

**KEY NOTE BY H.E. MR. MIROSLAV LAJČÁK,
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AT THE DISCUSSION ON THE 2030 AGENDA AND THE SDGs

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*Your Royal Highness ... Your Excellency, Madam Ambassador....
Dear guests... Ladies and Gentlemen ...*

It's an honour for me to be here, many thanks to the Embassy of Sweden for this great initiative and opportunity to share my thoughts on Agenda 2030. We can never talk enough on this issue. Simply because development of this planet is one of the most important global issues. And because SDGs concern us all.

Before we came to this event, we ate breakfast and lunch. But 842 million people around the world don't eat enough to be healthy.

Before we came here, we checked emails and news on our smart phones. But more than 4 billion people still don't have access to the Internet.

And before stepping on this podium, I drank a glass of water. But 663 million people are still without drinking water sources.

As our day went, have we thought how privileged we are to have food on our table, working electricity ... and not a worry in our mind where the next glass of water is going to come from? I dare to guess – not really. Because this is **OUR reality**.

But - for too many people around the world, it isn't. And that's the reason we are all here, and why the United Nations came together in 2015 and adopted the SDGs. Because we faced the **TRUE reality**.

The reality of climate change, reality of people dying from preventable diseases, reality of girls outside the classrooms. And we decided to do something about it. Adopting SDGs was a tremendous success. A shining example of multilateralism. Ambitious. Focused on people. Bold.

So – kind of like Pippi Longstocking. Or, please excuse my Swedish - Pippi Långstrump. Pippi never gave up. She always came up with the most unorthodox solutions. And they mostly worked. And this is the spirit we need now. Because – I will put it bluntly – **we are on the way to fail**.

The 2018 is almost over. Which leaves us with only 11 years till 2030. If we continue the “business as usual”, by 2030, the lists of our failures will be much longer than the lists of our successes.

When I started my mandate as the President of the General Assembly, we were 2 years in since the adoption of Agenda 2030. Me and my team made SDGs and climate action one of the priorities of the 72nd UNGA.

But before I get to our *actions and agenda* over the year I served, I want to start from the end. I will start with my last day in office. On this day, as was our regular practice during the year, I talked to the Secretary General. And he asked me what anyone would ask a colleague on her or his last day. He asked me what my biggest worries were for the United Nations. I told him, I had two.

First – I was worried the Global Compact on Migration would become a victim to internal political campaigns and oversimplification of complex phenomenon.

Second – I was worried we would fail on SDGs.

Unfortunately, it seems I wasn't completely off. So what's going on?

With SDGs, we have this great plan. This great vision. We have many great, dedicated people working on Agenda 2030 implementation. It seems like everybody is on board. We are persuading no one; we changed the question from “why?” to “how?” But somehow, **the efforts don't match the results**. So, how?

As I see it, there are 3 main “pains”, or - ingredients to add if we want to come closer to delivering. The first is

I. Financing

We can have the most noble goals and the best policies. But the harsh truth it – we won't get very far without investment. The SDGs require 5 to 7 trillion US dollars of global investment annually. This seems like an amount big enough to make our eyes water.

But, actually, this figure represents only 7 to 10% of global GDP – and 25 to 40% of annual global investment. So, the money is out there. However, the problem is: we cannot get it as we usually do. Public funding will not cut it. And that is why we need to try new means and mechanisms. We need to mobilize private financing for the SDGs.

The private sector controls 90% of the global job market and creates 60% of global GDP. So the money is there.

According to a study by Deloitte (*January 2018*) - 92% of business executives support the SDGs. It is understandable - customers want sustainability and are willing to pay for sustainable products. So the interest is there.

But only 17% of the businesses have actually put up any relevant plans or policies in place to materialize this support. So what's going on?

On one hand, there is a huge need. And on the other, there are huge resources. And there is a strong interest to support that need with these resources. Apparently, there is a missing link. So the second ingredient is -

II. Connection

What can be the bridge between the gaps and the opportunities? Between the interests and the deeds? I believe – it's the UN. And, in particular its General Assembly.

2030 is our Agenda. Of the UN, of its Member States. Businesses and investors won't simply jump on board because it's the right thing to do. It is up to those of us who brought the 2030 Agenda to life – the government representatives, diplomats, UN officials – to *sell* the SDGs.

To pick up on this idea during 72 UNGA, we started with organizing 2 events in New York.

In February this year, I hosted a business luncheon as an opportunity to interact and brainstorm about existing challenges and new possibilities.

Then, in June, I convened a high-level event at the UNHQ. This drew a mixed crowd: from government and UN officials, to representatives of businesses, think tanks and investment banks.

This event was slightly different to other UN events – which focus on Member States. Instead, private actors were centre stage. And what we heard was very simple: There is interest. Huge interest, in fact. And there are some very bright ideas, behind that interest.

At the high-level event, we listened to a lot of best practices and proposals. And we didn't want them to remain the room, so we created a toolbox. This gathers some of the best examples of efforts to attract and sustain investment in the SDGs.

This online toolbox was officially launched this October during the World Investment Forum. It is hosted by UNCTAD (UN Conference on Trade and Development.) It already contains more than 40 initiatives to learn from and will be constantly updated.

So – we need functioning network – connecting dots. As many of them as possible. Actually – all of them. And there is a perfect word for that.

III. Inclusivity

The third ingredient.

We need all parts of community working together. We need women. We need the youth. Half of this planet are people under 30 and half of this planet are women. Any implementation efforts will not do without them.

We need young people at the table. I invited many to the United Nations in May, for a Youth Dialogue. It was a great event, full of high spirits and energy. They embodied the kind of innovations and ideas we need to move forward. And I told them that the world needs them now. Our youth are not the “future generation”. They are here now. And we need to listen to them now.

And we need to be honest. Our systems – at the United Nations or at the national level – were built by men and for men. Things are changing, but not fast enough. So here, I want to acknowledge the tireless efforts of Sweden in promoting women empowerment, and beyond.

I have to say that during my tenure as PGA, Swedish diplomacy was an active force and great ally in the implementation efforts of the 2030 Agenda. From this place, I want to appreciate also Swedish contributions to implementation of SDG 14 – sustainable use of oceans.

Your Royal Highness, ladies and gentlemen,

I really wanted to close with an optimistic message today. But the truth is - time is running out. The chances of achieving some of our goals are already at risk. We need action – and we need it now.

So the message I will leave you with, is a message of hope. Because despite the challenges, we saw so much resolve and so much will at the UN. We saw almost 120 countries stepping up and presenting their national implementation plans. We saw UN trying to reform, bring more clarity, coherence and coordination into its efforts And most importantly: we saw first results.

Wells *filled with* drinking water. Hospitals *filled with* affordable technology. Schools *filled with* children.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, leaves me filled with hope.

Thank you