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**Opening remarks
High-level Conference on Financing for Development and the Means of Implementation of
the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Doha, Qatar, 18 November 2017

Your Excellency Minister Al Emadi,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to thank the Government of the State of Qatar for hosting this timely and important Conference. Qatar has shown unwavering commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

Nine years ago, the Second International Conference on Financing for Development took place here in Doha. Held at the height of the global economic and financial crisis, the Doha Conference reunited the international community around the financing for development agenda, despite the difficult circumstances.

Since the Doha Conference, the development landscape has undergone major transformation. Nevertheless, the spirit of respect and cooperation, a legacy of Doha, remains with us. It is in the same spirit that in 2015 the international community came together in Addis Ababa, New York and Paris towards milestone agreements.

Meeting here in Doha thus cannot be more fitting. It reminds us of where we came from and where we are going. It revives the spirit of respect and cooperation, which is needed more than ever in view of the challenging global environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite an improved global economic outlook, multiple vulnerabilities and policy uncertainties pose major challenges to sustained recovery of the world economy.

Global trade is unlikely to serve as a broad stimulus for growth, given weak global demand and setbacks in multilateral trade negotiations. Commodity prices have mildly recovered, but their positive effects on many developing countries have been cancelled out by domestic and regional pressures, especially in Africa.

Developing and transition economies have experienced negative capital flows since 2014. Capital flows remain volatile while creating macroeconomic risks, especially in developing countries. In addition, large-scale humanitarian crises and natural disasters are eroding hard-earned progress in many regions and pushing millions of people back into poverty.

At the same time, there are encouraging signs of progress. For example, global energy-related carbon dioxide emissions have stayed flat since 2013, even as the global economy continued to grow and as large-scale infrastructure was built in emerging economies around the world. Human life expectancy has continued to increase, global health has improved, and universal primary education has been achieved in most parts of the world.

However, progress has been highly uneven, with rising inequality in many parts of the world. Billions remain excluded from the benefits of progress. At the same time, biodiversity continues to decrease at rates of 100 to 1,000 times the pre-human levels. Humans impact more than half of the world's terrestrial ecosystems and almost half of the oceans. In fact, humanity claims an unprecedented 24 per cent of global terrestrial net primary production. Humanity also suffers from local and regional freshwater shortages and water stress over more than one-third of the planet.

Looking at this complex global picture, we need to appreciate the strong interlinkages. Local issues can quickly become global challenges, and progress in one area may well be at the expense of future generations or of progress in other areas.

Global challenges must be addressed through global cooperation. The 2030 Agenda and the Addis Agenda provide the compass for our way forward.

Two years after their adoption, the implementation of these global frameworks is on sure footing, thanks to strong buy-in to the global follow-up review processes under the auspices of the United Nations.

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development has become the centrepiece of the global follow-up to and review of the progress towards implementation of the SDGs. It broadened the scope of the SDG review by providing space for various communities, going beyond sectoral boundaries and focussing on coherence, inter-linkages and transformative actions.

At its 2017 session, held last July, 43 National Voluntary Reviews facilitated the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Another conclusion from this year's HLPF was that to succeed we need to have a complete picture of what is needed for SDG implementation. This includes science, evidence-based policies, inter-linkages with other SDGs and processes, and trade-offs.

The ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up has established itself as the global platform to discuss progress and challenges in the implementation of the FfD outcomes, based on national experiences.

It has galvanized unprecedented high-level engagement in the FfD process and advanced the cooperation between the UN and Bretton Woods Institutions. The 2017 FfD Forum sent a strong signal that the international community remains deeply committed to multilateralism and the global partnership for sustainable development. The rich discussions highlighted the urgency of changing the current growth trajectory and strengthening international cooperation to increase investment in sustainable development.

The outcome of the 2017 Forum reaffirms key elements of the Addis Agenda, and contains new commitments on policies and actions to ensure the full and timely delivery of the means of implementation of the SDGs. It gained universal support from Member States and was considered exemplary in intergovernmental negotiations.

The report of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development provided the major substantive input to the Forum and its outcome document. The Task force is a model of cooperation, comprising more than 50 organisations from the UN system and beyond.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the progress, if we remain at the current pace, we will not be able to meet our global goals by 2030. Getting the financing right is key to changing this trajectory.

We need to strengthen global public and private long-term investments into the implementation of the SDGs, especially into critical infrastructure. Public finance is essential to providing public goods, increasing equity and supporting macroeconomic stability. National tax systems need to be strengthened, and international tax cooperation needs to be stepped up.

We must get the regulatory frameworks and incentives right to unleash the potential of private investment in sustainable development. I see reorienting financial regulation and policy-making towards broader aims such as access to long-term finance as a core competency of the United Nations. Because of our stewardship of the universal agreements on sustainable development, it is our role to bring an integrated perspective to all policy-making fora.

To ensure that no one is left behind, we must establish policies that reduce inequality and are inclusive of all vulnerable groups. We must also pay attention to the special situations and needs of the most vulnerable countries.

We should not forget the critical role of international development cooperation. ODA commitments need to be fulfilled urgently. Climate finance must be stepped up.

DESA will continue to lead global efforts to advance Financing for Development, and to support Member States in implementing the Addis Agenda. Looking ahead, the year of 2018 offers important opportunities to move the agenda forward.

Please check against delivery.

In February 2018, the Inter-Agency Platform for Collaboration on Tax, comprising the IMF, OECD, UN and the World Bank, will hold its first global conference at UN Headquarters on the theme “Taxation and the Sustainable Development Goals”.

In April, the third FfD Forum will review progress and challenges in all action areas of the Addis Agenda. We will engage many ministers and strengthen the participation of the private sector. On the eve of the Forum, DESA will organize a SDG Investment Fair to promote interaction between high-level government officials and the private sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The primary responsibility for the implementation of both the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Agendas lies with national governments. By promoting the dialogue among national policy makers and constituencies, this Conference will facilitate experience sharing among them and increase their understanding of important policy and process developments at the global level.

As the first joint preparatory event for the 2018 FfD Forum and the 2018 HLPF, this Conference also aims to strengthen the coherence and coordination of the follow-up to FfD outcomes and the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. I therefore urge all of you to utilize this Conference at this early stage to build momentum for these important meetings next year.

I wish to end by thanking once again the Government of the State of Qatar for its generous support and hospitality. I wish you fruitful and constructive discussions.

Thank you.
