

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

MR. WU HONGBO
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

—
Opening of the Second Committee of the General Assembly

New York, 3 October 2016

Your Excellency Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani, Chairman of the Second Committee,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I congratulate you and the other Bureau Members on your election.

I extend special thanks to Ambassador Andrej Logar and his Bureau for the very effective leadership of the Committee during the 70th session.

Last year was remarkable – we adopted the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We had other outcomes, including on disaster risk reduction, the information society, and trade and development. All of these, and others to come such as the HABITAT III conference, will help us achieve the new Agenda.

Our meeting today coincides with the launch of the World Economic and Social Survey 2016. This year's survey focuses on climate resilience as an opportunity for reducing inequalities. It advances our understanding of the many links between climate and development, and identifies key challenges to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related international commitments.

Mr. Chairman,

As we begin this meeting, world economic growth remains subdued and only a modest improvement is expected for the next two years. Moreover, low levels of investment and slow productivity growth are likely to undermine the longer-term potential of the global economy.

The near-term economic outlook is also clouded by significant risks and uncertainties in the global economy – which tend to be heightened by new trends in multilateral cooperation.

Productivity growth will remain particularly critical for creating decent jobs, raising wages and reducing income inequality.

On another somber note, commodity price decline has adversely affected the Least Developed Countries, in particular, where average GDP growth slowed to a decade-low of 4 per cent in 2015.

The growth of these economies over the next few years will, therefore, likely remain well below the Sustainable Development Goal target of “at least 7 per cent”.

Appropriate, effective, timely and coordinated policy measures – at national, regional and global levels, are needed to revive global growth and create an enabling environment for delivering on all the SDGs.

Effective policy cooperation and coordination can help mitigate the negative spillover effects of domestic policies. At the recent G20 summit, the need to address these issues urgently through cooperative efforts was underscored.

Mr Chairman,

The discourse on globalization and interdependence is a continuing backdrop to the performance of the world economy. All agree that properly managed globalization could be a force for a more prosperous and secure future.

However, the mood in many countries towards globalization and interdependence is changing. Many voices across the world have questioned long-embedded commitments to open societies, as well as to the role of multilateralism in managing global public goods, and mediating global political and economic relations.

A number of observers, in fact, fear a retreat to isolationism and protectionism, at a time when more international cooperation – a strengthened global partnership for development – is most needed. The trends in globalization and interdependence, therefore, need to be more pragmatic.

I found some of the messages in the General Assembly debate this year and during the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development very encouraging.

Many high level speakers recognized that any reversals in multilateral cooperation and globalization would seriously undermine the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda.

At the Hangzhou Summit, these issues were also featured prominently – from concern about global economic growth, to the need for a world economy that is innovative, invigorated, interconnected and inclusive.

The rejection of protectionism and the need to ensure broad-based opportunities – through trade, investment, finance and technology, and better economic coordination and

governance – were all centre stage. And the overriding theme was about delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This, and similar leadership on these issues, gives hope.

Mr. Chairman,

This year, all attention should focus on implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The actions of all partners – at the multilateral, bilateral and regional levels – must be complementary.

Our success will be measured by the achievements at the national level; building inclusive and prosperous societies on a healthy planet. Nothing else will count.

The UN system as a whole – the General Assembly, ECOSOC, their subsidiary bodies - with the high-level political forum at the centre – all have a crucial role in this endeavour.

We believe that all contributions, and successive cycles of ECOSOC and the HLPF, should build on each other. The experience gained each cycle should become the stepping stone and catalyst towards higher levels of delivery on all the SDGs.

At the HLPF this year, 22 countries presented voluntary national reviews of implementation. This should continue, so that we all can fully benefit from the experiences and insights of all countries.

Mr. Chairman,

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda is integral to the implementation process. Steps have been taken to advance its implementation.

The first ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up took place in April 2016. It resulted in a concise and forward looking outcome document.

The first Global Infrastructure Forum and the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation, were also held successfully this year.

Thus, the implementation of policy actions across the seven areas agreed in Addis is underway in forums and in the Secretariat.

Mr Chairman,

At this session, you will also review progress in the implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017). This is vital to achieving the social dimension of sustainable development.

The level of extreme poverty has dropped in all regions. However, 1 in 8 people still live on less than \$1.90 a day and 800 million people go to bed hungry – with the least developed countries left furthest behind.

To eradicate poverty and inequality in all their forms the macroeconomic, trade, investment, financial, environmental and sectoral policies that this Committee champions, should work in tandem with social policies.

The World Economic and Social Survey 2016, for example, shows that climate change and inequalities are locked in a vicious cycle. The people at greatest risk from climate hazards are the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalized who, in many cases, have been excluded from socioeconomic progress. The best climate adaptation policies are those that simultaneously address immediate vulnerabilities and structural inequalities.

Mr. Chairman,

It is clear that coherent and well integrated policies and strategies, across a wide range of complex areas, will be necessary to fulfil the SDGs.

In response to growing capacity development needs of Member States, and drawing on its accumulated experience, DESA is developing modelling tools to assess scenarios for policies and strategies across the different dimensions of sustainable development. They are available through a web-based portal launched early this year.

Delivering on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs will also require careful attention to a number of other institutional and capacity questions.

The transformative power of information and communication technologies are one area for priority attention recognized in the 2030 Agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

The SDGs cannot be realized in the absence of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions. At the HLPF this year, we heard that an increasing number of countries around the world are putting in place institutional arrangements to ensure that the 2030 Agenda is implemented in a coherent an integrated manner.

We need more engagement with parliaments and local authorities. Alongside a “whole-of-government” approach, a “whole-of-international-community” approach is also very essential.

We know, too, that quality, accessible and timely data are fundamental to successful implementation. This requires collaborative efforts in building national statistical capacities. We in the UN are committed to working together to assist countries to achieve this.

A new \$10 million Development Account project will support the strengthening of national statistical systems, including by addressing specific data gaps.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me conclude by drawing your attention to two key items that this Committee will consider during this session.

First, the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR). You have had extensive discussions on this longer term positioning of the UN development system. The time has now come for you to give concrete guidance to the UN development system through a strategic and out-come based QCPR resolution.

However, the QCPR resolution may not be able to cover some major areas that warrant change. However, it can certainly lay the foundation for these changes that can be steered by the Secretary-General next year.

Secondly, the General Assembly held the high-level meeting to address the large movements of refugees and migrants. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants it adopted decided to launch a two-year process to elaborate a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, to be adopted at an intergovernmental conference to be held in 2018. This is an immediate priority, as the modalities of the 2018 conference should be decided by the General Assembly the end of this year. This Committee, however, has to focus on the next General Assembly dialogue on migration and development. I am confident that you will provide clear guidance in the next dialogue.

Mr. Chairman,

The UN development system, in its efforts to deliver as one, has before proven its ability to adjust. Your guidance should forge a stronger consensus on these very important questions.

We in UNDESA will continue to collaborate with other development partners and stakeholders – in civil society, the private sector, academia – to support delivery of the 2030 Agenda.

It is the only way to remain credible and relevant.

I thank you.
