



BAKU FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Strengthening the Regional Partnership on Implementation of SDGs
25-26 October 2018, Baku – Azerbaijan

Opening Ceremony
Thursday, 25 October 2018, 15:00-16:00

Remarks by
H.E. Ambassador Inga Rhonda King
President of the Economic and Social Council

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to join you at this Baku Forum on *Sustainable Development on Strengthening the Regional Partnership on Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, in my capacity as the President of the Economic and Social Council. I would like to congratulate the National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Azerbaijan for organizing this Forum and commend Azerbaijan’s commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we committed to end poverty, in all its forms and dimensions, and to leave no one behind. The 2030 Agenda is strongly grounded in international human rights standards and strives to leave no one behind.

We are at a critical time for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While there is continuing momentum for the implementation of the SDGs, progress has been uneven among and within countries. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018 shows that “progress is insufficient to meet the Agenda’s goals and targets by 2030”, and that “this is especially true for the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups”. We are faced with additional challenges, including conflict, climate change and growing inequalities.

The 2030 Agenda provides us a clear blueprint of what needs to be done to achieve sustainable development. We need the political will and financial means to implement the SDGs to achieve our targets. We need effective and meaningful partnerships. We need a

regional approach to address cross-border development challenges, such as climate change. This requires strengthening partnerships with better coordination and coherence among partners. And we need multilateral cooperation.

The universality and the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda means that no country can achieve the SDGs on their own. They need the support of non-state actors, especially the private sector, to help achieve these goals, and reach the furthest behind first. We not only need meaningful partnerships with the private sector to pursue common goals, but we count on the private sector to align their business models with the 2030 Agenda. And we must harness the power of technology and innovation to find those who are being left behind and who are most vulnerable.

A robust follow-up and review of the Agenda at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) is critical to ensure its implementation is on track. Next year, the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) will be convened under ECOSOC in July and under the General Assembly in September. Delivering on the most successful HLPF next year is my top priority to complete its first cycle. We must ensure Heads of State and Government recommit to the Sustainable Development Goals at the High-Level Political Forum in September 2019.

To date, 111 voluntary national presentations (VNRs) have been conducted at the HLPF. These VNRs can help draw attention to the specific situations and priorities of countries, and I encourage you all to continue to engage with the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) including through the preparation of VNRs in your countries. I applaud Azerbaijan for registering to present its voluntary national presentation at the HLPF for the second time in 2019 (first time in 2017).

The theme of the HLPF in 2019 will be “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”. The SDGs under review will include SDG 4 on quality education; SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth; SDG 10 on reducing inequalities; and SDG 13 on climate change; and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

The interlinkages among the Sustainable Development Goals and the trade-offs involved make the implementation of the Agenda challenging. At a time when multilateralism is being questioned, we need coherent global responses to address complex challenges.

We need to also come resolutely together so that the September HLPF Summit is a success of multilateralism. We need to mobilize our Heads of State and Government to come to the Summit prepared to adopt an outcome by consensus.

I hope that the Baku Forum will mobilize political will and generate positive momentum toward strengthening the regional partnership for implementing the sustainable

development goals. Regional perspectives provide unique contributions and enrich the HLPF discussions. The regional commonalities and differences, as well as the challenges, in implementing the 2030 Agenda need to be taken into account at the HLPF at the global level.

I look forward to your continued engagement and collaboration in the work of the High-level Political Forum.

Let us not forget that Member States at the highest level pledged with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda that no one would be left behind and they committed to “endeavour to reach the furthest behind first”. We should be guided by this principle in our pursuit for the world we want.