1. Introduction - Significance of each of 2015 Summit

It is indeed a great honor and privilege for me to address you this evening regarding the role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in building coherence in the 2015 Summits. There are four major summits this year for which all of us are focusing our attention on and for your Honourables, need to play your influential roles for them to achieve the desired outcomes. The four Summits are, namely, the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction which is planned for March 2015 in Sendai, Japan; the Third Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) to be held in July 2015 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Summit which will take place in New York in September 2015; and, the last the United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC CoP21) that will be held in December 2015 in Paris, France.

World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction
The Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction will deliberate on the development and adoption of a framework to address the reduction of risks associated with disaster beyond 2015. The need to address this has come about because of past experiences.

Within the last 10 years, over 700 thousand people lost their lives, over 1.4 million were injured, and around 23 million were made homeless as a result of disasters. Overall, more than 1.5 billion people were affected by disasters in various ways. Economic loss amounted to more than $1.3 trillion. In addition, between 2008 and 2012, 144 million were displaced by disasters.

Disasters are increasing in frequency and intensity, and those exacerbated by climate change are significantly impeding progress toward sustainable development. Evidence indicates that exposure of people and assets in all countries has increased faster than vulnerability has decreased, thus generating new risk and a steady rise in disasters losses with significant socio-economic impact in the short, medium and long term, especially at the local and community level. Recurring small scale, slow-onset and extensive disasters particularly affect communities, households and small and medium enterprises and constitute a high percentage of all losses. Those that are hit hard are developing countries and in particular the poor communities in those countries.

The Conference will provide an opportunity for countries to consider and adopt a concise, focused, forward-looking and action oriented Post-2015 framework. It will also consider the identification of modalities of cooperation and review of its implementation.

**Third Conference on Financing for Development**

The third International Conference on Financing for Development will gather high-level political representatives, such as Heads of State and Government, and Ministers of Finance, Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation, as well as all relevant institutional stakeholders, non-governmental organizations and business sector entities.

The Conference will bring together governments to negotiate and agree on an outcome that will contribute to and support the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. Specific focus of the Conference will be on assessing progress being made so far in implementing the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration and simultaneously identifying obstacles encountered in the achievement of the goals and objectives therein as well as actions to overcome the constraints.
The Conference will further consider new and emerging issues, including in the context of the recent multilateral efforts to promote international development cooperation. Deliberations around this focus will consider among other issues, current evolving development cooperation landscape; the interrelationship of all sources of development finance; and, synergies between financing objectives across the three dimensions of sustainable development.

A final focus of the Conference will be on reinvigorating and strengthening the financing for development follow-up process through private financing, investment financing and thus transfer of technology debate and capacity building may be part of the debate. Consequently, financial commitments to be made in Addis Ababa in July will be in establishing member states confidence for the Paris legally binding commitment.

The Conference on Financing for Development and its outcomes will be critical because they will contribute significantly to the achievement of sustainable development for human wellbeing. Considering that the four Summits are interlinked and the FfD is the first in the series is key and if it fails, the SDGs Summit may suffer likewise climate change deal although not connected so far. It is not yet certain if the FfD Summit will result into new monies for SDGs implementation. UNEP continues to support countries on inclusive green economy as a source of funding to fill the gap since it is being demonstrated that green economy narrative can in fact yield domestic resourced funds and investments.

**Sustainable Development Goals Summit**

The Sustainable Development Goals Summit will consider the adoption of a new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). If you may recall, the Rio+20 outcome document, *The future we want*, among other things, set out a mandate to establish an Open Working Group (OWG) to develop a set of SDGs for consideration and appropriate action by the General Assembly at its 68th session.

This has paved way for numerous processes within the United Nations which engaged various stakeholders to develop a new set of SDGs. There are seventeen (17) major SDGs that are being proposed for consideration and adoption at the Summit. The SDGs are diverse and cover many critical areas of the three (3) dimensions of sustainable development, namely, social, economic and environmental dimensions.

More specifically, the proposed SDGs speak to a wide range of areas, inter alia, ending all forms of poverty, curbing hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition. They also speak to reducing inequality within and among countries, protecting and promoting sustainable use of ecosystems, achieving gender equality, ensuring access
to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all and strengthening means of implementation, among others.

In addition, the proposed SDGs are accompanied by targets and will be further elaborated through indicators focused on measurable outcomes. The role of data to inform public policy options starting from harmonized ontologies and a cascade of indicators from global to national to sub-national would be critical. UNEP already plays that pivotal role through its UNEPlive which will be a useful tool for reporting and monitoring at global and national level or peer review at regional level.

**United Nations Climate Change Conference**

The Climate Conference has the objective of achieving a legally binding and universal agreement on climate for all the nations of the world. This will be a result of the twenty (20) year long negotiations.

As negotiations at the international level move at the snail’s pace, climate change and the impacts it has generated have intensified over the years and more adverse effects are yet predicted for the future if a business-as-usual situation prevails.

The Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or IPCC, has reported that the impacts of climate change are widespread around the world. They cut across many critical sectors of society including ecosystems and their services, human health, human security, extreme climate conditions, the diminishing glaciers and the sea level rise that causes atolls and low lying areas to submerge under water.

The Fifth Assessment Report further reports on some of the observed impacts in recent years. In Africa, extreme weather and climate events including droughts and floods have had significant impacts on economic sectors, natural resources, ecosystems, livelihoods, and human health. The floods of the Zambezi River in Mozambique in 2008 that displaced 90,000 people is one example in that region.

The recent floods in Australia and New Zealand causing serious damages to infrastructure and settlements and resulted in 35 deaths in Queensland alone is yet another example. A further, illustration is the Victorian heat wave that increased heat-related morbidity and was associated with more than 300 excess deaths, while intense bushfire destroyed more than 2000 buildings and resulted in 173 deaths.

In Europe, extreme weather events currently have significant impacts in multiple economic sectors and adverse social and health effects.
In the South Pacific, climate change induced global warming and sea level rise has caused some of the Carteret Islands of Papua New Guinea to submerge under water. This has resulted in loss of homes, loss of land, intrusion of salt water into potable water, destruction of food gardens, diminishing of customary fishing rights and many more. The situation has caused outmigration of the inhabitants to the mainland. The subsequent consequences are unimaginable.

These are only a few of the multitude of cases around the world illustrating the gravity of the impacts of climate change. The threats posed by climate change are real and should be cause for action in reducing emissions of greenhouse gaseous which is one of the root causes of the problem.

Ratification of the Doha Amendment to the Climate Change Kyoto Protocol is a commitment indicator and a precursor to the intended legally binding climate agreement. It is a signal of global engagement around climate change, of solidarity against the threats it poses and understanding of the opportunities it presents for sustainable economic growth. We are thus encouraging governments to speed up their ratification process for this second commitment period to provide valuable momentum for a necessary rise in global climate action for the years leading up to 2020. It is our hope that the Government will also join hands in this process.

2. Universality

One common feature of the four (4) Summits is the notion of universality. I would like to refer to universality first in the context of the nature of the problem and second in the context of call for action.

Take for instance the case of climate change and its impacts that I have alluded to earlier. They are clear demonstrations of the fact that the impacts of climate change are not a problem affecting one country or one region or one particular group of people. It affects every country, region, or people. It is a universal problem affecting the whole of humanity. The same can be said for all forms of disasters.

What do all these imply then? If there is any hope of achieving coherence and more importantly if transformational change has to be achieved then the whole government approach to the four (4) Summits has to be coherent, mutually reinforcing across the board and thus universal. The legally binding climate agreement is expecting a universal agreement and governments need to commit to that if the universal problem has to be solved. The targets and indicators of the SDGs must be global in nature and universally applicable to all and nothing specific to the rich or poor as MDGs were while taking into consideration national policies, priorities and needs. Finally, the means of implementation and in particular financing efforts on controlling
climate change and its impacts, reducing risks associated with disasters and the delivery of the SDGs generally will have to be made available universally. Sources of financing, whether public or private have to be mobilized and channeled toward these efforts. If governments do not make serious commitments during the Addis Conference then the other Summits that follow might be impacted adversely.

While some commitments for financing have been made by governments on specific SDGs, in particular climate change, no real commitment at the global level to finance all SDGs has been made.

In 2010, at the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, governments agreed that developed countries committed, in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation, to a goal of mobilizing jointly $100 billion dollars annually by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries, which will be drawn by a wide variety of sources (public, private, bilateral, multilateral, including alternative sources). Further efforts are needed to maintain and increase ODA allocated to least developed countries and those most in need. Discussions are ongoing also on creating enabling environments at the national levels, such as establishing institutional, legal and policy frameworks that would attract funding/investment for activities to address climate change.

3. Integration

While the four (4) Summits are held separately they should not be perceived as secluded from one another. In fact, they are inter-related Summits addressing distinct thematic areas, but they all tie into the common underlying agenda of achieving sustainable development.

For instance, disasters of all kinds and climate change are major drivers of change that can impinge upon the achievement of sustainable development and human well-being. In addition, climate change induced impacts have caused some disasters such as floods and bushfire as mentioned in the examples earlier.

Furthermore, if one were to curb climate change and its adverse impacts or if disasters were to be reduced to pave way for sustainable development, financing activities and initiatives to achieve that would be paramount. It is in this regard that the Conference on Financing for Development is relevant to the other two summits.

A further linkage among the 4 Summits is that the proposed SDGs address disasters risk reduction, climate change and financing for development. A section of Goal 11 makes specific reference to disasters by stating that by 2030 deaths, affected people, and economic losses relative to GDP caused by disasters, including water-related
disasters, with the focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations should be reduced significantly. Goal 13 calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. Goal 17 which speaks of the need to strengthen means of implementation recognizes finance as a critical factor.

Given the interconnectedness of these Summits, an integrated approach at the national level is best for better delivery, efficiency and effectiveness. This will require a cross-sectoral approach at the domestic level to ensure that these numerous thematic areas addressed by the Summits are integrated into our institutions, policies, plans and strategies. Agencies from planning, finance, environment and other sectors will need to speak to each other for an integrated approach to these issues. Countries may have to revise their national policies, strategies and action plans to respond to the universality of SDGs targets.

4. UNEP’s Role and Contribution from the Environmental Dimension

UNEP has contributed to the processes prior to and following Rio+20 in a number of ways. First, UNEP will not single handed change the world but will use its catalytic, convening power and normative role working in closer collaboration with other UN agencies and partners to engage through the environmental dimension of sustainable development. The environment cuts across the other two dimensions, social and economic, and as such it makes it natural for it to engage and thus be a convener of the linkages between social and economic dimensions beyond environment as a sector. For instance, environmental goods and services are used by humans for livelihood and economic growth and development. It has been able to convene Governments, Environment Ministers and other stakeholders through its governing body, previously the UNEP Governing Council, and now United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) at global level to deliberate, take decisions and provide policy directions on the environment at the global level.

UNEP also contributes to the numerous processes by working in partnership with other UN system-wide agencies under the banner of UN Delivering As One. It has contributed to policy and technical inputs from the environmental dimension for discussions in the Open Working Group (OWG). It continues to provide inputs and participates fully with other UN agencies into the development of SDG targets and indicators.

Furthermore, UNEP works with governments through different environmental-related regional processes facilitated by its Regional Offices to ensure regional priorities feed into the global level on SDGs and climate change debates as well as ensure Ministers will be fully engaged in the Summits negotiation processes.
UNEP’s work that will contribute to the Climate Change Summit are focused around three (3) objectives of the Parties which are preparing and submitting their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC), advancing work on pre-2020 and finalizing a negotiating text for Paris 2015 Agreement. More specifically UNEP continues to provide technical support to countries to develop their INDCs, enhance action initiatives through multi-stakeholder partnerships and preparation of UNEP climate-related reports to inform the negotiation process such as the 2015 Emissions Gap Report, 2015 Global Adaptation Report and the African Adaptation Report.

UNEP also leads and works with partners through a number of initiatives related to climate change and SDGs. One is the Green Economy Initiative (GEI). Its work on the GEI is guided by a low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive society. In a more practical sense it perceives that a green economy is one whose growth in income and employment is driven by public and private investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, enhance energy and resource efficiency, and prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services for human well-being. These investments need to be catalyzed and supported by targeted public expenditure, policy reforms and regulation changes. This development path should maintain, enhance and, where necessary, rebuild natural capital as a critical economic asset and source of public benefits, especially for poor people whose livelihoods and security depend strongly on nature.

In terms of integration, UNEP has prioritized the inclusion of SDGs and climate change across its work in particular aligning them with our Programme of Work and the Medium Term Strategy thus contributing to universality and integration. We in UNEP will need to prepare ourselves to support member states to attain the principle of universality. Since environment is relevant and important to everyone, we know expectations are huge out there and to respond to all the upcoming needs without depending on development cooperation partners will be a challenge.

5. Lessons and Actions for Parliamentarians/Legislators

Major challenge ahead of us all is to manage expectations from all these upcoming Summits and the need to be realistic. Nonetheless, actions are needed in every direction. From the lessons learned around the world on the impacts of climate change, one cannot ignore the realities that exist. The impacts of climate change can affect the United Kingdom and its citizens. They can lead to natural disasters that cost lives, destruction to infrastructure, and economic loss. These impacts can hinder the achievement of sustainable development nationally.

It requires all stakeholders to take bold and immediate steps in addressing these pressing issues. Parliamentarians are one major stakeholder and they have an important role to play. As legislators or law-makers, Parliamentarians will need to
legislate on these issues whether it is setting emission standards or debating and passing national budgets at the national level. As representatives of the people of the country they can ensure the Post 2015 development agenda and its related environmental, social, and economic sustainability are considered at all levels of government and they do trickle down to all.

It is therefore critical that legislating or committing to the legally binding and universal agreement on climate in Paris can be beneficial to the citizens of the United Kingdom as others in the world, for instance reduction in vulnerability in the country.

It will also be important for the United Kingdom to translate the discussions at the global level to the national level. The SDGs can be achieved best by domestic action. In other words, the domestication of the SDGs will lead to its success.

Integration of the numerous thematic areas such as climate change and its impacts, disasters, SDGs and financing need to be integrated into the policies, strategies and plans. This may require different ministries/agencies talking to each other to ensure that there is full integration of the different processes and actions taken.

International cooperation in terms of capacity building, technology transfer, financial assistance, to support efforts tailored toward curbing climate change in developing countries can be beneficial to the United Kingdom and its citizens. Again, this ties in with the reduction of vulnerability and also responding to the SDGs.

--------