

**REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR BURHAN GAFOOR, PR OF
SINGAPORE, AT THE FIRST INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON THE
SDG SUMMIT POLITICAL DECLARATION, UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ROOM 3, FRIDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 2023, 10.00AM.**

Co-Chairs

- 1 I would like to start by thanking both of you for assuming the responsibility of co-facilitating the SDG Summit political declaration, and for convening this meeting.
- 2 I would also like to associate myself with the statement made by Cuba on behalf of the G77 and China. I also listened carefully to the statement just made by the European Union. I think there is some degree of overlap between the two statements, and this gives some encouragement. I hope our discussions on the SDG declaration can avoid the classic dynamics of the Second Committee and avoid a polarising approach, but rather seek to identify common ground.
- 3 The SDG Summit will be the centrepiece of High-Level Week in September. This is not the first SDG Summit we will convene but this year's SDG Summit is critically important for two reasons: First, the world today is vastly different from the world of 2015, when we adopted the 2030 Agenda. We are facing today multiple crises, of war and geopolitical tensions, of climate change and natural disasters, and of debt, inflation, and low growth.
- 4 The second reason why the SDG Summit this year is critically important is that we are running out of time. We have reached the halfway point of the 2030 Agenda and we are far from where we need to be. And worse, the progress that we have made on the SDGs are now at risk of being reversed by the confluence of multiple ongoing crises.
- 5 I want to use this opportunity to respond to some of your questions and to put forward some ideas on the scope of the declaration. Let me say at the outset that I welcome the guiding principles that you have outlined which offers a very good framework.
- 6 First, it is important for the SDG Summit political declaration to **draw from and make reference to the UN75 declaration**, which in our view provides a forward-looking framework for the work of the UN. It is equally important to

refer to and reaffirm some of our foundational documents and principles, namely the UN Charter and international law. To pursue sustainable development for our people, we need a peaceful and secure world based on international law and respect for all sovereign nations. We also need to acknowledge the principles of the Rio Declaration on the Environment and Development and of course the principles identified in Agenda 2030 itself.

- 7 Second, the broad theme and tone of the SDG declaration must **underline the need for accelerated implementation and extreme urgency**. The message we need to send to the world is that we simply cannot continue with business as usual. We need to act with extreme urgency because the relevance and future of the UN itself depends on the accelerated implementation of A2030. The themes of people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership, as identified in A2030, remain very much valid.
- 8 Third, the SDG declaration must **emphasise the need for national ownership and leadership** and support the need to build or rebuild national consensus around the need for sustainable development. In recognising national ownership, we must also recognise the diversity of national systems and policies around the world and the different levels of development and capacities in different countries. While the 2030 Agenda is applicable to all countries, it was never intended as a one-size-fits-all solution.
- 9 Fourth, **we must focus on the idea of inclusion. We must strongly commit to advancing inclusive societies and economies**. The powerful idea of “leave no one behind” must remain at the core of the 2030 Agenda. The idea of inclusion must apply at all levels, at the national, regional, and global levels. Within nations, we have to address inequalities and support the marginalised. At the global level, we must recognise that the poorest and most vulnerable countries, and the small countries, are facing severe challenges and they will need the most help. Inclusion also means engaging stakeholders, including the private sector.
- 10 Fifth, the declaration must emphasise the need for **partnership and global solidarity**. Without partnership and solidarity, we will not be able to achieve the ambitious goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda; or address the many pressing global challenges that we are faced with. If there was one lesson from the pandemic, it was that solidarity was very much needed but it was also found wanting. And this is a lesson for us as an international community, to see how we can work together with solidarity.

- 11 Sixth, the SDG declaration must be **forward-looking and emphasise the need for transformation and innovation**. This requires new policies, new technologies and new ways of thinking. We think it is important for the declaration to recognise the potential of digital technologies to close the development gap. We need to bring the digital dimension to the SDG Summit and encourage innovations that can catalyse the achievement of the SDGs. Since the adoption of the A2030 in 2015, there have been big leaps in digital technologies and AI. The COVID pandemic has shown that digital technologies can be a tool to accelerate development, but the pandemic has also shown that the huge digital divide among and within countries needs to be urgently addressed.
- 12 Seventh, the SDG declaration must **underline the crisis in the management of global commons**. Climate change poses a clear and present danger to all nations and societies and yet we are far behind in reaching our climate targets. There are other challenges, such as water, oceans, outer space and also cyberspace. These issues of the global commons affect the planet as a whole and it goes beyond the implementation of specific SDG goals.
- 13 Eighth, the SDG Declaration must have a **strong focus on empowering women, enhancing gender equality, and engaging young people** nationally and globally. Women and youth play crucial roles in our societies as leaders and as catalysts for transformation. We have to address their needs and find ways to empower them.
- 14 Ninth, the declaration must have a **strong focus on means of implementation**. I endorse the remarks by the EU that we should await the outcome of the FFD Forum and see how we can incorporate that into the zero draft of the SDG declaration. It is clear that the current system of global finance is unable to provide either the scale or reliability of financing needed for development. Achieving the SDGs will therefore require major and fundamental reforms in the way that we organise financing for development. It would also require us to rethink our approach towards financing for development, which is not just a question of aid or ODA, but it is about collective investment in global public goods. In particular, the declaration must address the issue of reform of the global financial architecture.
- 15 This leads me to my tenth and final point, which is about the need to **reform and re-energise the global institutions to support the implementation of**

the SDGs. The declaration should emphasise the strong need to re-energise the global architecture, and in particular, the need to create channels of communication and coordination between the UN development system, the international financial institutions, and groupings such as the G7 and G20. I know that the UN cannot legislate these reforms, but it is important that we send a clear political signal that the status quo can no longer continue, and we need a coherent and coordinated dialogue among the key actors, with the UN acting as a platform.

16 In this regard, I also underline the need to strengthen and support the UN Development System (UNDS), which has been doing fairly well but it is quite clear that the UNDS is under severe strain, in the context of major crises and deductions in contributions. Therefore, it is important that we recommit to supporting the UNDS.

17 I apologise for this lengthy statement, but I wanted to share some of these initial thoughts, and I hope to work closely with both of you.

18 Thank you.

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