

UNITED NATIONS



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**THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS AT 2017 ECOSOC SEGMENT ON  
OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

**New York, 28 February 2017**

**ECOSOC Vice President,**

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I am pleased to be with you today, in my first official event as Deputy Secretary-General.**

**It is a great privilege to return to New York to serve the Organization again under the inspiring leadership of Secretary-General António Guterres.**

**I worked closely with many of you on finalizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change.**

**Since then, as a Minister in Nigeria, I have had first-hand experience of the importance and complexity of the task ahead in implementing these transformative commitments.**

**We will need to establish and balance priorities, mobilize new investments, build dynamic new partnerships and persuade policy-makers and people everywhere to adopt new skills and perceptions.**

**I look forward to working closely with you all to reposition the United Nations in support of your efforts and achievements.**

**Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is not an option. It is an imperative for a safe and secure future of prosperity, opportunity and human rights for all.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**As we look back over the past two decades, we can see how remarkable progress has been achieved.**

**I have seen it in all regions, including in Africa, where I have seen poverty decline and democratic space expand as more and more people become connected by new communications and technologies.**

**Still, because of its vulnerability, Africa needs to remain a United Nations priority.**

**In so many ways, success in Africa is success for the world.**

**Africa's complementary Agenda 2063 and the promising reform of the African Union will ensure we have a much more effective partner.**

**We must also step up our efforts in the least developed, landlocked and small island developing states to reduce vulnerability and build resilience.**

**It is critical that, across the world, we focus on those furthest behind first.**

**Because in all regions, the rising tide of optimism and empowerment has not yet reached everyone.**

**Far too many people have been left behind.**

**The prosperity and benefits of globalization have not been equitably shared.**

**Half the planet's wealth is controlled by a handful of rich men.**

**Some 200 million people are still jobless.**

**Many more are underemployed, working several jobs to make ends meet, or toiling under abusive conditions.**

**Gender discrimination continues to limit the opportunities and potential of our women and girls in all countries.**

**Anxiety is mounting as societies cope with climate change, urbanization, population growth, water scarcity and massive movements of people.**

**Fear and mistrust are increasingly driving political discourse.**

**This is the context in which we meet.**

**We must change this alarming narrative now.**

**We have a plan – an ambitious one.**

**The 2030 Agenda is a plan for everyone, with a promise of leaving no one behind.**

**The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are universal, interlinked and indivisible.**

**They are holistic.**

**The need for a holistic approach to peace, development and human rights is plain to see in the region that I come from.**

**In the northeast of Nigeria, an integrated approach and aligned action is needed from all stakeholders to address the interlinked challenges of environmental degradation, resource scarcity, prevailing inequality, persistent poverty, conflict and violent extremism.**

**All these challenges are not peculiar to my country. They are shared, to varying degrees, by all regions.**

**Around the world, success in achieving the SDGs will ease global anxieties, provide a better life for women and men and build a firm foundation for stability and peace in all societies, everywhere.**

**Success will require a bolder approach to financing and partnerships.**

**Nothing will be achieved without engaging all actors.**

**It will require all countries to rethink systems, approaches, redefine traditional planning, delivery and monitoring.**

**As United Nations, we will have to adapt.**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**Member States have shown vision in laying the foundations for a transformation of the UN system.**

**The 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review resolution is ambitious and clear.**

**We have listened and we have heard.**

**The UN system needs a much higher degree of integration, coordination, accountability and transparency.**

**We must become more than the sum of our parts.**

**We need to be “fit for purpose” to help Member States fulfil the promises they made in 2015.**

**Our efforts must be tailored to national needs, priorities and capacities.**

**That means becoming more effective, cohesive and agile at the country level.**

**And it means scaling up capacities at the regional and global levels, and reasserting the UN’s role as the global knowledge hub and the setter of norms and standards.**

**Traditional coordination mechanisms are no longer enough.**

**We need to rethink how we work, focus less on process and more on results and never be satisfied by the lowest common denominator.**

**We must innovate, and revamp our approach to partnership and financing, with a focus on the long haul.**

**We must empower youth to participate in and shape the political and economic lives of their countries and communities; to be the agents of peace and development.**

**We must leverage data and technology to benefit people.**

**And, with the rapid advance of science and technology, we will need to work with Member States to bring effective governance to currently ungoverned spaces, such as genetic engineering and artificial intelligence.**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**The Secretary-General is committed to fast-track transformation.**

**He has already outlined his underlying vision.**

**His vision focuses on prevention over response.**

**It lays greater emphasis on cross-pillar work to address the root causes of instability, vulnerability and conflict.**

**He is determined to reposition sustainable and inclusive development at the heart of the United Nations.**

**And he is committed to institutional capacity building across all our areas of our work.**

**Three broad principles will underpin the work ahead: strengthening leadership, addressing the trust deficit and focusing on results at the country level where all of those in need are at.**

**First, strengthening impartial leadership of the UN development system for coherence and integration at all levels.**

**This will require a strong and adequately resourced coordination system that can provide effective planning and risk management, monitoring and evaluation.**

**Second, addressing the trust deficit.**

**This will entail accountability and transparency at all levels that does not just reflect agency mandates, but how they contribute to global goals and system-wide commitments.**

**We will improve governance on system-wide issues that do not belong to any individual governing body.**

**We will identify institutional incentives that can ensure collective guidance by Member States is effectively implemented.**

**And we will make the system more responsive to national priorities.**

**That brings me to the third point: ensuring that country-level results remain the litmus test of any reform or transformation.**

**Delivering effectively on the ground will require that we focus on building long-term resilience.**

**We will need to bridge the gaps between humanitarian action, development and peace, anchored in human rights, and ensuring access to opportunity for all.**

**Delivering effectively will also demand a serious rethinking of financing and operational arrangements.**

**We need to create incentives for collaboration.**

**And we need integrated approaches that respond to the complexity of the transformation that is necessary for peace, development and prosperity on a healthy planet.**

**We need also to build on what exists, while also being bold in challenging ourselves and introducing necessary changes.**

**In some cases, we will seek to reinforce existing mechanisms and solutions; in others, we will need to go a step further.**

**Solutions from the past will not, alone, meet the challenges of the future.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**The QCPR resolution has established a sequenced approach to the review of the United Nations development system.**

**As we progress, we will work closely with you at all times.**

**I will take the lead in coordinating the work on the Secretary-General's reports, in collaboration with DESA and the UN development system entities.**

**The immediate focus will be on the first set of recommendations that the Secretary-General intends to deliver by June, for which the preparatory work is ongoing.**

**In addition to formal meetings, I hope to engage with Member States in more informal settings to discuss forward-looking ideas.**

**And I will make sure this remains an open, transparent and inclusive consultative process.**

**The UN development system has a proud history of delivering results.**

**And it has proven its capacity to reinvent itself – time after time – to keep up with the evolving priorities of our partners.**

**The ongoing work to empower Resident Coordinators and implement standard operating procedures for UN Country Teams are recent examples.**

**We are committed to continued evolution, working closely with you -- and for you.**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**Throughout the decades, the United Nations has generated and promoted ideas that have ‘changed the world’.**

**First, came the principles and standards of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.**

**We have progressively translated these into operational programmes that have benefitted people all around the world.**

**It is this ability to combine normative functions and operational capacity that makes the UN development system so matchless and unique.**

**We now face new challenges, and our boldest agenda yet.**

**The 2030 Agenda requires that we reinvent ourselves to better service Member States.**

**We have a joint responsibility to bring about transformational change.**

**People around the world are looking to the United Nations as a symbol of peace, a beacon of hope and a provider of essential needs.**

**Governments honour us with their trust.**

**We have a unique, once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver a better future for all humanity.**

**We cannot afford to squander it.**

**As the Secretary-General said at his inauguration: “We want the world our children inherit to be defined by the values enshrined in the UN Charter: peace, justice, respect, human rights, tolerance and solidarity”.**

**The task ahead is challenging, but nothing is impossible when we work together.**

**You can count on our utmost commitment to ensure that the UN responds in a way that honours the level of ambition of the 2030 Agenda and the QCPR resolution.**

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I thank you for your attention and your warm welcome. I am now all yours.**