

Costa Rica



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**Statement by the President of Costa Rica
H.E. Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera
United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development**

Yes, we can build sustainable societies

27 September 2015, New York

Co-chairs,

It is with great enthusiasm that I have come to this historic Summit to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, representing a nation that, for many years, has had the dream of becoming a sustainable society inscribed into its DNA.

The goals that we are committing to today are grand and ambitious. And so they should be. We should dream big and aim high. I am convinced that the decisions we take today have the potential to make many of our dreams come true.

As we are on the cusp of implementing this agenda, I would like to highlight both the achievements we have made already and the challenges that still remain for us in Costa Rica.

The fight for equality in Costa Rica dates back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. This dream started to become a reality in 1847 when the right to access the free education system was guaranteed to girls as well as boys. In 1950, for the first time women exercised their right to vote in our country, and my predecessor, Laura Chinchilla Miranda, became the first female president of Costa Rica. Additionally, a few weeks ago an illustrious former Costa Rican judge of the International Criminal Court, Dr. Elizabeth Odio, was elected to preside over the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Currently, Costa Rica leads the effort to elect a woman to head the Secretariat of the United Nations.

With this agenda, we reaffirm that “yes we can” and commit to the goal of equal access for women and girls to economic resources, political participation and inclusive, equitable and quality education. Women should enjoy the same opportunities for employment, leadership and decision-making as men at every level. We are convinced that when we achieve gender equality and women and girls are empowered, the world will undergo the profound transformation it urgently needs.

Our commitment to technology also dates back to the nineteenth century. In 1884, two years after electricity lit up New York City, modern lighting also illuminated our capital, San José. In 1940, the Costa Rican Institute of Electricity was founded and since then, it has developed a wide range of sources of renewable energy. Today 99.4% of the national territory is connected to the grid and is ensured stable, quality electricity at competitive prices.

Today, on the 27th of September, Costa Rica has generated electric power without burning any fossil fuels for the 214th consecutive day. We have fulfilled the mantra “yes we can” in this regard and we renew our commitment to the universal and solidary access to an affordable, reliable and sustainable energy supply.

Achieving sustainability is not a rhetorical exercise in my country. In 2002, the first moratorium on oil drilling was announced in Costa Rica. My government has extended it to 2021.

Today we say “yes we can” and we renew our commitment to becoming a carbon neutral country by 2021. We have taken on the massive challenge of transforming transportation in our country, focusing on sustainable urban mobility and seeking to be less dependent on oil, while developing a more sustainable and resilient infrastructure.

In 2006, we approved the Law on Organic Agriculture. A few weeks ago, we signed an agreement incentivizing our restaurants to serve healthy and sustainable food. For several decades we have proven with ecotourism that things can be done differently.

Today we take on one of the biggest challenges of the 2030 Agenda: ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Today we say “yes we can” once more and we decide to promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies free from fear and violence. The 2030 Agenda clearly states: “There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.”

Co-Chairs,

It is time to reflect on how we will implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

For Costa Rica, eliminating our army and consequently redirecting our resources towards social investment has created countless opportunities. We can now focus on the great challenges of sustainable development: fighting poverty, guaranteeing access to health services and education, providing potable water and improved sanitation, and protecting natural resources, among others.

Over the years, Costa Rica has repeatedly proposed that disarmament is a mechanism that will allow us to channel significant resources to sustainable development. Betting on disarmament is betting on peace. An equivalent of 1.7 trillion US dollars was spent worldwide in 2014 on military spending. The five

permanent members of the Security Council are within the top 6 countries in terms of military spending and are the largest producers and exporters of weapons in the world. We strongly call on them to reorient spending towards sustainable development. I assure you, there is no better formula for the safety of their countries than to ensure sustainable development throughout the world.

Costa Rica is preparing itself to implement the national 2030 Agenda and has begun incorporating it into all levels of its national planning. We believe in the need for coordination by means of the National Council on Sustainable Development that allows institutional development through the consultation of public and private stakeholders. We have studied and learned, from the experiences and best practices of other countries in this field.

Being a middle-income country, we have shown that, despite our many advances in several strategic areas, we have not been able to move at the speed our society requires, nor in all the areas that would ensure welfare for our entire population. I reiterate the call my country has made for this Organization to progress towards the establishment of an Action Plan for cooperation with middle-income countries. Over 70% of people living in poverty in the world are in the so-called middle-income countries, where the challenge of inequality and poor income distribution is the first issue to be addressed.

We call for better internal coordination and the required institutional coherence within the UN to support our efforts.

Likewise, Costa Rica calls for the development of an index to measure the multidimensional nature of poverty and one that includes criteria beyond per capita income. The challenge to end global poverty in all its forms requires the development of adequate instruments, and Costa Rica is committed to their design and implementation. This need was supported by various delegations moments ago in a meeting organized by my country.

These proposals for implementation should draw strength from the agreements already reached at the Third Conference on Financing for Development. They should be central pillars for future discussions, particularly as a basis for strong commitments on climate change, which, I hope, we will take in December in Paris. I congratulate President François Hollande for his leadership in this process, and the decision of President Barack Obama to attend Paris, after bravely launching his ambitious "Clean Power Plan" last August.

Co-Chairs,

Costa Rica has embarked on a path where disarmament is critical to achieving Sustainable Development. On December 1, 1948, the day of the abolition of the army in Costa Rica, the founder of the Second Republic, José Figueres Ferrer, said: "To this land of Washington, Lincoln, Bolívar and Martí, we say today: ¡Oh, Americas! Other peoples, your children offer you their greatness. Small Costa Rica would like to offer you, now and forever, its heart and its love of civility and democracy."

Sixty-seven years later, as we commemorate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and as we make our commitment to the 2030 Agenda, that small Costa Rica wishes to offer the whole world once more its heart and its love and commitment to sustainable development, democracy, and peace.

Thank you very much.