



4th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue **“Agenda 2030: Development Agencies as a Driving Force”** **Baku, Azerbaijan, 4-6 May 2017**

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of Switzerland, it is a great honor to participate at this distinguished session on building synergies between development agencies, economic & financial institutions for achieving the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September 2015 marks the beginning of a new era in which we are all called to jointly address the root causes of global challenges in a meaningful, holistic, and integrated way. This agreement represents an unprecedented consensus among the international community to transform the world towards a more social, ecologically sound and prosperous future for all.

This new agenda concerns us all – developed, emerging and developing countries alike. Considering this new set-up, I would like to highlight the following four elements:

- 1 SDGs should be seen as an inter-generational contract. The way we handle this contract, the way we live up to the goals, the way we will shape the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for people and planet, will eventually define what we will leave behind for our children and future generations.
- 2 With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, Heads of State and Governments pledged to leave no one behind. They recognized that human dignity is fundamental and that the goals shall be met for all nations and peoples and all segments of societies. Therefore, the promotion of good governance, equal opportunities, tolerance, inclusive societies, and intercultural dialogue need special attention.
- 3 The SDGs include the dimension of peace. There is a specific goal on Peaceful and Inclusive Societies (SDG 16), but important aspects of human rights, rule of law, justice, or human security can be found throughout the whole framework. Thus, the SDGs are also a real investment in peace!

- 4 This leads me to the last important characteristic of the SDGs from a Swiss perspective: Partnership! Partnerships are *the* key success factor of the SDGs. They shall bring relevant actors together in order to combine forces and advance the sustainable development agenda. Partnerships for the SDGs have to work at all levels (from global to local), between different partners (state and non-state actors), and also between sectors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I mentioned, most importantly, the SDGs are universal and therefore relevant to all countries: developing countries, countries in transition, and also developed countries.

For Switzerland, Azerbaijan and all the other countries that have committed to the 2030 Agenda, the question is therefore not *whether* we want to implement this agenda but rather *how* we can implement it in the most efficient and effective way. It is now time to walk the talk. Citizens will hold our governments accountable for their actions, but also for their inaction.

But it is not just up to governments to realize the SDGs. These goals have to be owned by everyone: apart from governments also by civil society, academia, the private sector, politicians, foundations or religious groups. In fact, I consider the SDGs as a great opportunity for everybody! However, as the title of this session puts a focus on the role of development agencies, I will spend a few minutes to elaborate on this specific kind of actor.

Development agencies, such as the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) or the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), play an important role in realizing these ambitious goals. And they are well prepared to do so. For decades, Switzerland through SDC and SECO has been engaged in many fields relevant to the SDGs, be it the fight against hunger and poverty, for better education and health services, for access to water and sanitation, better framework conditions for businesses or the promotion of gender equality, to name but a just few examples. In these and many other fields, development agencies have an abundant wealth of global experience and know-how to promote sustainable solutions.

Switzerland attaches great importance to the technical cooperation with Azerbaijan. Over the last 20 years, the Swiss government has allocated 100 CHF million US\$ to Azerbaijan for some 100 projects. Our current priorities lie on macro-economic support and on improvement of the framework conditions of the private sector, including the financial sector. On a more individual level, we also work with women entrepreneurs in deprived regions, for instance by offering them training in areas such as financial literacy or business planning. The overarching goal is to contribute with the government of Azerbaijan to the sustainable economic and social development of the country. We

have just adopted our new strategy for the next four years and will continue to deepen our partnership in the aforementioned sectors and beyond.

Turning back to my general remarks, let me state that development agencies have a lot of convening power to bring together exactly those partners that contribute to problem solving. However, looking at the financing requirements for the SDGs, it is obvious that the challenges are too big to be solved exclusively by governments and their development agencies. Budgets for Official Development Assistance (ODA) are stagnating in many donor countries, and even if they were to grow in the future, it would not be sufficient to bridge the massive investment gap. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the annual funding gap to achieve the SDGs amounts to 3-4 trillion US dollars in developing countries only.

Mobilizing the private sector, aside from civil society and academia is thus imperative to advance the 2030 Agenda. Switzerland therefore aims to double its Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) until 2020. By strategically allying with partners from the private sector, development agencies gain access to the necessary skills and resources to increase their impact on development. Thereby, governments use ODA to mobilize additional private investments. The expertise and resources of public and private investors can be combined and risks can be shared, which is particularly important in projects with high initial costs that would not be taken up by private investors alone.

Furthermore, development agencies also have a role in supporting developing countries at widening their domestic revenue base for sustainable development, for example by improving their tax collection systems as well as combatting tax evasion and illicit financial flows.

These examples illustrate that the 2030 Agenda does not only force us to find new ways of working together at all levels and across the traditional sectoral silos. They also show that we have to rethink the roles of different actors. This is also true for development agencies. Only if development agencies embrace this new understanding and open up for a true and renewed global partnership, they will be able to play a vital role in advancing the SDGs globally.

It lies in the universal nature of the 2030 Agenda that we implement it not only through our international engagement, but also at the national level. Therefore, Switzerland launched an inclusive national process in 2015, to identify important policy gaps in pursuit of achieving the SDGs, to define focus areas for action, establish a functional monitoring and reporting system and to put an institutional architecture in place that enables an accelerated implementation of the agenda.

Last summer, Switzerland already presented these initial implementation steps at the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). As Azerbaijan is

planning to do this year and I would like to congratulate the Azerbaijani government on this decision. Switzerland will undergo a voluntary national review and present a comprehensive report at the HLPF next year (2018).

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude, let me say that we all, governments and development actors, are called to provide and promote good governance, equal opportunities, tolerance and cultural diversity beyond our national borders by strengthening global partnership (SDG 17), eliminating inequality among countries (SDG 10) and promoting inclusive societies (SDG 16) . We commend Azerbaijan for taking this role and Switzerland stands ready to support you in every possible way.

With the SDGs, the necessary guiding global goal framework is given. Now, it is time to take action. The famous French writer, poet, and pioneering aviator Antoine de Saint Exupéry once said: *“A goal without a plan is just a wish”*.

Let us join forces and make sure that the SDGs do not remain bold wishes and will get the plan they need in order to be achieved by the year 2030!

I wish you all an inspiring forum and fruitful discussions on concrete plans to make this happen.

Thank you very much for your attention!