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S T A T E M E N T

by

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at the

High Level Political Forum on Sustainable
Development General Debate
on
Ensuring that no one is left behind

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Mr President,

Croatia aligns itself to the statement previously delivered by the European Union. Nevertheless, allow me to share also with you several thoughts from our national standpoint.

At the outset Croatia welcomes the adoption of the comprehensive Ministerial Declaration that we all worked hard on for the past couple of weeks. In this vein we thank all delegations that have contributed to its conclusion and in particular the co-chairs that were leading negotiations. Its adoption is of paramount importance for all of us as it proves the same unity and resolve highlighted at the Summit held last September and again demonstrates our joint determination and readiness for cooperation at the very beginning of implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda.

We believe that the role of the HLPF will therefore become more and more vital as it provides a crucial oversight role in monitoring the implementation of the Agenda, as well as in identifying new and emerging issues and providing new recommendations for further action.

This year, at the very beginning of a long road ahead of us, we are rightfully reflecting on the theme that is at the very heart of the development agenda – leaving no one behind. No child, no woman, no elder, no stakeholder, no minority, no country or society, no plant or animal, in fact no aspect of our lives should be left behind as we look towards the future and our development. In our view this theme also reflects not only the right not to be left behind, but also the responsibility not to stay behind on obligations and promises. This is the story of responsibility towards the present and future generations and finally the planet itself in its entirety.

Even though it can be said that currently we enjoy a kind of “honeymoon” atmosphere between the SDGs and national governments, we need to use this unique opportunity and move on decisively in order to set the strong yet flexible grounds for pro-active and inclusive implementation strategies for the next 15 years of hard work.

Our success will depend on our ability to raise and maintain awareness and commitment both in public and on high political level, and to build partnerships in and outside of our respective countries. The task at hand is far too big only to be handled by governments alone. In its spirit and principles, this is a people’s agenda, thus placing every citizen at the heart of implementation process should be our priority.

Mr President,

Smart, effective and accountable political leaderships will recognize this Agenda as an indispensable tool for preventing and resolving a number of emerging challenges that are also results of a world more globalized than ever before. As soon as the concept of sustainable development becomes a part of our second nature the sooner we will be able to make a needed paradigmatic shift in our social, economic and environmental existence.

Furthermore, our actions and decisions need to be guided based on good data collection and analysis and evidence of progress. This way we can ensure a strong connection between science and policy and effective follow-up and review.

Obviously different realities will set the tone of implementation for each of us quite differently. However, to call Agenda 2030 a success at the end of the day we will all need to come through the finish line together. Otherwise, the whole exercise will miss one of its key targets.

Our responses will be composed of various implementation approaches and strategies, policies and measures, ideally all made in a comprehensive and holistic manner, simultaneously focused on specific aspects yet recognizing interconnectivity with other goals and targets.

With the help of this Forum and the overall UN system, including other intergovernmental and regional organizations and international financial institutions, we are enabled to share lessons learned and best experiences in the process of implementation. At the same time we will be able to keep each other accountable to the joint mission we have committed ourselves to last year.

Mr President,

While creating an enabling environment to achieve the Agenda 2030 we must always keep at the heart of our re-doubled efforts the respect of human rights, with particular focus on the vulnerable groups. Furthermore, if we keep half population out of the game, namely women and girls, our results cannot be satisfactory. This is an area where Croatia has been particularly active in recent years and will continue to invest its efforts. Bringing a chance for education and employment unlocks significant potentials for development around the world.

Being a new and small donor on global stage, Croatia already functions in terms of „small input, big impact“. In this vein, our focus in development cooperation goes beyond financial contribution as we have specific expertise and in-depth understanding of unique developmental challenges in the post-conflict setting as well as of most common root causes of conflicts.

However, there are number of root causes of what we can call an unsustainable development that are in fact not necessarily related to conflict, and find fertile ground even in peaceful times. Inequality in its essence is the embodiment of concept of leaving people behind the curve of development. It also leads to a number of different legal, social, economic and other types of strifes and insecurities. With this premise Croatia attaches special importance on cross-cutting implementation of the Agenda 2030 that deals with enabling justice, rule of law, transparency, accountability, good governance, inclusiveness, fundamental human rights and liberties and fostering the culture of dialogue and tolerance.

Mr President,

The UN 2030 Agenda is by far the most complex set of mutually intertwined policies in the history of mankind and though there will obviously be differences in challenges that will eventually arise with its implementation, we can be sure that this Agenda will require much effort both from the global South and North.

The last 25 years of Croatia's history are testimony of surely unique blend of experiences, ranging from truly tectonic political, economic and social transition accompanied at the same time by the Homeland war and the process of post-conflict recovery and reconstruction all the way to successful memberships in the EU. It is therefore safe to say that Croatia and its people are well accustomed to reforms and changes. All these challenges and opportunities would have been difficult to achieve if weren't for the broadest level of public support, inclusiveness and political unity in attaining these priorities. Today we stay equally ready to put all our efforts in fulfilling the 2030 Agenda on national as well as on international level.

Finally, we note with particular satisfaction an increasing level of interest for cooperation in fulfilling UN 2030 Agenda by a number of representatives of these major stakeholder groups in Croatia. This makes us confident that the Republic of Croatia will again be successful in involving all levels of society, academia and business in achieving the Global Goals.

I thank you, Mr President.