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Remarks to the Interactive Sustainable Development Goals Lunch
Sixth Annual Athens Democracy Forum
Athens, 17 September 2018

Thank you all for coming today to this interactive lunch on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Above all, thank you for your commitment to helping make the Goals a reality, here in Greece and beyond.

Reaching agreement on the 17 Goals was a milestone for the Governments of the world. But meeting the Goals will, of course, be the real achievement. That responsibility belongs to everyone.

On that note, let me say how grateful the UN is to all of you who helped pull this event together -- experts, networkers, students, activists.

It is clear that the Goals have captured the imagination of leaders and general public alike. New champions are stepping up, working for a more inclusive globalization.

But the clock is ticking fast towards the deadline 12 years from now. We are up against a range of obstacles: Armed conflicts new and old, complex humanitarian crises and mass movements of refugees. Inequality remains alarmingly high. The impacts of climate change are worsening, and environmental degradation is deepening. For the first time in a decade, the number of people who are undernourished has increased. So has the number of people living in slums. Young people remain three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. And discrimination against women remains pervasive.

All this reminds us that the Goals cannot be achieved by Governments alone. That is why it is so important to see all of you responding on an unprecedented scale.

Today, you will have an opportunity to compare notes with each other on the work to reach some of the Goals. To exchange lessons learned and best practices. To formulate your approaches on what works, and what does not.

You will focus on four of the Goals – good health and well-being; quality education; reduced inequalities; and climate action. This will help concentrate your minds.

But if you think about it, these four Goals are also intimately related to every single one of the other Goals, from zero hunger, to life under water, to economic growth, to all the others.

And of course, since we are here at the Athens Democracy Forum, it is worth noting that democratic principles run through all the 17 Goals like a golden thread -- from universal access to public goods, safe places to live and decent work opportunities for all.

So I hope you will be democratic in your discussions. Let everyone be heard. Be bold. Be specific. The UN looks forward to hearing about the outcome. Thank you very much.