

Closing Keynote
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Symposium on SDG 7 (Energy)

2017 Sustainable Development Transition Forum
SDG Mainstreaming and Means of Implementation:
A Retrospective and Prospective View

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Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,
Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

We have come to an end of the 2017 Sustainable Development Transition Forum.

I would like to take this opportunity to express special thanks to the co-organizer and host, Dr. Jong Soo Yoon, Head of the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD), for inviting me to address the closing session of this meeting.

Discussions were rich and meaningful, and have generated a wealth of ideas.

I am very pleased to note that this event brought together such a wide diversity of thinkers, innovators and individuals representing national and subnational policymaking, IGOs, NGOs, academia, private sector and civil society.

I particularly appreciated the presence and active participation of representatives of youth organizations in this Forum. Youth are an important stakeholder whose voice need to be heard in the discussions on the SDGs.

Being among those who will be the most affected by the 2030 Agenda, Youth must also be an integral part of the transformative process the Agenda is calling for.

Since 2012, ECOSOC has convened the annual Youth Forum to give young people an opportunity to participate and voice their opinions and ideas on the contribution they can make to achieve sustainable development.

As I recently assumed my role as President of ECOSOC, I have high expectations of the 2018 Youth Forum — my first Youth Forum as President of ECOSOC, where I hope to get more of their insights on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am particularly delighted by the aim of this forum to help create a bridge between both HLPF 2017, with the thematic focus of *Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world* and 2018 HLPF, under the overreaching theme of *Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies*.

The latter is very much in line with the key priority I announced at the beginning of my Presidency, which is “to develop initiatives towards fostering sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through participation of all.”

In last July, the 2017 HLPF gave us a relatively positive record of the two-year mark of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. While progress has been noted in many countries in relation to the development of their economies, and their success in tackling poverty, hunger and nutrition, those issues are still a major concern in some countries and regions, particularly where the situation is even deteriorating.

The 2018 HLPF will most likely give us the opportunity to see, once again, how emerging technologies and innovation are progressing at an unprecedented rate, impacting positively on all aspects of our lives and showing promise for delivery of the SDGs, and particularly SDG 7 on universal energy access, which is part of the SDGs that will go under a more in-depth review next July.

Energy is central to sustainable development. As you know, a large portion of the world population is without access to sustainable energy. Many of them are relying on polluting fuels and technologies for cooking.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The most recent data on energy access include some encouraging news. Recent progress made in a number of populous low-access countries, such as Kenya, Malawi, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, and particularly Rwanda, showed electrification rates between 2 to 3 percentage points annually, i.e., beyond the pace observed around the world.

Such positive stories suggest that it is possible to accelerate the overall progress toward the Energy Goal over the coming years when targeted efforts are made where they can achieve the greatest impact, but also highlight the need for the knowledge, experiences and best practices to be shared and disseminated more widely, if we are to get on track to meet Goal 7. Such an approach is also valid accelerate the achievement of all other SDGs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As discussed during this Forum, realizing the 2030 Agenda also requires adequate financial resources.

The positive message we receive now is that the task of financing the SDGs should not be unsurmountable. The additional investments per year that are necessary to finance the SDGs remain within our reach in a world economy that is now at approximately at 127 trillion.

Through some presentation and group exercises, the forum also gave participants the opportunity to simulate and explore the interconnections among the focal SDGs at the 2018 HLPF, and identify leverage points for transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies by 2030.

It was particularly interesting to see, once more, how innovative tools in information technology can help us better understand the interconnectedness of policies we design and test their expected impacts on SDGs at their earliest stages of development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I was particularly delighted that this Forum had a special session on Sustainable Cities and Communities, taking place on the World Cities Day.

As it was mentioned once or twice during this forum, the world's cities, which occupy only a small portion (2 - 3%) of the earth's land today, are responsible for the largest consumption of energy resources worldwide (60-80% of the global energy consumption) and also generate a high total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (75% of the energy-related GHG emissions).

Of course, we can address the issue, starting with, for instance, improving the efficiency of our buildings and transportation systems, which are respectively responsible for 30% and 40% of the energy-related greenhouse gas emissions.

However, our transition to low carbon cities necessitates that we also revise our city planning approaches and models of urbanization, creating low-density development and promoting unsustainable modes of transport.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your discussions have highlighted many times the unequivocal understanding of the need for addressing interlinkages among the SDGs in line with the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda, and the need to ensure coherence between the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed instruments, such as those related to the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework.

As you all know, in the first decade of the 21st century, we entered in the Urban Era, characterized by an unprecedented pace of urbanization. In 2030, 60% of the global population will live in cities.

Cities are essential to sustainable development. Besides, being centres for innovation and culture, cities play a leading role in economic development of countries, whose global gross domestic product (GDP) is created, for a large part, in cities.

However, the current trend of urbanization is also often accompanied by significant social and environmental challenges, such as the lack of access to adequate, affordable urban land and housing options, urban

infrastructure and basic services. As a result, in many cases, the rapid urban growth is uncontrolled and informal, taking the shape of urban slums, often on fragile landscapes.

Much has been written and disseminated on this issue taking place in Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia, where the annual urban growth rate is sometimes close to the annual rate of progression of urban informal settlements. However, I would like to highlight the case of other Member States, where a comparable situation is occurring, but where the effects may sometimes be even more worrying.

Indeed, some Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are facing particular challenges posed by rapid urbanization, their main cities often being established in coastal and low-lying areas, have a magnetic effect on rural populations. In many cases, their urban population growth rates are very high (ranging between 3 and 5% annually), and the urbanization process is taking place informally.

In these circumstances, the new urban dwellers are constantly swelling the ranks of citizens living on vulnerable land, where substandard housing, poor drainage, and inadequate basic services contribute to increase their vulnerability to multiple hazards, including storm surges, flooding and tropical cyclones, which are undeniably increasing in frequency and severity with climate change.

Besides exacerbating natural disasters, climate change and its adverse effects can wipe out decades of development gains and even pose existential threat to some of the most exposed and vulnerable states, regions, cities and communities.

Climate change has already provoked many displacements and forced migration in different regions of the world. We must address those issues urgently and undertake the necessary transformations to make our societies more resilient.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While the theme of Transformation Towards Resilient Societies has been discussed extensively, within and outside this Forum, I would like, nevertheless, to insist on the simple fact that all the strategies, plans and measures to build resilience can only work at their best, when all the levels of our societies are engaged toward such a common goal, and this, at the earliest stages possible of development and implementation.

The same applies to all the SDGs. We must find the ways to get the full participation of all the stakeholders, if we are to achieve them by 2030.

As we are preparing the for the 2018 HLPF, with its thematic focus of *Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies*, and the in-depth review of a particular set of goals (6, 7, 11, 12 and 15), I would like to stress again the need to bear in mind the indivisible, integrated and interlinked nature of the SDGs and the three dimensions of sustainable development, including cross-cutting, new and emerging issues.

Before closing, I would like to express special thanks to the co-organizer and host, Dr. Jong Soo Yoon, Head of the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD). The 2017 Sustainable Development Transition Forum would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of his dedicated team.

I would also like to thank the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and especially the UN DESA's Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) and the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), for their exceptional support in preparation for this important meeting.

I wish to acknowledge and thank our facilitators, chairpersons, speakers and participants for making our discussions so frank, open, stimulating and relevant.

I take this opportunity again, to extend an invitation to you and your representatives to be part of this continued dialogue at HPLF 2018, and to join us in New York this coming July, when the HLPF will take place from 9 to 18 July.

Thank you.