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Secretary-General

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MUCH 'UNFINISHED BUSINESS' AFTER MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS DEADLINE,

SECRETARY-GENERAL WARNS IN REMARKS AT MONACO MUSEUM OF OCEANOGRAPHY

Following are UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks, originally delivered partially in French, at the Museum of Oceanography in Monaco on 3 April:

I am delighted to be here. This is my first time in Monaco, and the first time a United Nations Secretary-General has visited the principality.

I thank His Serene Highness for his warm welcome. Prince Albert and his family are great supporters of United Nations causes, from HIV/AIDS to education, from sport for development and peace to sustainable development.

I am especially pleased to see so many young people here today. Next month you will participate in the first Model United Nations in Monaco. Knowing that you are already on the path to being global citizens makes me feel very good about the future. As Secretary-General, everything I do is about your future. Even when dealing with immediate crises, such as the conflicts in Syria and Mali, my focus is always on creating the foundations for peace, justice and opportunity for all.

Today I would like to take inspiration from this wonderful setting — this Temple of the Sea — to discuss a fundamental element of those foundations. I will talk about sustainable development — in particular environmental sustainability — and how the United Nations is working with partners such as Monaco to achieve it.

Monaco may be small but its heart is large. In your own way, you are a mini-United Nations. Thirty-six thousand people from some 120 nationalities share this small enclave with just 8,000 native Monégasques. You set an example in peaceful coexistence that dates back centuries. It has helped you prosper and you are now using that prosperity to promote green growth and environmental protection on land and sea.

The Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation is recognized globally for its work on biodiversity, water and the fight against climate change. Your Grimaldi Forum is a world-class example of green architecture. Monaco's smart policies on encouraging electric vehicles are pointing the way towards a low-carbon economy. Prince Albert is leading the way. I understand some now refer to him as "the plugged-in Prince".

Monaco is also a generous host to important environmental work being conducted by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the International Hydrographic Organization. You are helping to lead the world into a sustainable twenty-first century. Let me now suggest what more I hope you will do, as global citizens, to advance our common goals.

This century began with a promise — a Millennium promise — to drastically reduce poverty, hunger and disease. The Millennium Development Goals, adopted by world leaders in the year 2000,

have mobilized Governments and catalysed partnerships. They have demonstrated the value of targets and timetables. They have shown that, with political will and resources, we can achieve impressive results.

This is an important lesson for our future development agenda. In the last dozen years, 600 million people have risen from extreme poverty — a 50 per cent reduction. A record number of children are in primary school — with an equal number of girls and boys for the first time. Maternal and child mortality has dropped. Investments in fighting malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis have saved millions of lives.

But there is still work to do. Progress has been uneven among and within countries. And we are lagging badly behind on some targets — such as sanitation. By the 2015 Millennium Development Goals deadline, some 2.5 billion people could still be living without ready access to a toilet or protection from untreated waste. This is a threat to the health of people and the environment.

Later this week, I will launch a global call to accelerate action to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Just 1,000 days will remain to make good on our promise. Success will improve the lives of hundreds of millions of people. It will also add momentum as we plan for the years beyond 2015.

There will be much unfinished business after the Millennium Development Goals deadline. The United Nations system and the Member States are working hard to develop a post-2015 development agenda and a set of sustainable development goals. We cannot end extreme poverty, hunger and needless disease unless we address the broader challenges of sustainable development — social, economic and environmental. These three dimensions are interlinked and interdependent, like the legs of a tripod. They include many elements, including human rights, social justice, gender equality, youth empowerment, decent jobs, good governance and fair trade.

Each is important in its own right. But today I want to focus on the environmental dimension. First because it is most at risk; second because we stand to gain exponentially if we make the necessary investments in a healthy planet; and third because we have the knowledge and the technology to transform our economies and place our societies solidly on the path of green growth.

Let me first address the risk. Last year, the United Nations Environment Programme reviewed the many important environmental commitments by the international community over the past two decades. Out of 90 agreed goals, significant progress had been made in just four. That's right: four.

We continue to lose biodiversity at an alarming rate. Fish stocks are shrinking rapidly — mostly due to unsustainable commercial fishing. Greenhouse gas emissions are rising and climate change is accelerating. The oceans are growing more acidic, threatening the whole marine food chain. The world's coral reefs are in decline.

Prince Albert I, who founded this museum, would be devastated to learn what is happening to his beloved marine environment. And he would barely recognize the Arctic that he explored. I myself have been to the Arctic and the Antarctic to see the effects of climate change. So has Prince Albert II. Like me, he has made climate change and sustainable development priority issues.

That is why one of his first acts on assuming the throne was to sign the Kyoto Protocol. Like me, the Prince understands the risks of doing nothing. We are approaching environmental tipping points. In the Arctic, scientists are concerned the North Pole may soon be ice-free in summer, threatening a dangerous feedback loop.

White ice reflects the sun. Dark water does not; it absorbs warmth and melts more ice. Another such loop is possible if the permafrost in Siberia and Alaska continues to thaw, releasing stored methane. Methane is a far more powerful greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. Runaway

climate change is a real risk — and a threat to the global environment, to sustainable development and to the security of nations and economies.

Concern about climate change and environmental degradation is far from new. Since the Stockholm Conference in 1972, the Earth Summit in 1992, and Rio+20 last year, the United Nations has sought to raise awareness of the threat — and the opportunities. But words have not been matched by action. Now time is running out.

Our consumption is unsustainable. Our ecological footprint is overstepping planetary boundaries. We must act now to provide a liveable future for the 9 billion people who will inhabit the planet in 2050. That brings me to my second point: the rewards of acting.

Investing in green growth is a down-payment on a sustainable future. It is the enlightened choice for all those who want to build a more prosperous, fair and stable world. When we embrace renewable energy and energy efficiency, we tackle climate change, create new jobs and build a healthier environment.

That is why my Sustainable Energy for All initiative aims to double renewable energy and energy efficiency by 2030. This alliance of partners from all sectors and regions also seeks to provide power, dignity and productivity to 1.4 billion people who currently lack access to modern energy services. This is the principle of sustainable development — balancing the social, economic and environmental for the benefit of all.

When we sustainably manage forests, we preserve biodiversity and freshwater supplies, protect communities from floods and landslides, safeguard livelihoods and mitigate climate change. And when we protect coastal habitats, we create more productive fisheries, lock in atmospheric carbon, and insulate communities from storms and rising tides.

Last year at Rio+20, Prince Albert and I took part in an event organized by Monaco on oceans. President [Anot] Tong of Kiribati was there as well. His nation comprises 32 atolls and one low-lying coral island. I visited Kiribati in 2011. President Tong and I planted mangroves as a guard against the rising tides that are poisoning wells and threatening to swamp the island. I also had an unexpected insight into the fear that now stalks Kiribati. My hotel room had an additional item that is not your typical amenity — a life jacket. I also met a young girl who asked a simple question: “What will become of us? What will the United Nations do for us?”

The answer to the first question is that President Tong is working with the Governments of Australia and New Zealand so his people can emigrate if his islands become uninhabitable. There is no joy in becoming a climate refugee, but at least President Tong has a Plan B. But what is Plan B at the global level? There is no Planet B.

What are the Member States of the United Nations going to do to avoid an entire world facing the existential crisis that Kiribati is already facing? There is only one answer: we must follow the path of sustainable development, giving equal attention to social, economic and environmental considerations.

At Rio+20, Governments recommitted to sustainable development and a new set of sustainable development goals to guide us beyond 2015. They agreed to strengthen institutions, beginning with the United Nations Environment Programme, which had its Governing Council here in Monaco in 2008. They also pledged to intensify efforts to protect and sustainably manage our oceans and marine resources. To this end, I launched the Oceans Compact last year.

Rio+20 also approved a 10-Year Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production that can help reduce our environmental footprint. And it recognized the potential of the green economy for protecting the environment and reducing poverty. This brings me to my third and

The green economy is not only necessary, it is possible and it is happening. From China to Rwanda, from Brazil to Denmark and, of course, here in Monaco, we see low-carbon resource-efficient policies and actions gaining traction — in national legislatures, in city governments, in boardrooms and classrooms.

The benefits of the green economy are social, economic and environmental. It means more and better jobs, less poverty and more equality. It means cleaner cities, more productive agriculture, and healthier ecosystems. It is a movement whose time has come.

But we need to accelerate momentum. We need to scale up what has been incubating for 40 years. To do that, we need to put in place the right incentives, including a price on carbon. We also need a universal, legally binding climate agreement by 2015, to support additional mitigation and adaptation actions in all countries. Next year I will convene a high-level meeting on climate change to help bring us to the finish line. I will rely on leaders like Prince Albert to support me.

We live in a time vulnerability and transition. Environmental decline and the growing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events are symptoms we cannot ignore. Yet, in the cure lies the chance to build the future we want — a world where human development is in harmony with nature. By caring for the environment we are contributing to social and economic development. By protecting our planet we can help to create a world where every child can grow up knowing opportunity, not despair, and prosperity instead of poverty.

These are ambitious goals, but they are achievable. I am determined to do everything I can while I am Secretary-General for a sustainable future. But I will need help. So today from this magnificent setting, I issue a call to the world: I ask every citizen of our planet to think about what you can do to care for the global environment and promote sustainable development.

None of us can do everything. But each of us can do something.

Thank you, Monaco, for helping to show the way.

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