

**Statement by Ambassador Vahram Kazhoyan,
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at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2016
“Regional priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific”
*Bangkok, April 4, 2016***

Madame Executive Secretary,
Distinguished Chairperson,
Honorable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by joining the previous speakers in thanking the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the UN ESCAP for organizing and hosting the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2016. I would also like to congratulate the Chair and other members of the Bureau with their election.

When I was coming here my hope was to get answers to many of the questions that we had back home. But I am afraid that I am going to return with even more questions – the many questions that we are asking, discussing and trying to find answers during these days.

Let me try to catalog what Armenia has done/achieved, what we are doing, what we are going to do.

The whole sphere of Sustainable Development in Armenia is governed by the Sustainable Development National Council of the Republic of Armenia, set up under a governmental decree issued on July 25, 2002 to provide for the design of sustainable development-oriented programs, as well as to foster and stimulate

public participation in decision-making processes in the sphere of sustainable development. The council is headed by the Prime Minister of the country. Members of the Council are the Vice-Prime Minister, all concerned Ministers (Ministers of Territorial Administration, Economy, Nature Protection, Healthcare, Employment and Social Affairs, Energy and Natural Resources, Finance, Urban Development, Agriculture, Education and Science), heads of the three relevant National Assembly standing committees, President of the National Academy of Sciences, as well as representatives of seven NGOs covering all of the sustainable development related areas. The Secretary of the Council is the representative of the civil society - Head of the Sustainable Development NGO.

Depending on the necessity the council creates working groups that bear direct responsibility for elaborating certain report or carrying out specific tasks. Such working groups have been responsible for example, the nationalization of MDGs and preparing Rio+20 Armenian National Assessment Report (2012). That working group also became the core team that prepared the “Post-Rio+20” Strategy Plan (2015) offering concept notes and action plans on key directions for sustainable development. But because this report was finalized after the adoption of the Agenda 2030, we did an additional but very useful work. We drew parallel linkages between Rio+20/MDGs and SDGs. Many of the challenges identified through this participatory process are in line with the Government’s Prospective Development Strategy for 2014-2025 which basically also includes many of the goals and targets that are in the SDGs.

We also have created, a kind-of a permanently functioning task force, headed by the Deputy chief-of-staff of the Government, which includes Deputy Ministers of Nature Protection, Economy, Social Affairs, Head of the Sustainable Development NGO and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, represented by myself.

That report also provided preliminary suggestions about SDG prioritization, based on the results of stakeholder discussions, the analysis of progress towards MDG implementation, the priorities defined in strategy documents of the Government, as well as the social and economic realities of Armenia.

In order to develop the suggestions, this report used the following approach: (i) parallel to addressing the pressing social, environmental and other issues, it is critical to fight the root causes of those issues;

(ii) in order to enhance the country's ability and further its goals, it is critical to identify the key binding constraints and address them.

Key binding constraints for Armenia are the level of funding available for economic and social programs; the effectiveness and capacity of the Government; the capability of the human capital, and knowledge and skills of the population necessary for developing and operating economic and social concepts and initiatives. A strong economy is essential for ensuring funds for economic and social programs. The key challenge for the Government and the society at large is to build a strong resilient economy, while continuing policy and institutional reforms essential for recovery and long-term development.

The suggested priority areas include:

1. Growth economy
2. Developing human capital
3. Improved governance (institutional modernization of the government system)
4. Gender equality
5. Health
6. Sustainable development (improved environmental protection).

A major constraint for development is the land blockade of the Armenia by Turkey that creates serious obstacles for a landlocked country like Armenia.

Another important milestone became the Armenian National Progress Report for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals that came out of the printing house four days ago.

Over the course of the last decade, Armenia has undertaken wide ranging and comprehensive institutional, economic and social reform steps towards implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Overall, Armenia identified and committed to fulfill 16 national targets under the eight MDGs. For the measurement of the implementation or fulfillment of these targets, 65 indicators were identified in the process of MDG nationalization. Some of the national targets and indicators were not identical to the globally accepted targets and indicators, but were adapted to reflect the realities in the country.

Out of the total 65 indicators, Armenia achieved 22 indicators. There was, however, good progress towards 10 of the non-achieved indicators. Armenia did not achieve nearly half of the national indicators; a total of 30 out of 65 indicators. There are three indicators for which the measurement is difficult due to lack of accurate data or identified quantifiable measures. It is important to note that the assessment of Armenia's performance towards meeting its commitment and achieving MDGs was done not in general terms, but in relation to achieving concrete national indicators committed by Armenia under each target.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One main question that lingers in the air is Countries' sincerity to really implement the SDGs. I believe if there is true and authentic wish to change this world by 2030, leaving no one behind, than we should put aside the petty differences and be able to stop wars and concentrate on important developmental issues. There were calls for cooperation in this chamber but without humanitarian values, human rights and mutual understanding there cannot be any cooperation, which is a pity.

If we had listened to John Lennon at the time and made love not war, now we could have been living in the world where there was no need for any development goals and where no one was left behind.

Thank you.

