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Remarks

Side Event on SDGs roll out process in Turkmenistan, during the Global Sustainable Transport Conference

“Theme: Measuring SDGs at the global, regional and national levels”

Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, 26 November, 2016

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to be here today and wish to join the Secretary-General again in thanking the government of Turkmenistan for hosting this conference, which addresses such a critical theme for Turkmenistan, this region and the world.

I also wish to thank the Government of Turkmenistan and the UN Resident Coordinator for organizing this side event on the SDGs roll out process in Turkmenistan and commend Turkmenistan for having started in earnest implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

I would like to stress one particular aspect of implementation, which is the issue of how to measure progress.

One of the lessons learned with the Millennium Development Goals was the importance of tracking progress, and the critical importance of data.

With the MDGs, governments made important strides in building institutional capacity to measure and track progress, identifying gaps and using that information to re-orient policy efforts.

But we need to do more.

The 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals are universal, inter-linked and indivisible, with 169 targets and 230 indicators.

The Agenda brings new challenges in terms of complexity of measurement, and in terms of underlying data, which are largely unavailable for many indicators.

The new agenda recognizes the centrality of quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data to measure progress.

Also, the imperative of leaving no one behind means that we must identify the most vulnerable groups, and address these groups with the appropriate data and indicators.

And equally important, we must be able to measure the effectiveness of our policies for those groups.

Data will be needed for all population groups. It must be disaggregated by age and sex, as well as available for relevant geographical units. This is essential to ensure that progress is equally shared by all. It is also necessary to be able to correct policies when they are not producing the desired results.

We also have important opportunities to measure development in entirely different ways, based on new technologies, innovation and creativity.

Big data and the expanding universe of technologies for geo-spatial data mean that we can measure development trends in different ways, obtaining new insights for the application of that data in policy.

To effectively monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to be able to document progress and ensure policies are on the right track, governments need to be able to use both traditional and innovative sources of data.

Governments have continued to work together, through the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators established by the UN Statistical Commission, to develop and refine an indicator framework for the monitoring of the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda.

In addition, the High-level Group on Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has produced a draft Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data.

An open global consultation was held during the first half of November to collect inputs on this draft Global Action Plan. This plan will be presented at the UN World Data Forum in January 2017, organized by our Department.

Data and statistics are one of the strategic areas of United Nations support in Turkmenistan.

I commend the Government for the efforts it is undertaking, with our support, to strengthen statistical capacity. Such efforts include those by Ministries and the State Statistics Committee to identify areas that will be improved starting in 2017.

It is our sincere hope that these efforts will continue and be deepened as we move further into the period of implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Like with other aspects of the 2030 Agenda, Turkmenistan can benefit from the experiences of other countries, and can in turn share home-grown solutions to the challenges of implementation with others.

In that respect, I would like to encourage active participation by all governments, as well as other stakeholders, in the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development and in its Voluntary National Reviews.

Twenty-two countries participated in the Reviews this year and more than 30 will participate next year.

Reviews are a space for exchange of lessons learned and peer learning, and for government officials to become part of a network of practitioners that will be strengthened over the years.

I invite the Government of Turkmenistan to consider participating in the Voluntary National Reviews in 2018, when it will be able to showcase the advances achieved over the course of the next year.

I reiterate that the United Nations stands ready to support this process at the national, regional and global levels.

Thank you.
