

Your Excellency, Mr. Luis Videgaray Caso, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico,

Ms. Alicia Barcena, Executive-Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me, firstly, to express President Thomson's regrets for not being present here today, due to previous unavoidable commitments elsewhere. On behalf of the President, I thank the people and Government of Mexico, for graciously hosting us this week in this beautiful and welcoming capital city.

This is a momentous occasion for the people of our region. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taken together with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, represent humanity's best hope of transforming the world we live in and building a more prosperous future, with social inclusion and environmental stewardship, and where no one is left behind.

Regional mechanisms for coordinating the ambitions of these agreements will be critical for making the link between implementation at the national level and follow-up and review efforts, including

through the High-Level Political Forum. I therefore commend ECLAC for fulfilling this important mandate.

Excellencies,

The President of the General Assembly has made it his main priority, to give a universal push for momentum across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. So far, results have been encouraging.

As we move into the second year of this ambitious agenda, most countries have mainstreamed the SDGs into their national development plans, and are now considering how to put them into practice. The fact that 44 countries have applied to present voluntary national reviews at this year's HLPF, 11 of which from our region and double the number from last year, constitutes further testament to the commitment of Member States to this Agenda.

As a large region composed mainly of middle-income countries, but which also includes SIDS, LLDCs and a Least Developed Country, Latin America and the Caribbean face unique challenges on their path to implement the 2030 Agenda and the targets of the Paris Agreement.

Historically, ECLAC has played an essential role in synthesizing such challenges. In recent years, in particular, through its trilogy on Equality,

the Commission has placed tackling inequality at the center of the policy debate on sustainable development. It has argued that a broad social compact is necessary to promote the structural changes that will transform the economies of the region, and bring about social development, while preserving the environment for present and future generations.

This vision is perfectly aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but a business as usual approach will not get us across the finish line, and certainly not in an inclusive manner.

Achieving the SDGs will require redoubling our efforts to mobilize finance and investments, improve governance and public services, empower women and girls, strengthen peace, and promote reforms in global institutions to level the playing field for developing countries. All of these are crucial to meet our overarching goal: eradicating poverty.

As both recipients of Development Assistance and providers of South-South cooperation, middle income countries are particularly well placed to push for change; while regional fora such as this one constitute an ideal space to discuss how to shape such a push.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As part of his strategy to push for SDG implementation President Peter Thomson has launched a series of SDG Action Events in New York designed to foster consensus among UN Member States and galvanize action around five strategic areas covered by the SDGs. To date, events have been held on: the relationship between sustaining peace and sustainable development; on catalyzing efforts to meet early 2020 targets related to the Paris Agreement and to SDG 13 on climate change; and on mobilizing sustainable finance to implement the SDGs.

Two more events are scheduled for the coming months, on issues that will be instrumental to framing our development plans for the future.

On May 17th, the SDG Action Event on Innovation will discuss how technological development will simultaneously break with the inefficient or unproductive ways we do most things, and bring about innovative solutions.

The meeting will also address how new technologies can allow countries to leapfrog carbon intensive development models and make exponential progress in SDG implementation, including in consumption and production patterns, while remaining sensitive to social and environmental impacts.

On the following month, on June 28th, the SDG Action Event on Education will look at how to provide equal access to quality education, especially for girls, and what will be required to prepare young people for digital literacy and proficiency, which will be essential in labour markets in the very near future. Access to continuing education in remote, fragmented and conflict regions, as well as financing all educational deficits, will also be examined.

I encourage all of you to be represented and to participate actively.

Excellencies,

Over the coming days, I will attend the forum's discussions and listen carefully to the concerns expressed and challenges faced by the countries of our region. I will report back to the President of the General Assembly to see how we can take those concerns into account when planning the aforementioned events and subsequent activities during the rest of the 71st session of the General Assembly. I look forward to engaging constructively throughout the week's debates.

Thank you for your kind attention.