



**Commemoration of the Appointment of President John Dramani Mahama to
Co-Chair the SDG Group of Eminent Advocates
12 February 2016**

Remarks

**Christine Evans-Klock
UN Resident Coordinator**

Your Excellency, John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana

Hon. Alban S. K. Bagbin, Majority Leader

Hon. Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu, Minority Leader

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, UN Under-Secretary General & UNFPA Executive Director

Ambassador Hertzberg,

Dr. Thompson,

Honourable Ministers,

Traditional Leaders,

Members of the diplomatic corps,

Leaders from Government, civil society, youth groups, and the private sector,

Members of the press corps,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you so much for joining us this afternoon.

Your Excellency, President Mahama, On behalf of the UN team in Ghana, I would like to congratulate you upon your appointment by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to co-chair the group of SDG Eminent Advocates and I would like to thank you for ongoing leadership role in promoting the Sustainable Development Goals.

Your appointment reflects the leading role Ghana has played over the past few years to envision and define the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Beginning back in 2012, NDPC and the UN launched consultations across the country to ask people from all groups of society about the “future they wanted”... on what should be captured in the post-2015 global agenda, and their views about how these aspirations could be attained.

One of the priorities that emerged was on reducing inequality, and Ghana went on to coordinate a global consultation on inequality with Denmark and host a Pan-African conference on inequality in 2014.

The work of the high-level inter-ministerial Coordinating Committee and the broad-based National Technical Committee made sure that at the global level, the SDG drafts reflected Ghana’s views, and, at the local level, laid the groundwork for SDG implementation within Ghana.

This appointment also reflects Ghana’s leadership within Africa on the Millennium Development Goals. We have been proud to celebrate Ghana’s success in having met the Millennium Development Goal to cut extreme poverty in half, that it did so significantly ahead of the 2015 target date, and that it had been the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to meet this goal.

Ghana also made substantial advancement in reducing HIV prevalence, increasing access to primary education for girls and boys equally, and reducing hunger.

The country has not only demonstrated results and shared its success stories, but has acted on good principles of transparency, acknowledging where progress has fallen short of aspirations, for example on decent work, improving women's involvement in governance, and decreasing maternal mortality.

Worldwide, we recognize that the MDGs have been the most successful anti-poverty movement in history. They proved true the 2000 vision of then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the UN Member States that setting goals and sticking to them through alliance of governments, civil society, the private sector and development partners could lift millions of people out of poverty, empower women and girls, and improve health and well-being. The number of people living in extreme poverty has been cut in half.

The Sustainable Development Agenda is the Road Map for ending extreme poverty in all its forms, for overcoming uneven progress across regions and within countries, and for leaving no one behind.

It is the People's Agenda. It is the result of years of grassroots consultations across the globe. It is a plan to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is one unified agenda for social, economic and environmental development and it is universal, a commitment of the least developed, the middle-income and the most developed countries alike.

It sets new ambitions in 17 sustainable development goals...

...to end extreme poverty in all its forms,

To decrease inequality,

To boost economic growth and job growth,

To improve infrastructure and cities,

To speed up industrialization and slow down climate change,

And to promote peace and to secure access to justice for all.

As the Secretary General has said, “This means building societies founded on respect for human rights, where fear, distrust and marginalization are supplanted by pluralism, participation and respect for differences.”

The breadth of experience across the members of the group of SDG Eminent Advocates reflects the breadth of the partnerships needed to achieve them.

In announcing their appointment on January 19th, the Secretary-General said that this group reflected the universal character of the 2030 agenda.

They have been drawn from all continents, from industry, from civil society, from the arts, from philanthropy - each of them drivers of change in their own right.

But the Co-chairs are Heads of State, from Ghana and Norway, reflecting the fact that the SDGs will make a difference at country level when they are led by national development plans, policies, budgets, and development partnerships.

Your Excellency, it is already appreciated that from the beginning consultations on Ghana’s long-term development plan, linkages were drawn between the global Sustainable Development Agenda and the national development agenda.

And at the regional level, the coherence of development aspirations is also apparent. The Secretary-General in his remarks at the AU Summit last month in Addis Ababa noted that the objectives of the 17 SDGs fit perfectly with the AU's own ambitions as outlined in the Agenda 2063 continent-wide socio-economic development plan.

The SDGs are worthy goals in their own right. But they also provide a strong foundation for national development if they are owned locally and integrated into national plans and follow-through.

7) UN support for implementation and impact in Ghana...

The UN in Ghana is committed to working with NDPC, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the line ministries and other government and social and business partners to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals into the national long-term development plan, and to ensure that their achievement in the first 15 years creates an enabling environment for achieving the rest of the 40-year development plan.

We have started to craft a UN Action Plan with NDPC and the Ministry of Finance that will target UN SDG support to where it can have the greatest multiplier effect. Options under discussion include support to

- build up the statistical baseline and monitoring for the SDGs consistent with long-term development plans,**
- expand knowledge about and accountability for SDGs at local levels,**
- strengthen the knowledge base and share good practices on national prioritized targets within the 17 SDGs, and**
- Support cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms for a whole-of-Government delivery approach.**

We will also continue to share Ghana's SDG experience at regional and global levels. And if you are interested in knowing what lessons we have learnt from our partnerships here in Ghana on the MDGs that should inform our support for the SDGs, I refer you to a set of MDG briefs available outside this hall.

In this Action Plan UN agencies will continue to work together, to deliver the experience, expertise, south-south knowledge sharing and partnerships from each agency's mandate in a coherent joined up fashion, to provide support as one UN, consistent with the inter-sectoral nature of the SDGs.

The UN team here in Ghana has great resources to draw on from across the UN system. It is not symbolic that we have with us today

- UNFPA Executive Director and UN Under-Secretary General, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, and**
- UNFPA Regional Director for West and Central Africa, Mr. Mabingue Ngom;**
- UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director, Ms. Jan Beagle**
- FAO Assistant Director General and Regional Representative for Africa, Mr. Tijana Bukar, and**
- UNICEF Deputy Regional Director for West and Central Africa, Ms. Christine Muhigana.**

Some of these UN dignitaries are here this week for regional meetings on sexual health and reproductive rights for young people, to celebrate Ghana's achievements in reducing HIV prevalence and acknowledge Ghana's new leadership role in UNAIDS' Governing Council, and to join HE Dr Lordina Dramani Mahama, the First Lady, and the Organization of African First Ladies, in launching the Ending Child Marriage Campaign in Ghana.

In closing my remarks I would like to thank NDPC for co-hosting this event today to congratulate the President and to launch the SDG implementation stage in Ghana.

I hope that we will take away a better understanding of the opportunities we all have to help the SDGs make a Difference.

Your excellency, President Mahama, in your remarks to the Global Sustainable Development Summit in New York in September, you said that "the adoption of the new Goals at a time the UN turns 70 provides a level of hope to young people of the world that ... the UN is still alive to the challenges of today's world."

We are grateful, Your Excellency, for your commitment to take up the Co-Chairmanship of the Group of Eminent Advocates to help make sure that this

hope, this aspiration, is realized – for young people, for all people, here in Ghana, throughout the Continent, and across the Globe.

Thank you.

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