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Statement by Mr. Yves Leterme
Secretary-General of International IDEA

Esteemed Co-Chairs,
Excellencies,

As a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity, which seeks also to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an ambitious roadmap for change. The adoption of the Agenda is an historical pledge to eradicate poverty while reversing at the same time the tide of environmental degradation. Turning it into reality will require the involvement and engagement of the people.

International IDEA, as the sole intergovernmental organization with an exclusive mandate on democracy and electoral assistance, has advocated a democracy lens in the definition of the Agenda. Attention to the three dimensions of social, economic and environmental sustainability has guided the deliberations of Member States. In addition to them, I strongly believe that there are political dimensions essential to delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals. These are related to such issues as democratic accountability to citizens, country ownership, coherence across a wide range of public policies, and the mobilization of the material and immaterial resources necessary for turning deeds into action.

The Agenda could have been bolder on recognizing the importance of democratic governance. Its approval, however, is an impressive achievement and an example of multilateralism at its best. Let me detail three remarkable facts:

- First, the declaration underscores the importance of democracy, human rights and the rule of law for sustainable development.
- Second, the SDG framework includes key goals for democratic development, like SDG#5 on Gender Equality, SDG#10 on Reducing Extreme Inequalities, and SDG#16 on Peaceful Inclusive Societies, Justice and Accountable Institutions.
- Third, the openness, transparency and inclusivity of the consultation process gave an unprecedented space for engagement with many actors. These included national parliaments, civil society organizations, academia, local actors, the private sector and other major groups. Alongside governments, they will all play a key role for defining actionable plans, sound public policies and development outcomes.



The extraordinary post-2015 process is not yet over. Important work on indicators has still to be accomplished by March 2016. A key principle in this regard will be to measure what we treasure. I urge Member States to ensure that the indicators will capture citizens perceptions, and will assess both the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of the SDGs.

The biggest challenge that lies ahead of us is the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Citizens need to own sound national strategies that fully take into account all human rights. For such strategies to be truly people-centered, citizens should be given the opportunity to engage in their definition. They should also be allowed to provide feedback on their implementation.

I particularly welcome the recognition of the importance of all responsible actors' accountability to citizens in achieving the Goals. Democratic accountability will be a critical factor for ensuring that the translation of the Agenda into national strategies is really responsive to the needs and lives of all people.

This was stressed today at a High Level Event organized by International IDEA with the Governments of Switzerland, Botswana and Mongolia. Member States should build on the experience gained throughout the MDG process for further strengthening accountability mechanisms at the national and sub-national levels.

International IDEA stands committed to facilitating experience sharing by Member States from all regions of the world on democratic accountability in service delivery. We shall also contribute, together with the UN and other partners, to supporting national efforts at developing and utilizing democratic accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In conclusion, let me underscore that we owe it to the next generations that we act now, with democracy's empowering energy, to protect and build a better world for us all.

I thank you.