

Draft Opening Remarks

Regional Symposium on “Building Effective, Accountable and Inclusive Institutions and Public Administration for Advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”

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[Introduction]

- I would like to welcome you warmly to this Symposium on behalf of the United Nations.
- It is a great joy to be in the city of Incheon. I would like to thank the hosts, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety of the Republic of Korea and Incheon Metropolitan City Government, for hosting this event in these beautiful surroundings.
- I am also grateful to them for hosting my Department’s Project Office on Governance (UNPOG) and supporting the Head, Mr. Char Gun Chung, and his dynamic team.. Just few days ago, I had the honour to attend the opening of the new office of UNPOG, together with Mr. Liu Zhenmin, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.
- Mr. Liu regrets that he could not stay for the Symposium but has asked me to extend his wishes for a successful event.
- I also want to thank the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and UNDP for their support.

[The 2030 Agenda]

- The theme of this Symposium is timely – we will soon begin year three of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- The 2030 Agenda was adopted by all Member States of the UN in September 2015. 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets at its core.
- The Agenda is “a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity”. It seeks to strengthen peace and revitalize the global partnership.
- It is uniquely ambitious. It aims at transforming the world by 2030.
- It commits to eradicating extreme poverty for all people everywhere.
- The Agenda applies to all countries, rich and poor.
- It is guided by the principle of “leave no one behind” .
- And it aims to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies based on good governance at all levels.

[The need to mobilize and transform institutions]

- Such an ambitious Agenda requires equally ambitious national responses.
- Governments and public institutions are at the heart of this response.
- The Agenda makes it clear that they must be effective, accountable and inclusive to underpin the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. They also have their own stand-alone goal; SDG 16.
- But to deliver on the SDGs, institutions themselves need to profoundly transform. They need new capacities and knowledge to provide integrated support to implementation. They need new ways of working. They need to open up to people, innovation and new technologies to better deliver public services and promote inclusion. And they need to constantly evaluate their impact and plan for the long term and future generations.
- Succeeding also requires mobilizing the men and women who work within those structures. The SDGs need to capture the imagination of public servants. We need to galvanize public servants’ drive to respond to people’s needs and relentlessly innovate. We need to overhaul their capacities and change workflows -- but we also need to change mindsets.
- Our symposium is precisely about this- mobilizing and equipping public institutions -and people within them -to embark on the common visionary endeavour world leaders launched in 2015.

[Regional implementation]

- We have been making good progress already in implementing the SDGs.
- This came out clearly at the meetings of the UN High-Political Forum on Sustainable Development last July. Many governments in Asia and the Pacific have been adjusting and mobilizing institutions at all levels to support SDG implementation. They have been adapting the targets to their national circumstances and incorporating them in their plans and policies.
- In 2016 already, four countries from Asia and the Pacific, including our host, Korea, volunteered to conduct voluntary national reviews of their efforts at the HLPF. In July 2017, they were 10.
- Additional countries have volunteered for 2018.
- Lessons and good practices are already emerging. But challenges and areas requiring support are also becoming apparent.
- Our symposium is also about this- sharing lessons, building capacities and mobilizing support.

[The broader context for the Symposium]

- My Department has already organized two Regional Symposiums on equipping public institutions for implementing the 2030 Agenda. The first was for Latin America and Caribbean in 2016. The second was for Small Island Developing States in 2017. Next week, the Africa Regional Symposium will take place in Ethiopia. We will present the outcomes of your discussions
- We can achieve a lot during those three days in Incheon.
- We must also think ahead. On Friday, we will come together to recap the insights emanating from your discussions. We will discuss the Way Forward and Future Actions. We will have a session dedicated to discussing the kind of support available to your countries for implementing the SDGs.

- During the symposium, we will also be launching a process with public administration schools to develop curriculums for the SDGs, working with UNITAR.

[Conclusion]

- It is befitting that we are meeting in Incheon, this booming city full of energy and dynamism.
- This is because we would like this symposium to launch an equally dynamic joint endeavour to implement the SDGs in your region.
- The Minister asked earlier what we think about when we think about Korea. We think about many inspiring things, notably its amazing trajectory towards smart and sustainable development. I also hope that, one day, people might also think about our Incheon symposium as an event that made a difference for realizing the SDGs.
- I look forward to these three days.

Thank you.