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**Closing Remarks**

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**SDG 16 Conference 2021**

**30 April 2021 at 11:15 a.m.**

Thank you, Minister Bencini,  
Excellencies,  
Ambassador Giorgio Marrapodi, Director General for Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Italy,  
Ms. Jan Beagle, Director-General of the International Development Law Organization, IDLO  
Distinguished participants, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

We have reached the third day of the SDG 16 Conference on “Transforming Governance for a more Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Future: SDG 16 as the roadmap to respond to COVID-19 and build back better”. This has been an incredibly rich event both in content and participation.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the government of Italy for sponsoring this event for the second time. I would like to thank the International Development Law Organization for partnering again with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the organization of this event.

I thank all participants for their insights and contributions to the discussions and the deliberations of the Conference which, let me already now remind you, will continue with the three final parallel sessions later today.

This Conference has been a moment of reflection on challenges and opportunities to achieve more peaceful, just and inclusive societies as a response to COVID-19 and in the post-COVID context.

Interventions throughout the Conference have highlighted the critical importance of governance and public institutions in the fight against the pandemic and for our collective journey to an inclusive and sustainable recovery from it.

Several important messages resonated through our virtual platform.

1. Governance capacity at all levels, not only has proven critical for timely, just and inclusive response to the pandemic, but has also influenced the level of public confidence in public institutions.
2. Despite the enormous challenges it has posed, the crisis can be a catalyst for transformation and can provide an opportunity to reimagine the role of institutions and policymaking.
3. Attaining sustainable development in the wake of the COVID-19 requires a comprehensive and coordinated effort to make governance more people-centered and reflective of the voices and needs of women, men, girls, boys, and all those at risk of being marginalized.
4. Resilience to shocks and crises cannot be achieved without policy coordination and whole of society approaches that address discriminatory norms and social practices and aim to reduce inequalities.
5. Strengthening transparency and accountability and addressing corruption risks through an integrated and whole-of-society approach will be paramount to ensure the effectiveness of response and recovery plans to address the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and avoid further marginalizing the most vulnerable segments of society.
6. Promoting gender equality as well as the participation, representation and leadership of women and girls in policy spaces and decision-making at all levels, including in recovery plans from the pandemic, is key to building back better.
7. An equitable, timely and effective delivery of public services, including health, education, and social services, is essential to building greater public confidence and trust in government. It will also help accelerate progress on all the Sustainable Development Goals.

And my last take away,

8. Governments have successfully used digital platforms and digital tools to keep the wheels of government turning and continue to deliver essential public services during the pandemic. Accelerated action is needed to address digital divides and make digital government a positive force for inclusion.

So your messages resonated clearly. SDG 16 is a fundamental underpinning of sustainable development and a key enabler and entry point to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.

With only nine years remaining till 2030, SDG 16 should be utilized as a framework to address critical challenges related to the pandemic and shape the post-pandemic response in support of sustainable development.

I am confident that the outcome of this Conference will provide important and timely inputs to the review of SDG 16 at the high-level political forum on sustainable development next July.

I thank you for your attention.

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