

UNITED NATIONS

NATIONS UNIES

Please check against delivery

**Human Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):
Realizing the 2030 Global Agenda in the Context of the
ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD)**

REMARKS

BY

MS. MICHELLE GYLES-McDONNOUGH

UNITED NATIONS RESIDENT COORDINATOR, MALAYSIA
UNDP RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE
FOR MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE & BRUNEI
UNFPA REPRESENTATIVE FOR MALAYSIA

23 SEPTEMBER 2016

9.40 am

UNIVERSITI MALAYA, KUALA LUMPUR

Street Address: Wisma UN, Block C, Kompleks Pejabat Damansara, Jalan Dungun, Damansara Heights, 50490 Kuala Lumpur

Telephone: 2095 9158 Facsimile: 2095 2870 E-mail: registry.my@undp.org URL: <http://www.undp.org.my>

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 12544, 50782 Kuala Lumpur

Thank you, Your Excellency Edmund Bon.

And a very good morning to my fellow panellists, the esteemed judges and all of you who are here for this AICHR Youth Debate.

It's my pleasure to speak about the most transformative global agenda in history. It is not only transformational for its content, but also for the way in which it was developed. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emerged from the most participatory and inclusive consultation the world has ever seen. It represents the common aspirations of people from around the world, including from ASEAN – where many national consultations were conducted. Nearly a quarter million Southeast Asians, maybe some of you here today, voted and clearly stated their priorities for the next 15 years in the WorldWeWant survey.¹ The global ownership is strong!

The 2030 Agenda consists of the 17 sustainable development goals, and the goals are complemented by three other major global agreements: The Paris Climate Agreement, the Sendai Disaster Risk Reduction Framework, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, which addresses the means of implementation of the agenda. These together set the global development agenda for our world.

This agenda has three very important characteristics that I want to highlight today. It is a universal agenda. It is an agenda grounded in human rights. And it is an integrated agenda.

¹ <http://data.myworld2015.org/>

Universality of the SDGs:

First what do I mean by a universal agenda? Unlike its predecessor the Millennium Development Goals, which were applicable to only developing countries, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) challenge both developed and developing nations with common and specific milestones to be achieved by all, within the next 15-years. It is an agenda for everyone.

Rights-based agenda:

Second, the goals agreed by all 193 Member States of the United Nations are deeply rooted in human rights, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national and social origin, property, birth, disability or other status². Its overarching principle and commitment is to **leave no-one behind**. To achieve this, the agenda calls for, and requests, each nation to assign high priority to ensuring respect for human rights and human dignity, equality and non-discrimination **both within and between countries**; and to equal opportunity, in order to enable the full realization of human potential of all, including children, women and girls, and all who now are excluded or live on the margins of our societies. With an agenda that makes equal access to opportunity, giving each and every person the chance to reach their fullest potential, we can see there is hard work ahead for every country, from the richest to the least developed.

In every critical pillar of the goals, be it social, economic or environmental, we have a clear obligation to identify the most vulnerable - persons who are furthest behind

² http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

and hardest to reach, and to make every effort to reach them first. Governments committed to doing this in a **renewed spirit of regional and global partnership**, to **mobilize the means required to implement** the Agenda and to prioritise what is most critically needed for people and planet, peace and prosperity, whilst taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities².

Through Goal 16, the global agenda aims to build peaceful and inclusive societies, which are free from fear and violence; and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. This calls for democratic governance, rule of law, access to justice and personal security. In short, the Global Goals therefore, cover the entire spectrum of human rights – economic, civil, political, social and developmental³.

Integrated agenda:

Third, the 17 seemingly diverse SDGs and their 169 targets and over 200 indicators, are actually deeply intertwined. Its core principles of human rights, gender-sensitivity, people- and planet-centeredness make the Agenda transformational, dynamic, integrated and indivisible. There are also many interactions between the goals and targets that apply at all levels of implementation, from national to local, and including at the regional level. The International Council for Science (ICSU) in their *Draft Framework for Understanding SDG Interactions*, published in June this year, for example noted that “due to growing globalization and trade of goods and services, many trade-offs between the SDGs are transboundary in nature, such that

³ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/MDG/Pages/The2030Agenda.aspx>

pursuing goals in one country can interact with the goals of others”⁴. Hence, it would be important for individual countries to take into consideration both internal and cross-border trade-offs and synergies when developing their country framework for implementation.

Nexus between the 2030 Agenda and the AHRD:

So we can see this is an ambitious, bold and transformative agenda. It is a new way of working and interacting within and between countries, with clear priorities and outcomes, because transformation means profound and radical change that sets humanity and our planet in a new direction. To transform our world and secure the future we want, we must make more determined effort, take bolder approaches, build stronger and broader coalitions in our respective countries and across borders, and ensure meaningful participation of stakeholders. We must leave “business as usual” behind.

Countries have committed to do this. They say they are willing. Now, are we ready? Ready to lift these commitments and key principles of the 2030 Agenda off the paper and put them at the core of our implementation and deliver peace, prosperity and stability for our people and planet? What are our plans to localise the goals at the regional, national, state and local levels, and to integrate them into our political systems, cultures and norms even as we recognise our differences? I believe that the degree to which we can traverse and bridge these differences, the degree to which we embrace the core principles of human rights, of leaving no one

⁴ <http://www.icsu.org/publications/reports-and-reviews/working-paper-framework-for-understanding-sdg-interactions-2016/SDG-interactions-working-paper.pdf>

behind and of reaching those furthest behind first, will determine the degree of our success in 2030.

The ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (or AHRD) and ASEAN's determination to create a people-oriented, people-centred and rules-based ASEAN, provides a sound basis for ASEAN countries to build on in the delivery of the 2030 Agenda. I believe that ASEAN's joint commitment to ensuring that the implementation of the AHRD will be in accordance with other international human rights commitments to which ASEAN Member States are parties, including the 2030 Agenda unanimously adopted by all 10 ASEAN Member States – will drive collaborative regional efforts in attaining the Goals. The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (or AICHR) and national human rights institutes have also important roles to play, particularly in regard to monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the 2030 Agenda.

The UN is here to lend support; and the first ASEAN-UN Plan of Action for the period 2016 to 2020, which focuses on cooperation across a number of areas, including the 2030 Agenda, and on gender equality and women's empowerment, gives us a clear framework for us to work together in common purpose. As recently mentioned by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the 8th ASEAN-UN Summit in Vientiane, the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action gives us the opportunity to further the complementarity of ASEAN's Community Vision 2025 with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Finally, there is one point that I wish you to take away from today. This Agenda is not just the responsibility of our respective governments who committed to it last

September. It belongs to each one of us, and young people such as you can make substantial and game-changing contributions to achieving the Agenda. For the Global Goals to be successful, it needs to be **owned by all** and **implemented for all**. We have to take individual responsibility too. If we - as individuals, civil society, the private sector, academia, sub-national and national governments, and regional groupings like ASEAN take responsibility and play our part in achieving these ambitious goals, guided always by our shared principles, rooted in human dignity, non-discrimination, peace, prosperity, and protecting the health of our planet, we will be able to realise significantly improved lives for all people everywhere - a life free from fear and want on a planet that is able to sustainably support and secure our progress for future generations.

Thank you.