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## KEYNOTE STATEMENT 1



**H. E. DR TATIANA VALOVAYA**

*Director-General  
United Nations Office in  
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Excellencies,

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

I extend a warm welcome to all of you at the Palais des Nations and to International Geneva, a city renowned for its commitment to international cooperation and sustainable development.

It is a pleasure to open the 22nd World Association for Sustainable Development International Conference. I would like to express my gratitude to the World Association for Sustainable Development (WASD), the Permanent Mission of Qatar, and other partners for organizing this event at a crucial moment, as we approach the 2030 target.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

Let me start by quoting the UN Secretary-General António Guterres: “The SDGs aren’t just a list of goals. They carry the hopes, dreams, rights, and expectations of people everywhere”.



Indeed, the SDGs aim to transform our world by ending poverty, hunger, and inequality, protecting the planet, and ensuring that all people, including future generations, enjoy healthy, just, and prosperous lives. We are now at a pivotal moment in our collective efforts to create a more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive world. The challenges we face are immense, but so are the opportunities to drive transformative change.

There are some reasons for optimism. In many regions, girls now enjoy equal educational opportunities. Women are advancing significantly in leadership roles across various industries. Internet access has expanded and renewable energy now accounts for 30% of global electricity production.

However, this progress represents only 17% of the SDG targets that are actually on track. The latest SDG report[1] reveals that progress on over one-third of the targets has either stalled or reversed. In this regard, today’s conference aims to address a critical question: *How can we accelerate the pace of achieving the 17 SDGs ?*

The UN Secretary-General proposed four key fronts for accelerating progress[2]: ending conflict; increasing SDGs financing; recommitting to inclusion; and making a major push on green and digital transitions. Let me elaborate on these four points.

It is obvious that sustainable development is impossible without peace. Civilian deaths in armed conflicts skyrocketed in 2023, with civilian casualties increased by 72%. Additionally, 2023 was the deadliest year for refugees and migrants, with May 2024 seeing an unprecedented 120 million forcibly displaced people. So, we must start by ending conflicts and fostering peace.

*[To this end, as an example, UNOG co-organizes with civil society actors the Geneva Peace Talks and hosts the Opening Ceremony of the 2024 Geneva Peace Week.]*

The gap in SDG financing is growing, and many developing countries are facing financial instability. The global community is starting to take action. Multilateral Development Banks are reforming to be more effective. Member States are reallocating Special Drawing Rights to support countries in need, and there are emerging efforts to address the debt crisis. However, these actions are still not enough. We need to act faster and more decisively.

We also need to accelerate green and digital transitions. This means speeding up the energy transition, transforming food systems, and making new agreements to protect nature and ensuring universal digital access, particularly for youth worldwide.

Inclusion remains essential. We must reinforce the SDGs’ promise to “leave no one behind” by prioritizing the most disadvantaged, protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, tackling gender inequality, providing better outcomes for young people.

I am particularly pleased to see on the agenda of the conference the emphasis on the vital role of educational institutions in driving forward the implementation of Agenda 2030. Universities and academic institutions are not only centers of learning but also hubs of innovation, research, and community engagement. They play a pivotal role in equipping the next generation with the knowledge and skills needed to achieve sustainable development.

One last important point I need to mention: we need more – not less – multilateral cooperation that transcends borders, breaks down silos, and builds bridges between generations.

The upcoming Summit of the Future in New York in September presents a key opportunity to upgrade our multilateral system by making it more effective and fit for the challenges of the 21st century. This Summit will reinforce and accelerate efforts to meet existing international commitments and further implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Importantly, the Summit will emphasize the need to think and act on behalf of not only present generations but future generations. It will invite Member States and the broader multilateral system to step forward with ideas and concrete actions on how to better respond to current and future challenges.

The UN family in Geneva strives to facilitate Member States' efforts in this regard. For example, the Beyond Lab in my office – previously known as the SDG Lab – has been fostering partnerships aimed at achieving the SDGs. Today, it operates as a multi-stakeholder innovation hub, driving creative thinking and practical solutions to address systemic issues and promote deep structural changes needed for the SDGs and a vision beyond the 2030 agenda.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

I encourage all participants to engage in insightful discussions, share actionable insights, and collaborate on innovative strategies that will help us accelerate progress toward our shared goals. Let us unite for a brighter, more inclusive, and environmentally conscious tomorrow.

I wish you all a fruitful discussion. Thank you!

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



