



## The Role of the UN and its Sustainable Development Goals in Seeking to Reduce/Eliminate Human Trafficking by 2020

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Thank you very much, and I'm honoured to be part of this very important gathering and I want to talk about one specific thing, and that is the relationship of this mission, this purpose of ending modern slavery in all its forms and ending human trafficking, with the upcoming Sustainable Development Goals at the United Nations. This is a work in progress, the SDGs, and I think this meeting and the Holy See can help to shape the SDGs, both their final content and how they are implemented in the future, to help succeed in the quest that is the purpose of this meeting.

I wanted to give you a background to the Sustainable Development Goals, a bit of the current process and then some suggestions, of how the next few months could be most effectively used so that we can see the Sustainable Development Goals as a tool that will be an important instrument for many things, including the fight against modern slavery.

The background of the Sustainable Developments Goals really begins fifteen years ago with the Millennium Development Goals. As everybody recalls, in September 2000 the UN General Assembly adopted the Millennium Declaration. I would like to say that Pope John Paul II played, as expected, a very important role in highlighting the importance of the Jubilee Year and the importance of the new millennium for raising the aspirations for humanity. Then-Secretary General Kofi Annan put the Millennium Declaration before world leaders, there were about 163 world leaders assembled in September 2000. They adopted the Millennium Declaration. Within the Millennium Declaration were a number of development goals. They weren't even identified as a separate category at the time of the Declaration, but the next year, Secretary General Kofi Annan told them in 2001: "By the way, you adopted Millennium Development Goals, and here they are, check out the following pages". And the General Assembly then voted to take a portion of the Millennium Declaration and call them "Eight Millennium Development Goals". I was greatly honoured at that time, that moment, when Kofi Annan asked me to become his advisor and the UN's advisor on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and I've been in that capacity now for the last fourteen years, working with then-Secretary General Kofi Annan, and now General Secretary Ban Ki-moon. So I've watched the Millennium Development Goals as a tool.

They are not a treaty. They are not legally binding. They are a statement of global aspirations, and they are meant to be a focal point, a way to get the attention of the world. I believe more and more that attention is the key in our world; the world is so noisy, competing images and now virtual images as well as others, that attention to what's important is a large part of our battle. And the Millennium Development Goals did serve in an important way – I wouldn't say in a decisive way but in an important way – to draw attention to the plight of the poorest of the poor. Because the Millennium Development Goals were goals addressed to reducing extreme poverty, illiteracy, children out of school, and preventable and treatable disease. So they focused on extreme poverty, and they called, among other things, for reducing the extent of extreme poverty by at least half, comparing the 1990 rate of extreme poverty as the World Bank measures it, with the 2015 rate. That goal, broadly, will be achieved, in that the global rate of extreme poverty has come down significantly during this period, and there have been hearteningly many other areas of progress, including the reduction of the deaths of children, especially from preventable and treatable causes. Thirteen million children under the age of five died in 1990. Now the number is still shockingly high, but lower, 6 million. So from 13 million to about 6 is more than half reduction. This is because the causes of death of young children are almost entirely preventable and treatable. It is still a blot on humanity that as many as 6 million children die each year of preventable and treatable causes, largely because they don't have access to the most basic preventative and curative health services, and they live in poverty. The numbers are coming down thankfully but there is a long way to go.

Now in 2012 the UN Member States convened on the twentieth anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit. This was a different process, largely around environmental themes. And you'll recall, of course, that in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit, three major treaties had been adopted: one on climate change, which we still battle to implement; one on biodiversity; and one on combating the spread of deserts, or combating desertification. When the member states convened in 2012 again in Rio, they had to take note of an extraordinarily sobering reality, which was that not one of the three treaties had been implemented. These were treaties that had been adopted at the highest degree of political leadership; heads of state and government from around the world had signed them, more than 190 governments had ratified them, and yet we are on a catastrophic environmental trajectory as well.

So in 2012 the governments, looking at this rather bleak twenty years of failure, took note of the at least moderate success – I don't want to over do it, but I would say moderate success of the Millennium Development Goals – and said that the idea of global goals, to help orient the global discourse, the attention of young people and the acts of government, should apply more broadly, to expand the Millennium Development Goals to a broader concept that would include the continued fight to end extreme poverty but would add two other crucial dimensions. One is the dimension of environmental sustainability, to draw attention to our coming catastrophe if we don't change course on climate, on eliminating biodiversity and so on, and the third dimension is social inclusion, that even though economic development had proceeded, economic growth had taken place and poverty had come down, the extent of inequality in our societies, inequality of income, of power, of wealth, had widened, and the crisis of social exclusion was widening not narrowing.

So the governments in June 2012 adopted a new vision of sustainable development, which I strongly subscribe to myself, which is that sustainable development means to combine economic development, including the end of poverty, with social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Or we say in shorthand, that sustainable development means a holistic approach to economic, social and environmental objectives. I find this a powerful concept, that we should have a holism of economic, social and environmental aspirations. We should be teaching our children and we should be teaching our governments, that pursuing GNP is not enough, that pursuing economic growth is not enough, but that economic growth needs to be combined with social inclusion and with environmental sustainability in a holistic framework.

Rather remarkably, in a world that agrees on almost nothing, governments have come to agree to adopt this concept. This is rather valuable for us because I can only stress how hard it is at a diplomatic level to get agreements on anything these days, even *within* governments, much less across 193 diverse governments. So in June 2012 the governments said we should adopt Sustainable Development Goals by 2015, and that means that we are in the year of adopting the Sustainable Development Goals. In early 2013 a working group, the so-called Open Working Group of the General Assembly of 30 countries and 60 additional countries that participated in this – so it was 90 countries – negotiated a draft of the Sustainable Development Goals. And the draft has a hierarchy of goals and targets.

Last June 2014, the Open Working Group gavelled a decision of recommendations to the General Assembly. It's online, and is called "The Open Working Group Proposal For Sustainable Development Goals". They agreed, but they agreed on something somewhat cumbersome I have to say. So the goals are 17 in number and the targets are 169. So it's a long and complex document; a little bit, in my view, contradictory to the purpose of global education, because it's a lot of education here, a lot of text, a lot of different elements. On the other hand, I think it is also true to say that this is a complex reality we face, because harmonising economic, social and environmental objectives is not a simple matter, it's not a simple matter conceptually, it's not a simple matter – one could say – philosophically, and it is not a simple matter especially operationally, because no government in the world that I know of is ready for this integrated holistic agenda. Governments do not have Ministries of Sustainable Development; governments do not have a holistic vision of issues, and I could recite chapter and verse of governments that resist this kind of holism because it is difficult and because vested interest groups at every point intervene and interfere in this.

Be that as it may, we are on the verge of adopting Sustainable Development Goals. This is extremely important for us to take note of. And I want to update you therefore on what the goals say, what the process will be and how the challenge of human trafficking and ending all forms of modern slavery fit into the process right now, and how the process could be improved to strengthen the ability of the Sustainable Development Goals to support this agenda. First, the notion is that there is a hierarchy: goals; targets; indicators. And the goals and the targets were proposed last year.

The General Assembly voted last December that the proposals would be the basis for the agreement this September. It didn't say that they would be exactly this form but it said that the recommendations of the Open Working Group would be the basis for the agreement this coming September. The governments also agreed that there should be indicators, these are quantitative indicators, they could include the numbers of people in

each country subjected to all forms of slavery for example, or estimates by country of the numbers of individuals caught in human trafficking, because of course such estimates exist even if there are difficulties of having them precise. Because the indicators are a technical issue, the General Assembly said that the heads of state would not adopt them but rather would accede to a technical process, which is now underway. And the indicators will be adopted in March 2016. So take note, if we want indicators on these issues, that's where and when the indicator list will be adopted. Why an indicator list? Because every country will be asked to report every year on the agreed list of indicators.

The other aspect of this that I want to highlight is a political process that's been created called the High Level Political Forum, or HLPF. This will be a new political designation within the UN, which will have the political responsibility for guiding the Sustainable Development Goals. It will be convened by heads of state, and the heads of state will meet in quadrennial summits around the Sustainable Development Goals – so perhaps 2018 or 2020 – and then every four years thereon, which is at least the vision right now, although it's not been settled. And in the intervening years, the governments will meet at the ministerial level to review progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. So the idea is to embed the Sustainable Development Goals within a high-level political process of the member states of the UN. This is extremely important, of course, it is the only way that there can be ongoing accountability and ongoing awareness of government leaders, that they are jointly responsible and accountable for the political oversight of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Sustainable Development Goals will be adopted, as I understand it now, on September 25th. There will be a three-day head-of-state summit. It will be the largest gathering in world history of heads of state and government. It also happens to be on the 70th anniversary of the United Nations. So it is really a remarkable occasion. I think even more remarkable is that the gathering will be opened by Pope Francis. He will be speaking to the assembled heads of state and government on the morning of September 25th. I think this is absolutely the most important and wonderful point, to infuse the moral authority and the moral importance and the critical significance of this concept of holism into the work of the world's political leaders. It is an opportunity one could only dream of, but it is going to happen.

We have therefore the months between now and September, to help sharpen, if possible, the goals and targets and the months between now and next March to help set indicators, and the period up to 2030 to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Because it's like a homework assignment, it only *starts* on September 25th, it doesn't *end*. I tell my students that their homework is to end poverty, but I tell them that they have 15 years to do it, that it's open book and that they can work in groups. So they get some relief out of that, and they will get more relief when they know that the whole world is the group that they should be working in, that this is truly a global process.

Where do we stand on the SDGs in regard to the topics of concern? Both the human trafficking and I would say more generally, the fight to end modern slavery in all its forms. First, I can tell you there are a lot of good things in this document. In many places the targets have very important statements and I wanted to just highlight a few of them briefly for you: Goal no. 5 is to achieve gender equality and to empower women and girls, and target 5.3 under that goal is to eliminate all harmful practices such as child early enforced marriage, and female genital mutilation.

So forced marriage is on the agenda, it is one of the goals, it is one of the norms that is being adopted here and one of the things that should also be monitored and measured. Goal no. 8 is to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. So there are many aspects of this agenda that obviously intersect with the challenges being discussed at this meeting. Let me highlight three. Target 8.5 says "By 2030 achieve a full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men". Target 8.7: "Take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, eradicate forced labour, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers". Target 8.8: "Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers including migrant workers, in particular women migrants and those in precarious employment". So these are areas of obvious overlap.

SDG 10 is to reduce inequality within and among countries, and target 10.7 is to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people. SDG 16, as it's now drafted, includes in target 16.2 "End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against and torture of children". And SDG 17 is to strengthen the means of implementation, including enhancing international partnerships and enhancing data collection.

So you can see that the various parts of these 17 goals include several aspects of the agenda. However, I think that if you do a careful reading, and that is what I recommend for us to do, a careful reading of the goals and targets, there are definitely missing sections, missing words; the word "slavery" does not appear anywhere in the document. This seems to me to be a mistake and a shame, because it's also not only a primary moral

term, but it's also a legal term under ILO charters. It's globally defined, there are many covenants and practices around it, and it should be in the document. Many of these targets, in my view, are not adequately phrased right now. Some seem to refer only to child trafficking, not to adult trafficking. They are ambiguous. They have sections about children, but then they say "end trafficking", not being clear whether it's adult trafficking or child trafficking.

This was written by a committee, a committee of Ambassadors by the way, so all the more understandable that the language is not precise in some places, or ambiguous. Now here is the problem: the problem is that it was so hard to reach an agreement that, from the moment the agreement was reached, a number of governments said "don't touch a comma, don't touch a word, don't you dare put a word 'and' here, don't you dare say 'adult and child trafficking'" or anything like that. So we have fought right now, I have fought a painful battle for almost a year now to make changes or to suggest changes. So far every single comma, every single word has been held at bay under the argument that if anything is opened, everything can unravel. To my mind this is not adequate for the rational deliberations of mankind, because we should be able to rationally deliberate without jeopardising the consensus by having a few words altered here and there. And that is what I recommend we try to do.

There are two co-facilitators of this process. They are the Ambassadors of Ireland and Kenya. I, of course, work with them on a daily basis. They have said not to touch anything, because that is what they hear from the G77 and many powerful member states, and the European Union has not been too helpful on this I have to acknowledge, because it has also taken the view not to touch any word. This of course takes place in many different venues, so I am only reporting how it gets transmitted to New York, and the process. I believe that there is still time to make some changes. And I do believe that since many of the targets are incorrectly stated – I'll go that far – not just poorly stated, but made technical errors in their formulation, that these changes do need to be made, and that this gives an opportunity for some opening of the text. I don't propose that at this moment we review exactly the textual lines, but there are a few places where the objectives here could be strengthened inside the text and what I can say also categorically, is that the indicators that we need can be put in next March; that is an open agenda still, not a closed agenda.

Just to stop therefore, I would like to suggest the following five points. First, I believe that we should all strongly support the Sustainable Development Goals, even as they are currently formulated: they are a powerful, indeed vital global consensus on key issues that will not easily be achieved again, and they are important for us. Second, we should make and I would suggest 'we' being the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and, of course, the Holy See and others, make recommended textual changes in a few places; not to dream of major changes, because I can tell you we are not going to succeed in that, but specific changes on this agenda I think are important, and I think they can be conveyed to the Secretary General, they can be conveyed to the co-facilitators, they can be conveyed to the European Commission and they can be conveyed to key member states of the UN through the Holy See and through other means. Third, I hope that under the guidance of this new framework, that we can help to promote a global partnership around this theme because we are invited to, by the structure of the Sustainable Development Goals, that is, to bring the agencies, the civil society, governments, academia, and other key organisations, to bear. Fourth, there is a conference in July called the Financing For Development Conference, which is a prelude to the SDGs, to put resources on the table to promote the Sustainable Development Goals. The fight against human trafficking and the fight to end all forms of modern slavery requires financial resources. I can elaborate a bit more on that in discussion if there is interest. And finally, I hope that the Holy See and others propose to the High Level Political Forum, which is taking shape, that this agenda should be one of the points that is considered regularly in the review of the Sustainable Development Goals in the years ahead.

Thank you very much.