



Remarks

by

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President of the 68th Session of the United Nations
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Opening of the
High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

Please check against delivery

Honorable Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished Ministers
Excellencies,
Secretary-General,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a special honor and privilege to preside over this inaugural session of the High-Level Political Forum. I greet you today at this historic meeting with enthusiasm and a sense of purpose. I look forward to our session, which I expect will be enriching, forward-looking, thought-provoking and sincerely hope - action-oriented.

This High Level Political Forum is a new entity within the UN body. Let me begin by reminding all gathered here today that we collectively fashioned this new institutional tool - the HLPF- and it is therefore our responsibility to use it wisely and well. We have created this HLPF for the express purpose of delivering more effectively on our aspirations and agendas at a time when we realize that the practice of sustainability provides the only real bridge from our past to our present and our future, and from our planet to our peoples and our prosperity.

Today, we frame our discussions around the theme: “Building the Future We Want: from Rio+20 to the Post 2015 Development Agenda.” Consequent upon this theme please let me pose a few questions:

- How much ambition and leadership are we willing to commit to our High Level Political Forum?
- How do we translate this new institutional platform into concrete and tangible implementation on the ground?
- How do we ensure that institutional form and function are properly aligned so that the HLPF can succeed?

In the Rio+20 Outcome Document, *The Future We Want*, Heads of State and Government agreed on a vision of development that merges the well-being, social inclusion and prosperity of all the world's people with the health and well-being of the planet. It identified these two integral pieces – people and planet – are inextricably linked.

The HLPF offers us an opportunity to translate this holistic vision that merges the vital needs and concerns of our people and planet into concrete policies and actions. Designated as both the guardian of, and the catalyst for the global sustainable development agenda, this forum will be the place where we – as an international community – can identify major global socio-economic and environmental challenges and determine how to address them. Within this forum, we will craft specific goals, which when adopted in 2015, will help create broad structural and transformative change in how we live, consume and do business in all countries and societies.

Let us be guided at this inaugural session with the knowledge that the HLPF is a joint endeavor between the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to promote and implement an integrated and balanced sustainable development agenda beyond 2015. It will be a universal and unique platform on issues related to the implementation of sustainable development, pulling together relevant actors on the global stage and within the United Nations system, and resulting in a level of coordination, integration and coherence that until now has been lacking.

This inaugural session of the HLPF is personally gratifying for all those who have spent many long hours working together on the issue of sustainable development. I would like extend my thanks to all those who have helped to make this vision of the Rio+20 Outcome Document a reality and have opened a new pathway toward a sustainable future. To all the heads of State and Government who have supported the sustainable development agenda and the establishment of this Forum, your support is duly noted and appreciated.

Excellencies,

If the High Level Political Forum is to fulfill its mandate – if it is to fully thrive and do justice to the vision of Rio+20 – what is actually needed?

First, it must be a proactive and sometimes provocative Forum that responds to the most current and pressing challenges and creates a robust and innovative agenda for sustainable development.

The HLPF needs active political leadership and strong global champions.

Reviewing progress in implementation is critical. We need a Forum that effectively monitors previous sustainable development commitments – such as those found and agreed in Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Barbados Programme of Action, and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation – and ensures that implementation is felt at all levels.

It must also ensure that sustainability is factored into economic and social decision-making. Indeed, it must set a new norm wherein sustainability becomes part of all our development activities.

It will need effective support and coordination amongst all relevant stakeholders. The HLPF, as well as the Post 2015 Development Agenda, will require contributions and commitment from a range of actors, both government and non-governmental, all of the United Nations system including the Multilateral Financial Institutions, as well as other international and regional organizations. Enhanced coordination and cooperation among these various actors need to be further advanced to strengthen the synergies between global policies and national realities.

Accountability must also be one of the hallmarks of the work of the Forum. Reviewing and measuring progress need a shared vision of specific goals, commitments, timetables and concrete mechanisms. Our Forum needs a broad range of tools for enhanced multi-stakeholder engagement and implementation, in particular partnerships. In this regard, effective partnerships should be advanced as a mature and scalable delivery mechanism to facilitate the achievement of the means of implementation for sustainable development.

The HLPF will undoubtedly play a pivotal role in the elaboration and the implementation of the post 2015 development agenda. It should be the home for concrete guidance in the review of the sustainable development goals, their implementation and monitoring, as well as integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development by all actors. It will, if properly used, become the tool for embedding or mainstreaming sustainable development at all levels.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Conferences in Stockholm in 1972, Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and 2012, the SIDS Conferences in Barbados and Mauritius in 1994 and 2004, and the various Conventions and Policy instruments that emerged as a consequence of our collaborative efforts have served to bring us a considerable distance along the development path.

But in convening the HLPF in this our Assembly of Nations, we also clearly have to recognize that we are facing an ever-challenging future and we have miles to go before we can rest. A new development agenda will not be achieved with half measures. It will not be the product of serendipity nor of continuous cycles of statements however well-intentioned and delivered. We have to take stock of the current global crisis and the failure to so far achieve sustainable global development, first as an opportunity and second as a call to action to which all of us -member-states, international organisations,

and civil society must together respond. It requires serious and concerted effort and yes dogged determination.

Let us remember that we have been afforded a rare opportunity to get things right from the start because a new institution is a clean slate. It has no historical reference point, and at the same time, there are no negatives associated with it. The slate of the HLPF waits for us to write in its purpose and its future. We have the opportunity to set the tone, tenor, scope of action, level of engagement, achievement and productivity for which this Forum will become known. Through our efforts in this Forum we can and must offer our citizens new hope and new solutions. Having elected me as your President and having agreed that this HLPF is necessary in the reform process, I appeal to you to make that effort and let this body become an effective forum and an instrument which supports and delivers a much needed integrated sustainable development which results in prosperity for our planet and her peoples.

Thank you.