



**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. Mr. TAMMAM SALAM**

**PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

**OF THE REPUBLIC OF LEBANON**

**AT THE UNITED NATIONS**

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT 2015**

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*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

*Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations  
866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 531, New York, NY 10017*

Mr. Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The title of this meeting: *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* is inspiring.

Our world does indeed need to be transformed.

The Goals listed in the Agenda constitute an adequate canvas for any coherent National Strategy for Sustainable Development. But, it is in their implementation that difficulties are encountered by our countries, especially when it comes to the integration of sustained economic growth, inclusive social development and the protection of the environment. These three pillars are equally determining in as much as they cross-fertilize each other to cement sustainability.

The challenges are numerous.

In the case of Lebanon, it is the humanitarian issues caused by the Syrian refugee crisis that constitute one of the greatest challenges to development.

Lebanon, a country of four million inhabitants, the smallest in the region, has borne the brunt of the mass forced displacement of people out of Syria. My country hosts today over 1.2 million registered Syrians, representing a third of its population.

This has had a devastating impact on development, economic activity, social progress and the environment, overstressing the capacity of our national institutions in health care, education, energy, water, sanitation and security.

It has set back development or even threatened to reverse it, and has weighed dramatically on our economy, generating a cost of about one-third of our GDP.

The international response was inadequate to address a crisis of this magnitude and duration. Limited resources concentrated on humanitarian funding, while development assistance and burden-sharing in terms of finance and resettlement were needed. The refugee crisis facing Europe today is a direct consequence of that insufficient response.

In this regard, we welcome the recognition of forced displacement of people as a result of spiraling conflict, violent extremism and terrorism in the 2030 Agenda, and the recognition of the need to strengthen the resilience of host communities, particularly in developing countries.

This should be done by systematic assessment of the costs of hosting refugees, reliably predicting long-term financing needs and implementing equitable resettlement arrangements based on "burden-sharing principles."

In Lebanon, resilience is essentially articulated on efforts of the private sector; one major component of this potential is the Lebanese diaspora by way of remittances.

In this regard it is essential to review the unnecessary restrictions imposed on remittances. They result in a disproportionate increase of transfer costs, thus penalizing those at the receiving end and producing direct negative effects on consumption and schooling, the areas to which they are essentially directed.

As such, these constraints are affecting vital elements of development and stability, because consumption is a major component of GDP in developing nations and education, is key in this process, as it is also a rampart against extremism and a factor of moderation.

We invest dearly in the education of our children only to see them leave the country when they reach working age. This is seriously impacting our productivity, and the surest way to counter this trend is through sustainable and balanced development.

Indeed, it is essential to avoid the pitfalls of favoring development poles, for it is only in promoting inclusive growth that we avoid creating pockets of underdevelopment even within urban centers, in which all kinds of fanatic ideologies can fester.

Respect of human rights, gender equality and women empowerment, democracy, promoting good governance and the rule of law, universal access to justice are all elements that favor development.

Hence, reforms in those areas are indispensable for sustainable development. Development feeds on them and without them, growth is bound to falter.

Without them no society can enjoy stability, security, fairness and equity.

As regards international aid, which is an essential factor in triggering development in less advanced countries, it is crucial to review the notion of "middle-income countries" because it penalizes many nations who lose their access to aid while they may be in more urgent need of aid than others not classified in this category.

Accordingly, the approach to global aid should be revamped to take into account specificities and, most of all, it should be a targeted contribution to shore up the sustainability of development.

Maybe one of the most important goals is to enhance global partnership. It is time more advanced societies recognize that by helping less developed ones through transfer of knowledge and of technologies they are also durably helping themselves.

Respecting our environment, reducing pollution and correcting past damages, should be seen as goals in themselves, but also as criteria of progress achieved in sustainability. They help to effectively monitor the process altogether.

We also believe in upholding the “Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities” and look forward to the United Nations Conference on Climate Change to be held in Paris later this year.

In closing, we salute the recognition of development as a right for every human, for it is the bedrock of welfare, but we equally need to recognize the primordial importance of putting an end to armed conflicts, to terrorism, to sectarian violence, and to hatred, in order to ensure security, stability and peace that constitute indispensable conditions for development and, the primary duty of leaderships and governments everywhere.