

**Opening remarks by**

**Mr. LIU Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations**

**Conference in preparation for HLPF 2019 – Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies: SDG 16 implementation and the path towards leaving no one behind**  
27 May 2019

Your Excellency Emanuela Del Re, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Italy

Your Excellency Ambassador Elisabetta Belloni, Secretary General for Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy,

Your Excellency Omar Hilale, Vice-President of ECOSOC and Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations,

Your Excellency, Ms. Irene Khan, Director General, International Development Law Organization, IDLO

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, I am delighted to welcome you all to this Conference in preparation for HLPF 2019.

Our focus over these coming days will be on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies: SDG 16 implementation and the path towards leaving no one behind.

Let me first express my sincere gratitude to our host, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy. Your generous support has made this important meeting possible.

I would also like to thank our co-organizer, IDLO, for their strong and constructive partnership in preparing for this Conference.

Let me also extend my special gratitude to all our partners, especially the United Nations system entities. Their expertise has strengthened the programme and made this a truly collaborative effort.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Achieving the 2030 Agenda is our collective endeavour.

It demands strong and committed actions from countries at all levels of development, and from all sectors of society.

2019 is a special year for the 2030 Agenda on sustainable development, and for SDG 16 in particular.

In July this year, the United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF) for sustainable development (HLPF) will complete the first cycle of its thematic review of all SDGs.

SDG 16 will feature for the first time in this review.

In September, world leaders will come together, at the SDG Summit at the United Nations Headquarters to chart the course forward.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We all know that SDG 16 is a critical enabler for the implementation of the entire 2030 Agenda.

This fact is echoed repeatedly in countries' Voluntary National Reviews, or VNRs.

Even the independent group of scientists who are now writing the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report for 2019 highlights 'governance' to be one of the critical levers for transformation towards sustainable development.

Multiple assessment reports – including the Special edition of the Secretary General's annual report of progress on Sustainable Development Goals, released recently – are pointing out that we are falling behind on many of the SDGs, with significant divergences across populations and countries.

At the same time, we see – across the world, and across stakeholders – a willingness to take action. More governments than ever are setting up new mechanisms and institutional structures to support the transformations needed for the SDGs.

So, at this conference, we must ask ourselves not only how to accelerate progress on SDG 16 itself, but how to do so in ways that will resonate positively across the entire 2030 Agenda.

Distinguished Delegates,

Peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and inclusive institutions are not only important ends in themselves, but also means towards achieving the other SDGs.

We see that advances in ending violence, promoting the rule of law, strengthening institutions, and increasing access to justice have been uneven.

Millions continue to be deprived of security, rights and opportunities, and we remain far from realizing the central aspiration of ‘leaving no one behind.’

Ineffective institutions undermine the delivery of public services, and broader sustainable development.

We need more effective institutional structures to generate and implement socially and politically acceptable solutions for reconciling trade-offs and advancing synergies.

We need concerted, coordinated and catalytic efforts to address the complex and interrelated issues within SDG 16, and between SDG 16 and the other SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, we work to advance effective, efficient, transparent, accountable, and citizen-centred public governance, administration and services for sustainable development.

We also target:

- inclusive social policies and analysis of thematic and frontier issues as they relate to the SDGs;
- strategies for leveraging financing for sustainable development; and
- how science, technology and innovation works to advance human progress

All of these are of great importance to SDG 16 as well. Our work informs action on the ground, as also at regional and global levels in multiple ways. One of these is through multi-stakeholder partnerships, which are also actively promoted by UN DESA.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

With this year, we begin a decade for accelerated action for all the SDGs, including SDG 16. We would like to invite each one of you to commit to acceleration actions towards SDG 16.

A dedicated platform has been set up by DESA to compile those actions in the lead up to the SDG Summit, in September.

You are all invited to contribute.

This Conference has an ambitious agenda. You will be taking stock of global progress towards achieving SDG 16. You will share knowledge, success stories and good practices. Your discussions will identify specific areas of concern and main challenges. Most importantly, you will suggest ways forward in terms of policies, partnerships and coordinated actions at all levels as well as specific ways to leverage the interlinkages between SDG 16 and the other Goals.

The outcomes of this conference will help inform and prepare for the upcoming HLPF in July, and for the broader review in September. They will also influence collaboration and programmes of work going forward from 2019.

I wish you a very productive Conference.

Thank you.