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Summary record of the 35th meeting

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President: Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 5: High-level segment (*continued*)
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(b) High-level policy dialogue on future trends and scenarios and the long-term impact of current trends on the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (*continued*)

Panel discussion: “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”

1. **Ms. Melamed** (Chief Executive Officer of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data), moderator, said that, after spending a week looking back during the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the Council would look forward to the world that it wanted to create. She encouraged the participants to discuss practical measures for shaping future trends and scenarios and the trade-offs and challenges involved.

2. **Ms. Fraser-Moleketi** (Chair of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration), resource person, said that the success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development hinged on good governance and effective public institutions. Plans and actions to stimulate empowerment, inclusiveness and equality should be informed by the principles of effective governance for sustainable development endorsed by the Council in its resolution 2018/12.

3. **Ms. Durant** (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)), resource person, said that the tremendous growth of international trade had lifted millions out of poverty, but it had benefited some regions more than others, and it had deepened inequalities. While making trade more regional could reduce its climate and environmental impacts, to tackle inequalities effectively, it was necessary to establish fairer trade regulations and public rules as well as more redistributive fiscal policies.

4. **Ms. Pypaert Perrin** (Director General of All Together in Dignity Fourth World), resource person, said that poor people had unique knowledge and experience that were key to helping them escape poverty. Policies and projects to alleviate poverty should empower the poor by building on their efforts and essential knowledge.

5. **Mr. Kenny** (Director of Technology and Development and Senior Fellow of the Center for Global Development), resource person, said that developing countries needed technology to boost production. The first industrial revolution had also been

characterized by growing inequalities, but the rise of labour unions and the introduction of progressive tax systems had helped to level them. With the right policy responses, automation and artificial intelligence had the potential to accelerate development.

6. **Ms. Howe** (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales), resource person, said that Governments were historically very bad at planning beyond the next electoral or budget cycle, even when future trends were fairly predictable. Wales was the only country in the world with an institution such as hers that held the Government accountable for long-term, integrated planning, and she recommended that other countries adopt similar mechanisms.

7. **Ms. Bogdan-Martin** (Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)), lead discussant, said that with slowing growth rates at the bottom of the pyramid, the window of opportunity for bringing the rest of the world online might be closing. There were also growing concerns about affordability, privacy, security and widening digital skills and gender gaps. However, none of the Sustainable Development Goals could be achieved without connecting all of the world’s population to the Internet. She was confident that the international community could find ways to address current risks and promote the necessary radical partnerships.

8. **Ms. Metang** (President of Association camerounaise pour la prise en charge des personnes âgées), lead discussant, said that, to ensure the inclusion of older persons, Governments needed to pay serious attention to the implications of an ageing population, recognize that older persons were a heterogenous group, combat discriminatory laws and practices, take a life course approach in all policies and programmes, ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa and support efforts to draft a global convention on the rights of older persons.

9. **Mr. Suárez Santos** (Observer for the International Organization of Employers) said that Governments, institutions and international organizations should work more closely with business on the Sustainable Development Goals, encourage more companies to support the Goals by stressing how doing so conferred a competitive advantage and establish effective partnerships with local players.

10. **Ms. Melamed** (Chief Executive Officer of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data) asked the resource persons what they would have

Governments do to safeguard the future if they could have only one wish.

11. **Ms. Durant** (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) said that she would have Governments support small- and medium-sized enterprises and women entrepreneurs.

12. **Ms. Howe** (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales) said that Governments should establish independent accountability mechanisms.

13. **Mr. Kenny** (Director of Technology and Development and Senior Fellow of the Center for Global Development) said that he would want the European Governments to reverse their migration policies. With its rapidly ageing population, Europe needed workers, and letting Africans in would have massive economic benefits for both Europe and Africa.

14. **Ms. Fraser-Moleketi** (Chair of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration) said that Governments should ensure that people in public administration, the private sector and civil society were adequately prepared to deal with rapid urbanization. In addition, they should follow principles of governance that enabled a focus on inclusivity and accountability and fostered broad participation and trust.

15. **Ms. Pypaert Perrin** (Director General of All Together in Dignity Fourth World) said that Governments should create adequately resourced spaces for dialogue with people in extreme poverty, make quality instruction in the new technologies accessible to all and implement social protection floors.

16. **Ms. Metang** (President of Association camerounaise pour la prise en charge des personnes ageés) said that older persons contributed to development at the national, regional and global levels, and Governments should take them into account in their policies and programmes and discontinue programmes that discriminated against them.

17. **Ms. Nemroff** (United States of America) asked the participants to discuss the issue of budget transparency and how transparency in national planning and feedback loops with local actors could be improved to ensure that nationally-led development addressed regional and local needs.

18. **Ms. Zapeta** (Mexico) said that she would appreciate the participants' views on how to make technology a cross-cutting focus and on options for connecting the half of the world's population that was offline.

19. **Mr. Louis** (Observer for Haiti) asked the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD what could be done to make international trade fairer and increase investment in developing countries.

20. **Ms. Fraser-Moleketi** (Chair of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration) said that many developed and developing countries were working to achieve budget transparency, which was measured every two years by the independent Open Budget Survey.

21. **Ms. Howe** (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales) said that in Wales local public institutions were required by the Well-being for Future Generations Act to set objectives to maximize their contribution to seven well-being goals and to report to her annually on progress towards them. Her office also worked closely with the Welsh Government to set a national policy framework that was then applied by local governments and institutions. With respect to budget transparency, local governments were required to report to her annually on how they were applying the Act through their budget processes.

22. **Mr. Kenny** (Director of Technology and Development and Senior Fellow of the Center for Global Development) said that budget transparency was very important. Government procurement budgets should be public down to the contract level. Regarding the Internet, the cheapest, most efficient way for Governments to provide universal access would be to contract with the lowest bidder to build cell towers in areas without connectivity. Of course, education was also necessary.

23. **Ms. Durant** (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)), responding to the representative of Haiti, said that developed countries should honour their commitment to contribute 0.7 per cent of gross national income to development assistance. Developing countries should work to diversify their economies, strengthen productive capacity, become digital exporters, develop agriculture and address climate change. Those countries that could achieve green development would have a considerable advantage. Countries should also build concrete relationships with local governments and regional organizations, which should play a more active role in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

24. **Ms. Pypaert Perrin** (Director General of All Together in Dignity Fourth World) said that members of her organization had taken computers to neighbourhood streets and had helped the residents to use them. She wondered if Ms. Bogdan-Martin had examples of effective digital literacy programmes.

25. **Ms. Bogdan-Martin** (Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)) said that her one wish would be for Governments to prioritize connectivity as a means for tackling development challenges. Regarding Internet access, it was necessary to address the issues of affordability and digital skills and to consider local content, needs and languages. Global collaboration and multi-stakeholderism were essential.

26. **Mr. Wenjian Zhang** (Assistant Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization) said that, according to the Global Risks Report 2017, failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation was one of the chief sources of global risk. States should have mechanisms for listening to their national meteorological organizations, which had the information they needed to reduce economic losses from natural disasters, and they should make sure that their regional and national infrastructures were resilient.

27. **Mr. Kiefer** (Observer for the Council of Europe) said that multi-level governance was key to implementing the 2030 Agenda.

28. **Ms. Dolan** (Observer for the Women's Environment and Development Organization), speaking on behalf of the major group for women, said that the Council was discussing trends and scenarios while the planet was burning. The Sustainable Development Goals failed to challenge the fundamental paradigms that produced and sustained inequality: patriarchy, unfettered capitalism, neo-liberal trade, militarism and environmental exploitation. The only long-term scenario worth pursuing was one of wealth redistribution, transition from fossil fuels, rights-based governance and women's and girl's leadership.

29. **Ms. Leung** (Observer for the Foundation for Environmental Stewardship), speaking on behalf of the major group for children and youth, said that she would appreciate the participants' views on how to address systemic barriers to progress such as global debt and shrinking civic space and how to quickly institute the necessary institutional reforms. She called for well-informed policy options and decision-making. There was no time waste.

30. **Ms. Pypaert Perrin** (Director General of All Together in Dignity Fourth World) said that without urgent action on climate change, millions more would sink into poverty. Poor people living outdoors had been the first to raise the alarm about its effects. It was important to collaborate with poor populations to ensure that the measures taken to protect them did not inadvertently do them more harm than good. Steps could

be taken to ensure that poor people benefited from the green transition by, for example, putting their recycling expertise to work.

31. **Ms. Durant** (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) said that she agreed on the urgency of moving to a green economy. It was also necessary to return to a non-financialized economy of goods and services. However, those transitions posed complicated problems that could not be solved overnight. Governments needed to embrace multilateralism and eschew protectionism.

32. **Mr. Kenny** (Director of Technology and Development and Senior Fellow of the Center for Global Development) said that individual countries had nothing to gain by reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Nevertheless, bowing to pressure from private citizens, the world's Governments had adopted the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which despite its weaknesses, gave hope for the future. Individuals everywhere should continue to push for implementation and more ambitious action.

33. There were no low-energy rich countries. Developing countries should not be denied the tools they needed to create energy, even if the world as a whole needed to move faster on climate change.

34. **Ms. Howe** (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales) said that there had to be accountability for local decisions, which often ran counter to national sustainable development and climate commitments.

35. **Ms. Fraser-Moleketi** (Chair of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration) said that, indeed, developing countries should not bear the burden of transition to a green economy. With respect to the important role of local government, it was essential to strengthen governance capacities and capabilities at all levels, including in the private sector and civil society. While the Sustainable Development Goals were part of a major global agenda that Member States were disposed to pursue with some urgency, it was not as radical as the policies that many young people were demanding. Greater input from radical young voices at all levels would therefore also be crucial.

36. **Mr. Wheeler** (Observer for the Global Eco-Village Network) said that subsistence farmers faced multiple challenges without having the financial resources to solve them. Given the many environmental problems caused by industrial agriculture, transitioning to regenerative agriculture was imperative. He asked what could be done to ensure the funding, planning and

implementation of agricultural and environmental solutions in rural communities around the world.

37. **Ms. Melamed** (Chief Executive Officer of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data) asked the participants how they would invest \$1 billion if they were a hedge fund manager wishing to invest in sustainable development.

38. **Mr. Kenny** (Director of Technology and Development and Senior Fellow of the Center for Global Development) said that he would pay his taxes, keep his money onshore and abide by the letter and spirit of the United Nations Global Compact.

39. **Ms. Howe** (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales) said that it was up to the public sector to drive private-sector investment in sustainable development through globally responsible investment and procurement.

40. **Mr. Kenny** (Director of Technology and Development and Senior Fellow of the Center for Global Development) said that the private sector needed to overcome gender biases.

41. **Ms. Fraser-Moleketi** (Chair of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration) said that diverse companies and companies with gender-diverse boards generally had above-average profits. Private companies should be encouraged to be more innovative in how they invested in developing economies. They might also play a role in financing infrastructure for growing urban areas.

42. **Ms. Durant** (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) said that if she ran a rich company, she would refrain from tax evasion, and she would counsel patience to her shareholders. She would invest massively in the real economy, giving preference to for-profit start-ups. She would make sure that her board was gender-balanced, and she would invest only in companies that paid equally for equal work and had gender parity in strategic management positions.

43. **Ms. Pypaert Perrin** (Director General of All Together in Dignity Fourth World) said that she would invest in education, in social protection floors and in social movements working with poor populations to make their voices heard.

44. **Ms. Bogdan-Martin** (Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)) said that she, too, would invest in education. In that connection, ITU had recently decided to team up with the United

Nations Children's Fund on its project to connect every school in the world to the Internet.

45. **Ms. Adams** (Observer for the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction), speaking also as a representative of the Sendai Stakeholders, said that she would appreciate the participants' views on how diverse sectors and stakeholders could work together more effectively to widen the reach of disaster risk reduction solutions by tailoring them to local contexts. She would also like to know what could be done to better align the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda. If she ran a technology company with \$1 billion to invest, she would hire indigenous peoples and people from small island developing States to inform product development.

46. **Mr. Cooper** (Observer for the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action Aboriginal Corporation) said that Honolulu and the four mayors of the state of Hawaii looked forward to presenting their voluntary local reviews at the 2020 high-level political forum. Honouring indigenous peoples' right to their biodiverse lands was essential for sustainable development.

47. **Ms. Conyers** (United Nations Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)), speaking as an intern, said that an annual carbon emissions limit could be agreed for each developed country. Countries exceeding their limit would pay a fine that would be used to assist the developing countries most affected by climate change.

48. **Ms. Howe** (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales), referring to the cultural rights of indigenous peoples, said that the Wales recognized the importance of culture and cultural well-being, which should be considered in the development of economic models and environmental protections. With respect to the suggestion of imposing fines for carbon emissions, fines were an important tool. Without accountability, progress on combating climate change would remain slow or stagnant.

49. **Mr. Kenny** (Director of Technology and Development and Senior Fellow of the Center for Global Development) said that it took talent to develop the new solutions and technologies required to implement the 2030 Agenda. One immediately available and relatively inexpensive way to speed implementation would be to nurture and use talent across ages, genders and races.

50. **Ms. Durant** (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) said it was important to avoid "Goal

fatigue". If all of those represented in the room did their part to implement the 2030 Agenda, they could accelerate progress. In an increasingly fragmented world, the Sustainable Development Goals were the glue that held them together. They must not lose their commitment to working together and across sectors to implement the 2030 Agenda.

51. **Ms. Pypaert Perrin** (Director General of All Together in Dignity Fourth World) said that engaging directly with people in extreme poverty was a prerequisite for sustainable policies and programmes. Governments should aim to give the poor more power over their own lives, recognize and build on their contributions, encourage partnership across the chasm of poverty and support young people's drive to unite respect for human beings with respect for the Earth.

52. **Ms. Fraser-Moleketi** (Chair of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration) said that it was necessary to apply the principles of effective governance to which she had referred previously. Many difficulties in implementing the 2030 Agenda were linked to policy objectives, for which contextual analysis was critical. Action was needed to address issues of intergenerational equity and to empower women and girls, youth, persons with disabilities and older persons. Governments, civil society and the private sector must all do their part.

53. **Mr. Harris** (Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist), summing up the discussions during the high-level segment, said that there had been a number of key messages. Participants had recalled that equality was a foundational value of sustainable development. Inequalities were multi-dimensional and intersecting, reinforcing the deprivations that pushed certain groups behind. Long-entrenched discrimination and exclusion, as well as violence, insecurity and other denials of human rights often exacerbated existing inequalities, creating a vicious cycle. Inequalities correlated closely with marginalization, as well as with under- and unemployment and financial exclusion.

54. The participants had also stressed the importance of transparency, predictability and accountability in national budgeting and had underlined the need for good governance at all levels, including in civil society and stakeholder organizations. The new technologies should benefit everyone everywhere, and Governments should make it a priority to ensure access to them and close the digital divide.

55. A whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach was essential, with comprehensive public policies based on inclusive social dialogue. Thus, space

must be created for the participation of all relevant stakeholders, including young people. Especially in view of the differential impact of climate change, it was important to ensure that the necessary transitions were just.

Closing of the segment

56. **Mr. Liu Zhenmin** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that the message of the 2019 session had been that the world was not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and transformative, integrated efforts were urgently needed. However, the 2030 Agenda remained the most compelling road map for achieving sustainable development. With accelerated, robust action, there was still time to deliver on it by 2030.

57. In its consideration of the main theme of the 2019 session, the Council had made a positive contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Council's segments, forums, functional commissions and expert bodies had worked to provide integrated policy options and recommendations, address gaps and contribute to the overall review of progress towards implementation. Yet efforts to provide a comprehensive overview of global progress on the Goals continued to be hindered by the unavailability of quality and timely data. Much greater investment in statistical capacities was essential.

58. **The President** said that consideration of the 2019 theme, "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality", had contributed significantly to galvanizing efforts to ensure empowerment, inclusiveness and equality. The Council's deliberations had emphasized the need for an integrated approach to the 2030 Agenda and for decisive, transformative actions to accelerate its implementation. The Council had heard that reaching to the local level and empowering and including local people in decision-making led to better outcomes and stronger support. It had also heard about mega trends and threats, such as the looming debt crisis, growing inequality, climate change and biodiversity loss, which would greatly affect the delivery of the 2030 Agenda.

59. Clearly, it was necessary to scale up and accelerate the known solutions, particularly education, and to promote multilateralism. However, there was less certainty about how to achieve some of the deep transformations required to realize the Sustainable Development Goals. The Council and the high-level political forum could provide a platform for the necessary reflection and exchange.

60. One key message from the high-level segment was that Governments needed to reinvent themselves. They

must be able to react swiftly to urgent trends while keeping the compass on the long term, to nurture innovation, to listen to people more keenly, to involve the poor and vulnerable in decisions that affected them and to engage with companies and small-scale entrepreneurs that could improve social well-being. In some countries, some of those transformations were already under way.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.