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“IMPLEMENTING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL - STRATEGIES AND
MECHANISM”.

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All protocols observed,

I am very pleased to be associated with the Bonn Symposium 2015 organized by the Development and Peace foundation in collaboration with the Service Agency Communities in One World and the Minister for federal Affairs, Europe and Media of North Rhine-Westphalia. I am particularly happy for the opportunity offered me to share my ideas on the theme: “Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals at the Local Level — Strategies and Mechanisms”. This theme, in my opinion, is very appropriate and timely especially at a time when Developing Countries like mine (GHANA) are still grappling with implementation challenges associated with aspects of the targets set for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). I thank the organizers of this symposium for grating me this opportunity.

Mr. Chairman, the United Nations Conference held in Rio de Janeiro, 2012 established 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which are aimed at building “The Future We Want”. It is anticipated that these goals would be achieved by 2030. On the whole, the goals, I believe strongly, are germane to human existence and growth in particular. This is because the SDGs provide an integrated problem-solving development phenomenon that focuses on three key issues: economic development, environmental sustainability and social inclusion. These three issues are crucial in survival of our societies.

Mr. Chairman, a recent review of targets for the SDGs by the International Council for Science revealed that the SDGs proffer improvements on the Millennium Development Goals and addresses critical issues such as inequality, unsustainable consumption pattern, weak institutional capacity and environmental degradation which were not covered fully by the MDGs. The review also identified some major limitations such as lack of focus in some of the targets sets for the MDGs which posed challenges for effective implementation of the set goals challenges; and trade-offs between some of the targets. Nevertheless, the SDGs seem to provide some window of hope because they aim at stimulating action in areas of crucial importance in building the world we crave for.

In my opinion, the 17 goals and 169 targets of the SDGs through very ambitious could be achieved when the interplay between a number of the goals are identified, pathways are clearly carved and implementation strategies are contextualized for the benefit of individual nations. In this light, this conference’s aim of seeking local strategies and mechanisms for implementing the SDGs is very appropriate. This is because most of the human activities destroying the environment and water bodies take place occur within local contexts. Within the context of Cape Coast Metropolitan Assembly, in the Central Region of Ghana where I serve as the Metropolitan Chief Executive, we have proposed policies and programmes which will serve as a framework for implementing the SDGs to improve quality of life for all. These are structured along the following dimensions: (a) social; (b) economic and (c) environment.

Social implementation strategies and mechanisms

The area of social inclusion is a major challenge in my metropolitan area. The rate of youth unemployment is increasing at an alarming rate. The metropolis has a youth population of 121,654 comprising 58,938 boys and 62,716 girls. Out of this youth population, only 45.39 percent are in gainful employment. The challenge of unemployment has been one of the basic causes of social inequalities in the metropolis. It is worth mentioning that other metropolises, municipalities and districts in Ghana also experience the unemployment challenge. To address this challenge, the nation has identified access to quality education as a crucial factor. As a result, Government has introduced a free education policy from basic through to the secondary school level. At the level of my locality, the Metropolitan Assembly has instituted an educational endowment fund to support brilliant but needy students.

Secondly, we are encouraging the growth of small scale industry through various support initiatives both at the regional and local level to encourage entrepreneurship among the populace especially the youth. For example, through a government initiative called the Micro Finance and Small Scale Loans Centre (MASLOC), Youth Entrepreneur Skills (YES), Local Enterprise And Skills Development Programme (LESDEP), young people are helped to gain training in self-employable skills and supported financially towards setting their own economic independence, reduce the inequality gap, and improve quality of life in general. A major challenge though is how we can sustain the small scale industry initiative.

Another critical area of concern in the social inclusion agenda is the extent to which chiefs could be engaged in the Metropolitan Governance system. Traditional leaders in Ghana wield much authority. Yet their authority parallels that of political authority. We need both traditional authority and political authority to implement the SDGs. Within the Ghanaian cultural setting where the relationship between the ruler and the ruled is characterized by a high power distance, we require a governance system that will mobilize the various levels of power towards achieving a common mission of the Metropolis. Harnessing the knowledge and skills of chiefs to support decision making and policy implementation in the Metropolis is crucial because as the adage of one of the Ghanaian societies literally translated 'knowledge is a baobab tree. No one person can embrace it'. In this light, our plan is to bring on board chiefs as well as other opinion leaders in the metropolis to help build a more proactive and responsive governance system that will provide a broad-based solution to social challenges facing the metropolis. Indeed, we require a united front and a collective character of civic commitment if the challenges identified here can be addressed. In this light, my metropolis is seeking to resource its National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) and invest in the training of more people to enable them educate people on their rights and responsibilities.

Environmental Implementation Strategies And Mechanisms

Mr. Chairman, our second strategy for implementing the SDGs relates to environmental management. Literature is replete with evidence that suggests strongly that without a conducive operational environment, development plans tend to remain a mirage. In other words, we need an enabling environment to support the implementation of development plans. Thus, environmental conditions relating to climate change, deforestation, sanitation, environmental pollution, poisoning of water bodies among others are inhibitive experiences that we need to relentlessly fight. Conditions such as these, if not controlled, can be a limitation in implementing the SDGs.

In coping with these environmental threats, we are firstly strengthening capacity of our town and country planning sectors to be more proactive and responsive. Their role, we believe would be a stopgap against indiscriminate projects that destroy the environment as well as ensure proper and efficient land-use. Furthermore, protecting and preserving the water bodies is yet another area of prime concern. Individual economic activities by fishermen both at the local and international levels on our waters are a major source of

pollution of our estuaries. Their activities such as fishing and small scale mining (galamsey) have led to near extinction of fingerlings, poisoning of our waters, outbreak of diseases, destruction of the ecosystem, economic hardship among others. The repercussion of their activities is enormous, therefore, drastic mechanisms would be taken to forestall normalcy in the environment. We will intensify education in this regard by creating awareness on the debilitating effects of their activities. Furthermore, we shall organize training for the fishermen and small scale miners on proper ways of conducting their activities while at the same time preserving the environment. Beyond education, we will establishing a task force at both the regional and local level to monitor their activities and persons found culpable would be brought up for prosecution.

It is worth mentioning that, the metropolis' ability to manage waste is top on the strategies the metropolis is adopting towards addressing the environmental needs of the metropolis. We shall intensify effort at establishing recycling factories and incinerators and make them functional. The existence of recycling factories will reduce the indiscriminate handling of waste. Furthermore, biogas production will be given attention to handle human waste.

Economic Implementation Strategies And Mechanisms

Beyond the environmental threats and social inclusion challenges, lies the economic factor. The desire for survival is even intense as people from developing countries keep migrating to the developed nations in search of greener pasture. Millions of people die daily due to extreme poverty, illiteracy leading to extreme vulnerability etc. therefore, sustainable economic independence of the citizenry is imperative. In achieving this very goal within our local context are very much dependent on the social and environmental variable. Success at social inclusion and environmental preservation is success for the people economically.

Furthermore, we shall renew our efforts at educating companies and the general citizenry on the need to recognize and act responsible by paying their taxes. Further to this, we shall strengthen our administrative unit to be more responsive and accountable to the taxpayer. This, Mr. Chairman, I believe will build trust between the tax payer and the administrative system. Moreover, the area of tourism would be explored further to serve as economic empowerment to the people as well as the metropolitan.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, in as much as strategies and implementations are effective in realizing the SDGs when contextualized to the local settling, I wish to implore our development partners to increase their support for local content initiatives to accelerate the development plans.

Thank you!