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Opening plenary

**UN Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development
agenda, 25 September 2015**

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Thank you Mr. President,

Secretary General, world leaders:

I speak today both on behalf of the global Amnesty International movement with more than seven million activists and for many independent civil society organisations around the world.

At the outset, I congratulate you for the remarkable progress the world has seen through the Millennium Development Goals.

But we increasingly hear the question, is our world spinning out

of its axis? It can feel that way. Hundreds of millions still live in poverty. Too many people, particularly women and girls, routinely suffer violence and multiple human rights violations.

Inequality, injustice, environmental destruction and corruption are a toxic combination. There is declining trust in governments and big corporations and young people across the world are rising in protest. Horrific conflicts are destroying communities and countries and have fuelled the largest global refugee crisis since the Second World War.

The appalling story of the three-year-old Syrian child Alan Kurdi, whose dead body on the beach shocked the world, sums it up. We cannot hide the reality of the world we live in.

And then... there is the world we want, the world represented by the Sustainable Development Goals.

We cannot blame people for being sceptical when they see yet another Summit Declaration.

There is a huge gap between the world we live in, and the world we want.

But the Sustainable Development Goals represent people's aspirations and rights which can and must be realised.

I suggest four practical tests to realise the goals and prove the sceptics wrong:

1. First, the **ownership test**. The key to success is for poor and marginalised people to be primary decision makers at every stage. The Sustainable Development Goals must be integrated and resourced in national and local plans and budgets, and they must be implemented in line with the state's existing human rights obligations.

2. Second, the **accountability test**. People should know exactly what governments have promised and what they have delivered – the right to information. And if governments don't deliver, people should be able to hold them to account through independent mechanisms. It is not enough anymore for governments to say that they are legitimate because they were elected or have a mandate. They have to be accountable to the people directly on an ongoing basis.

3. Third, the **non-discrimination test**. Let us be clear. Leaving no one behind means challenging power structures and enforcing the rule of law. Inequality is largely the direct result of discrimination and exclusion based on gender, race, descent, religion or other status. Inequality is the consequence of the failure to protect

the rights of the marginalised, Indigenous peoples, minorities, migrants, persons with disabilities, children and the elderly.

4. Fourthly, the **coherence test**. We are all aware of countries which performed very well on the Millennium Development Goals . But outrage against persistent human rights violations led to revolutions. Why? Because people's lives are not divided into development, environment, peace and human rights – only bureaucracies are. Coherence and consistency are essential.

You cannot claim to support sustainable development when you are reluctant to reduce the consumption of the rich or transfer technology. You cannot preach about human rights while using mass surveillance. You cannot lecture about peace while being

the world's largest manufacturers of arms. You cannot allow your corporations to use financial and tax loopholes while railing against corruption. You cannot adopt the Sustainable Development Goals in the name of development and at the same time attack and arrest peaceful protesters and dissenters. You cannot launch these Sustainable Development Goals and in parallel deny a safe and legal route to refugees, a life with dignity.

Esteemed leaders,

The Sustainable Development Goals present a compass for decent jobs, for justice, for humanity. As civil society, we will stand with the poor and marginalized at all costs. And we will hold governments and businesses to account.

Tens of thousands of people marched last night for the Sustainable Development Goals to light the way. They called for authentic leadership from you, leadership with integrity, leadership from the heart. I know that you can live up to their hopes.

Thank you.