1. Introduction

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to welcome and address participants from island states to this practitioner forum on implementing the 2030 Agenda in their context. I am pleased to welcome also colleagues from UNDESA and UNISDR as well as other resource persons for this important forum.

Although I am here on assignment in Sri Lanka for only 3 months I have enjoyed immersing myself in the excellent work done on the 2030 Agenda and I know the new RC will be fascinated also to continue that engagement when she arrives at the end of this month.

In my previous work, with UNDP in leading the Capacity Development Group and Capacity 2015 Fund, we engaged very strongly to support SIDS to develop a specific action agenda pertinent to their circumstances, notably in Mauritius in 2005. We engaged also on promoting capacities to graduate from LDC status with several success stories in recent years. Throughout these years, however, the influence of climate change and disaster risk reduction were recognised as an increasingly significant factor strongly impacting sustainability and resilience in SIDS, compared to the overall criteria established for LDC graduation.

Therefore, while the purpose of this forum is to exchange experience on implementing the transformative 2030 Agenda and all 17 SDGs, I would understand if goal 13 on CC and related targets under other goals are in the forefront of your concerns. Also, I would endorse the priority given goal 17, in respect of full stakeholder engagement in national development, brokering new partnerships and exploring avenues to access new sources of sustainable finance and appropriate technology.

2. Voluntary National Review

Sri Lanka was one of 46 countries that presented its VNR to HLPF in July 2018. Kiribati also presented in 2018, and some 7 out of the 13 participating countries here will be preparing their VNRs to be presented at the HLPF 2019 (Fiji, Mauritius, Nauru, Palau, Timor-Leste, Tonga and Vanuatu).
The HLPF noted that the VNRs highlighted the importance of capacitating a more effective and coordinated government, including at the subnational and local levels, as well as evidence-based policymaking and innovation-driven development underpinned by high-quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data.

A notable feature of the Sri Lanka experience was that it was one of the few countries that mentioned in its VNR some of the challenges the country is facing in realizing the 2030 Agenda, both in the report and in their presentation to the HLPF. We encourage you to take a similar self-critical analysis.

From the Sri Lanka experience we may highlight two overall challenges when preparing VNRs: 1) Stakeholder Engagement, and 2) Data.

Stakeholder engagement: Essential to implementing the 2030 agenda is meaningful stakeholder engagement and leaving no one behind. To do this, the countries need to have a nationwide approach, involving civil society, private sector and sub-national entities, and vulnerable groups to advance the agenda: a whole of society approach.

This was recently emphasised by the President of Sri Lanka who called on everyone to take part in the National Sustainable Development Discourse which H.E. launched earlier this month (6 Aug 2018). Increasing awareness about and participation in movements around SDG priorities is a critical issue for effectiveness.

How do you achieve meaningful and inclusive stakeholder engagement is an important question and I am sure sharing rich experiences amongst you will help answer that question. Regardless of the approach, the principle of inclusivity must be applied – as creating sustainable development is everybody’s concern and we must encourage everyone to participate in a better future.

Similarly, within a whole of government approach it is important to address the lack of coherence that may arise in implementing the integrated approach of the SDGs. In Sri Lanka the SD Council is actively dealing with that need by bringing together various central and provincial ministries and other players. A priority area is CC and DRR, and also data.

Data: A data ecosystem is crucial to the success of measuring progress towards the sustainable development goals. The United Nations recognizes the need for a comprehensive approach to strategically build and demonstrate the significance of data for development. This needs to encompass results of regular surveys, analysis of administrative data, and use of new sources of information by accessing so called big data from multiple sources in society. It is the insights derived from multiple sources of data that can help nations simulate policy-based scenarios and formulate the most effective strategic plans for action on national issues.

In Sri Lanka, the Government and the UN have identified data and statistical coherence as a key accelerator to achieve the SDGs. A second significant priority is climate change and DRR, emphasising governance aspects and a focus on river basin management and dry zone issues.

3. Adhering to basic principles for governance of the SDG agenda

The full realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and other internationally agreed development objectives will hinge in no small part on a common understanding of the basic principles of effective governance for sustainable development. The basic principles are intended to clarify the governance
agenda, while recognising different governance structures, national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. They have been developed by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration as a contribution to the HLPF. As basic principles, they apply to all public institutions, including the administration of executive and legislative organs, the security and justice sectors, independent constitutional bodies and State corporations.

The principles are given depth and made operational through a selection of commonly used strategies and related practices, which are an integral and evolving part of this work. The principles are included in your resource book, but I would encourage the organisers to give you access to the full document, which offers a range of practical instruments to implement the principles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
<th>Accountability</th>
<th>Inclusiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Competence</td>
<td>• Integrity</td>
<td>• Leaving no one behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sound policymaking</td>
<td>• Transparency</td>
<td>• Non-discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collaboration</td>
<td>• Independent oversight</td>
<td>• Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Subsidiarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Intergenerational equity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adopting and operationalizing the principles of responsive and effective governance for sustainable development and undertaking related strategic actions that are known to be effective in line with each country’s unique needs and aspirations is essential to the transformative goal of the 2030 Agenda. The following are priority areas of intervention:

• Adopting the principle of leaving no one behind as a core principle of public policies, legal frameworks, strategies and services including finance and administration at all levels, and ensuring that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality, including the poorest and most vulnerable and those subject to discrimination;

• Addressing violence and insecurity as a matter of priority as the absence of peace can otherwise throw healthy and prosperous communities into abject poverty and helplessness;

• Strengthening local governments, authorities and communities as integral actors of sustainable development in service delivery, infrastructure development, local resource mobilization or institutional and human resource capacity development;

• Fostering life-long learning cultures to shift mind-sets and values, along with tailor-made and comprehensive capacity development in the public sector.

I wish you all success and sustained engagement in these important matters in the effort to realise the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. Thank you for your attention.