015 development agenda discussions, - which is why the all for a Data Revolution from the High Level Panel Report is important! Previously targets were identified first, but less thought was given to where the data would come from. Now all realise statistics are a development investment.

Finally it is about how we preserve policy space, while having a common set of goals. It is true that countries under special circumstances often find their space for making domestic policy choices squeezed. This tension arises from the dilemmas of how countries can keep the manifold benefits of extensive international development engagement free of conditionalities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In Africa, we are working to ensure that there is a converged and harmonized approach to the SDGs and the Post-2015 Agenda, through an African Common Position. The African position takes into account the challenges of the MDGs, whilst

calling for a structural transformation agenda based on a set of enablers of development (such as infrastructure, peace and security, human rights). These will require goals that can be translated at the national levels whilst recognizing the need to integrate policies at the international level. This why there is a debate about African- specific Development Goals (ADGs) to weave the diverse and often fragmented development initiatives of the African Union into a coherent whole. Furthermore, the ADGs are intended to complement the African priorities with universal goals, defined by the Post 2015 process.

It is clear that there are different and varied needs for African countries, LDCs, LLDCs, MICs or SIDs. The key that binds all these countries together is the realization we are in this one together, and that we need each other to save the planet and increase opportunities for all. That is the true definition of human development.