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**Statement by Ms. Nino Tkhilava, Head of the Department of Environmental Policy
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Protection of Georgia**

**at the general debate on the theme “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in
a changing world”**

**Ministerial meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
(HLPF), convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**

New York, 19 July 2017

Mr. President,

Distinguished delegates,

After almost 2 years since the adoption of the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” we gather in New York to assess achieved progress. While more work needs to be done, we are glad to observe advancements in many directions.

In my country the Government has offered a high-level political support to incorporating SDGs into national priorities. Georgia was one of the 22 countries that presented National Voluntary Reviews at the HLPF last summer. Since then, the number of goals and targets identified as the national priorities has grown up to 17 and 90 respectively and verifiable indicators for tracking the progress were defined.

In May 2017, the Government established the SDG Coordination Council to further advance the dialogue on SDGs implementation. The Council will bring together sectoral task forces committed to plan, monitor and evaluate relevant policies. An innovative approach is the development of an electronic monitoring system to distribute up-to-date information about the performance of public agencies on the SDG targets.

Mr. President,

Economic growth is a key enabler for the eradication of poverty. Understanding that business is a driving force of economic development, facilitation of private sector development remains one of the main priorities of our economic policy. Along with improving the investment environment, Georgia is providing an opportunity for creative thinkers to utilize their entrepreneurial talents and innovative potential by the country’s first High Technology and Innovation Development Centre – the Technology Park.

At the same time, promoting green growth is considered as a main path towards the implementation of the SDGs. In this context, let me highlight the importance of the 8th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference of UNECE - “Batumi Ministerial” - hosted by Georgia last year that played a significant role in fostering global action for promoting green economy and improving air quality for a better environment and human health.

Mr. President,

Specific measures have been taken in the country to alleviate extreme poverty levels and assist the poor and vulnerable through social protection systems. This includes changes to Targeted Social Assistance programme providing cash benefits for those under extreme poverty line.

Major step towards securing enjoyment of health rights was the launch of a Universal Health Care Program in 2013, leading to a major expansion in population entitlement to publicly financed health services. This covers the basic package of the planned and emergency in- and out-patient clinical care, including oncology and maternity services.

To address the SDG 2, the Agricultural Development Strategy for 2015-2020 envisages the fostering of competitiveness in agro-food sector, steady growth of high quality agricultural production, food safety and security. Furthermore, the strategy promotes good and climate smart agricultural practices, biodiversity and environmental sustainability programs, and gene bank development for conservation of agro-diversity and endemic species.

Mr. President,

Ensuring gender equality, empowerment of women and combating violence against women remain on top of Georgia’s priorities. At the executive level, the Inter-Agency Commission has been established to promote gender mainstreaming into Government policies.

All targets that the Government has prioritized are already considered as the first order country financing priorities. The key challenge identified is a lack of data, which demonstrates substantial need for upgrading Georgia’s national statistical research capacities. This will require additional training, financing and human capital.

Having a good understanding of the role of partnerships, the Government will promote Public Private Partnerships (PPP) as part of its four point-reform plan.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that international cooperation and involvement of stakeholders has an immense role to play in successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

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