

Deputy Secretary-General's guest of honor statement at the 17th Doha Forum

14 May 2017
United Nations
Secretary-General

Your Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani,

**Your Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Minister of Foreign
Affairs of the State of Qatar,**

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a pleasure to join you.

Let me start by conveying warm greetings from Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who took up his duties in January with an appeal for peace, and who looks forward to working with you in the years ahead.

He and I would both like to thank the organizers of the Doha Forum for bringing together so many government officials, businesspeople, and other dynamic partners.

We would also like to express appreciation to His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, for Qatar's support to the United Nations. The country continues to play a key role in ensuring timely, predictable and flexible financing to help the United Nations meet the needs of vulnerable people caught up in conflict, war, disasters and other emergencies.

Such solidarity is especially welcome at this time when there are more people in need of humanitarian assistance, and more people fleeing conflict, persecution, poverty and environmental degradation, than at any time in recent history.

Indeed, we are living in a world that is out of balance.

We are seeing a proliferation of new conflicts even as old ones never seem to end.

Climate change is a growing threat, and biological diversity in steep decline.

Joblessness – particularly for our young people – is on the rise.

Women and girls are still subject to systemic discrimination and outrageous levels of violence.

Nationalism, populism and xenophobia are growing.

Many people have lost confidence in governments and global institutions.

And while globalization has brought remarkable gains in recent decades, over that same period inequalities have also widened dramatically. The world's eight richest people control more global assets than half of the world's population.

Behind such numbers are real people: parents struggling to feed and clothe their children; young people worried about their future; people trapped in a cycle of poverty, ill-health and despair.

We must also recognize the ways these challenges feed and fuel each other. Many of the root causes of violence, including terrorism, are often born out of poverty, deprivation and marginalization. Too many people feel left out of decisions, which affect their lives. When deprived of a voice-- of peaceful channels for addressing grievances – of hope and dignity-- people at times turn to violence. I have seen this in my own native Nigeria in the North East with Boko Haram.

That is why we must work, now, to build an equitable, sustainable and peaceful world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

That really is the purpose of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development-- and of the 17 Goals that are its centerpiece. These 17 interlinked and interdependent Goals are our blueprint for a world of peace, prosperity and dignity for all on a healthy planet.

The deadline is 2030. That is not much time. But it is enough if we work hard and we work together, if we work with long-term objectives in mind, and if we all make sustainable development a priority.

One key point about the 2030 Agenda that deserves greater attention is that it is universal and applies to all countries. Even the richest and most advanced countries have yet to conquer inequality, fully empower women or safeguard the environment. In a sense, all countries are in a process of developing-- of building better lives for all of their people. So this is a universal agenda. It is as much about developed countries as it is developing countries.

As you may be aware that as an advisor to the current Secretary-General's predecessor, I had the great honour to be at the heart of the process that helped define the 2030 Agenda agreed by 193 Governments in 2015. The process itself was as inspiring as the result-- the most open and inclusive consultative process in UN history, which drew on the voices and ideas of millions of people across the world, and which led to our boldest ever agenda. We need to keep those coalitions together as we translate the Agenda's promises into positive change and real action at the country level.

I then had the further great honour to be asked to help spearhead the Agenda's implementation in my home country of Nigeria. As Environment Minister, I saw not only the needs close-up, but also the readiness of people to contribute to problem-solving in their communities and for the world. I also saw the challenges involved in catching up, on the ground, with an agenda that represents a paradigm shift in the way we approach sustainable development. In and beyond Nigeria, we have come across siloes and revamp our traditional thinking around partnerships.

Today, as United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, I have the enormous privilege and responsibility of promoting the global sustainable development agenda as that work deepens and accelerates.

In these early months of the Secretary-General's tenure, he has set in motion a wide range of reforms aimed at making the United Nations a responsive and effective actor for development and peace. In other words fit for purpose.

We are taking steps to strengthen peacekeeping and, especially to prevent conflicts from erupting in the first place. Prevention is not just a matter of diplomacy when countries are on the brink of violence. It means building resilient societies and strong institutions. It means investing in social cohesion, so that minorities feel their identities are respected even as they belong to the larger community. And of course it means realizing the potential of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change. The best prevention, ladies and gentlemen, is inclusive and sustainable development.

We are also pursuing reform of the UN development system, so that it can better support Member States in their efforts to deliver on the 2030 Agenda and climate commitments. The UN development system needs to be more cohesive, accountable and transparent. It needs to be more than the sum of its parts, while preserving the richness of the system's expertise. We are encouraged to note how many countries are aligning their national development plans with the Sustainable Development Goals. They are sharing experiences about how to mobilize resources and build capacity. Such local ownership and leadership-- in the private and public sectors alike-- is crucial.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Implementation of the Paris Agreement is inextricably linked with the Sustainable Development Goals. Indeed, the steps we take to mitigate and adapt to climate change will simultaneously advance the 2030 Agenda.

Qatar itself recognizes both the threat and the opportunity. Already rising temperatures and forecasts of declining rainfall highlight the danger. At the same time, the country is committed to climate action, including by generating electricity from renewable energy sources. As Qatar moves towards ratifying the Paris Agreement, our hope is that it will also act to ensure the sustainability of the vast infrastructure development that is happening in the country. Here and across the world, our future progress and wellbeing rests on more closely linking sustainability and climate action.

Financing and other means of mobilizing resources will be critical. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development offers a comprehensive plan, building on earlier agreements reached in Monterrey and right here in Doha. We face a challenging and uncertain global economic environment. At the same time, there is potential to "unlock" trillions of dollars in private and non-traditional financing – including Islamic financing. Let us make this wise investment in people and stability.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 2030 Agenda enshrines a promise to leave no one behind-- and to assist those most in need, first. Among the most vulnerable of the vulnerable are people who have been forced to flee their homes as a result of conflict or persecution, or who leave other dire circumstances in search of greater opportunity. The Agenda thus has important potential to address today's large-scale movements of refugees and migrants, issues that are among the main concerns at this year's Doha Forum.

At a time of when there are 65 million refugees and displaced persons – more than at any time since the Second World War-- the United Nations continues to call for wider sharing of

responsibility in providing protection, asylum and assistance. It is neither sustainable nor just that only a few countries, largely in the developing world, provide havens for people in need. The international community needs to do more to support this hospitality by stepping up financing and protection-- and by dialing down the politicization of refugee issues. In that same spirit, let us work towards safe, orderly and regular migration. And let us recognize the imperative of harnessing the development potential of migration for the benefit of migrants and countries of origin, transit and destination. Indeed, the solidarity we show with refugees and migrants will be a key driver of success in fulfilling the 2030 Agenda – and it will also be a key test of our commitment to it.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are daunting challenges to be sure. Yet the world has the wealth, the technology and the knowhow to defeat poverty and put our societies on sustainable trajectories. Sustainable development is a contribution to sustaining peace. Climate action offers a pathway to stability and the markets of the future. Let us update our mindsets, and make investments that are commensurate with the challenge-- and that we know can bring great dividends.

I personally feel a tremendous responsibility to get this right-- under the UN Charter, but also under a personal compact that I have with my own children. The United Nations will count on you to show the wisdom and the sense of shared purpose in achieving the transformation we know can be ours.

Thank you.