

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**OPENING REMARKS TO THE 2019 ECOSOC FINANCING
FOR DEVELOPMENT FORUM
New York, 15 April 2019**

Excellencies,

I am pleased to join you at this critical moment for governments to accelerate action for sustainable development.

We have the tools to tackle poverty, inequality, climate change and environmental pressures. They are the great multilateral agreements reached in 2015: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action, and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

The Sustainable Development Goals are our blueprint for fair and sustainable pathway to development that leaves no one behind. Their powerful message is that no matter where you are born, no matter how marginalized your community may be – the world is determined to carry everyone along on our journey to a better and more equitable future.

The 2030 Agenda is much more than a framework; it is a concrete plan for policies that can improve the lives of hundreds of millions of women, girls, men and boys around the world.

2019 is a defining year for implementing the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.

So far, we are not keeping pace. We face serious challenges and evolving risks.

Uneven growth, rising debt levels, possible upticks in financial volatility, and heightened global trade tensions are complicating the implementation of the SDGs.

Climate change is causing havoc, particularly among the most vulnerable, and greenhouse gas emissions are on the rise once more.

New technology is disrupting labour markets, putting strains on social protection systems.

Most people live in countries where inequality is growing. In some countries, the gender equality gap is widening.

These developments are cause for great concern. We are here today as part of an effort to coordinate an urgent global response.

Excellencies,

A recent study by the International Monetary Fund found that developing countries face an average annual funding gap of some \$2.6 trillion of investment in health, education, roads, electricity, water and sanitation.

For low-income developing countries, this means additional annual spending that can amount to as much as 15 percent of their Gross Domestic Product.

Simply put: we need more money to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda is our blueprint for the global partnership to finance sustainable development. Everyone, and particularly developed countries, must meet their commitments in full.

Development aid remains essential, especially for the poorest countries, but supporting domestic mobilization of resources is the first line of action.

This means increasing tax revenue. That also requires the international community to do much more to fight the tax evasion, money laundering and illicit financial flows that undermine this effort. These measures alone would be enough to finance the public services that are essential to achieve the SDGs, in some emerging market economies.

We can also fill this gap by increasing both the amount and the impact of investment through action by all stakeholders: the private sector, official development assistance, international financing institutions and philanthropies. Resources from International Financial Institutions can help reduce perceived risks and encourage other stakeholders to invest, while funds from philanthropies can be leveraged in public-private partnerships.

Policy frameworks are key to reducing risks, creating an enabling business environment, incentivizing investment in public goals, and aligning financial systems with long-term sustainable development.

New types of financing can also contribute, including innovative financial instruments like green bonds and social investment bonds, crowdfunding and social entrepreneurship. The potential is considerable; for example, green bonds grew from a zero baseline to over \$220 billion in a decade.

We must also increase access to finance, which can be a critical gap for women and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

New financial technologies, institutions and markets have great potential to extend financial inclusion and facilitate investment.

Excellencies,

The Strategy for Financing that I launched last year sets out ways in which the United Nations can support the fundamental shift in the international financial system that is needed to align global economic policies and financial systems with the 2030 Agenda.

We are already making some progress.

At the global level, I am convening a new group, the Global Investors for Sustainable Development Alliance, comprising the Chief Executives of large companies around the world. This is in addition to the Task Force on Digital Financing of the SDGs, which will issue its interim report by September.

At the regional level, we are strengthening our collaboration with multilateral development banks to scale up climate finance and increase access to finance for Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.

At the country level, in line with the reform of the United Nations Development System, we are strengthening our capacity to support governments as they mobilize domestic resources and unlock new sources of private and public finance.

Excellencies,

Your discussions today are a milestone on the path towards the five major summits that will take place here in September, and particularly the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development. I count on the strong participation of finance ministers in that meeting.

The political outcome agreed last week shows that this forum is an opportunity for global progress towards our objective of mobilizing the finance needed for sustainable development.

I urge you to be bold in your recommendations, and to identify critical areas for further attention and discussion.

Thank you.