

Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2017
Remarks by H.E. Amb. Nabeel Munir (Pakistan)
Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council
29 March 2017

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to represent the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council at the opening of this session. I am grateful for the opportunity to make a few brief remarks.

The theme of the 2017 Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development is “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing Asia-Pacific”, resonating closely with ECOSOC’s own theme of “Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and addressing related challenges.”

The 2017 ECOSOC Integration Segment, scheduled for 8 to 10 May in New York, will also address poverty from a multi-disciplinary standpoint. The Segment will address the question: “Making eradication of poverty an integral objective of all policies: what will it take?”

It will consider best practices and lessons learned on integrated policymaking for poverty reduction and come up with policy recommendations. As Vice-President of the Council, it will be my privilege to chair the 2017 Integration Segment.

Excellencies,

These themes are also in sync with the theme of the 2017 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”.

But why were these themes chosen?

It is a fact that sustainable development and prosperity for all cannot be achieved without eradicating poverty. Interlinked themes provide us an opportunity to see one issue from different perspectives. And the centrality

of poverty eradication makes it the cross cutting focus of our discussions this year.

MDG 1 was one of the success stories. Worldwide, nearly 1.1 billion people have been extracted from extreme poverty since 1990. This region was a primary contributor to this progress. Yet the number of people living in extreme poverty globally remains unacceptably high – close to 800 million people. Those living in rural areas, working in the agriculture sector and vulnerable groups continue to bear the brunt of poverty.

There is a realization that growth alone, while necessary, is not sufficient to end extreme poverty. That is exactly why we need to address the multidimensional nature of poverty.

Attention to non-material aspects - poor health, job insecurity, social exclusion, malnutrition and lack of personal security – is critical. We need to fully understand and address the causes and manifestations of extreme poverty.

So what do we need to do:

- One, come up with strategies and policies at all levels to prevent and reduce vulnerability to conflict, natural disasters and economic downturns;
- Two, curb inequalities and exclusion that leaves segments of society stuck in poverty;
- Three, support effective governance that ensures all citizens have a voice, particularly those left behind, and;
- Four, enable governments generate growth that is inclusive and help countries halt environmental degradation that causes and aggravates deprivation and increases the risks of setbacks.

Only if we address poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon, and not a linear issue, will we have a shot at achieving SDG 1, and by extension the 2030 development agenda.

HLPF is the forum to discuss these issues in a comprehensive manner at the global level. But regional meetings like this are necessary to inform these discussions and focus on the regional dimensions of poverty.

Excellencies,

The 2030 Agenda, together with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is indivisible and universal. The UN system, at the global, regional and national levels, is aligning itself to support countries in a coordinated and coherent manner to assist them in implementation.

Similarly, countries themselves are increasingly coordinating implementation at the national and sub-national levels, including all stakeholders from government to private sector, academia and the civil society. The UN system is working to tailor its assistance the same way.

Regional and subregional frameworks can facilitate conversion of policies into concrete action at the national level. The 2030 Agenda therefore underlines the importance of regional and subregional dimensions, regional integration and interconnectivity in sustainable development.

As national ownership is key to achieving sustainable development, outcome of national processes should be the basis for reviews at regional and global levels. It is therefore important that at regional meetings, national policies are discussed, experiences shared and lessons learned.

This will identify regional commonalities and trends and good practices that could possibly be scaled up and replicated in other countries of the region, who often face similar challenges. The UN system can assist in this.

It is equally important that results of these discussions feed into the global level. Regional commissions and other UN system entities with national and regional presence could thus be the lynchpin between the national, the regional and the global.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Lastly, I would highlight the criticality of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at the global level for effective and comprehensive tracking of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This year 11 countries from this region will be presenting their own national reviews at the HLPF as part of 44 countries that have volunteered. Participating countries will present their own successes and challenges.

At this regional meeting we are also going to hear from some of the volunteering countries from our region and discuss their preparations; their challenges and how they are addressing them. This, I feel, would make for a useful and interesting exchange.

I thank you for allowing me to take part in these important discussions, and I look forward to engaging with you all.

Thank you.
