**Remarks at the Launch of the 2019 Global Human Development Report by the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms Nardos Bekele-Thomas, 11 December 2019, Protea Hotel Loftus, Pretoria**

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Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

It gives me great pleasure to launch the 26th Edition of the UNDP Global Human Development Report, a UNDP flagship research document that interrogates global human development progress and challenges and proffer good practises for experience and knowledge exchange.

I would like to start by reflecting on How is the Human Development Approach is different from other conventional approaches? The outcome of focus on mere economic growth, as has been demonstrated during the regimes of the structural adjustment programs tend to leave countries, especially those aspiring to develop, with jobless, ruthless, voiceless, perilous and futureless growth. It becomes jobless, since growth in the economy does not guarantee expansion of opportunities for employment for large sections of the population. It can be ruthless by the mere fact that the fruits of economic growth would mostly benefit the rich, while millions of people stagnate in poverty. It could also be voiceless growth as in many places it has not ensured the process of democratic participation of the people in decision making processes- it allows the economic and political spaces to be occupied by the rich and makes others to be just spectators. In the futureless growth, the rich squanders resources needed by the future generation. It is against this backdrop, that the UN affirmed that development which perpetuates inequalities is neither sustainable nor worth sustaining and adopted the human development approach as a means to socio economic transformation process.

Human Development Approach to development is different from the conventional approaches to development, i.e. the economic growth, human capital formation, human resources development, human welfare or the basic human needs approaches. The human development approach believes that economic growth, which is the increase in production is necessary but not enough for human development. Whilst the theories of human capital formation and human resources development consider the human being as a means and not as an end, and whilst the human welfare approach visualises people only as passive recipients of benefits of development and not as its participants, and whilst the basic needs approach aims to satisfy the basic minimum needs i.e. food shelter, clothing etc. to the deprived sections of the population rather than on the issue of human choices, the human development approach puts equal emphasis on the production and distribution of resources, expansion and use of human capabilities, scope of choice, livelihood security, participatory process and social, economic and political freedoms. According to the human development concept, income is merely one option that people would like to have albeit an important one. It is not the sum total of their lives. Development must therefore be more than just the expansion of income and wealth. Its focus is on people.

It is important to examine how development is being viewed as freedom by Amartya Sen. According to him: development must be perceived as a vital process of expanding real freedoms that people enjoy. Expansion of real income and economic growth are not necessarily characteristics of successful development as countries with high GDP and per capital income at times have low achievement in the quality of life of most of its people. Accordingly, to him, the objective of development is to remove obstacles such as illiteracy, ill-health, poverty, lack of access to resources, lack of civil and political freedom. He does not deny that economic prosperity should be the major goal of planning and policy making. He however considers it to be an intermediate goal to contribute to the ultimate goal of development. i.e. the development of human lives. To Sen, both the primary end and the principal means of development is the expansion of freedom as freedom in one type helps advancing freedom of other types.

All said, human development is just an affirmation that every human being counts, and every human life is equally valuable. Upholding that universal perspective and resonating with the 2030 Development Agenda, the 2019 Human Development Report asserts that no one should be left behind in the human development journey. Human development is not for the few, not even for the most, but for everyone.

Without pre-empting the contents of the presentation, all Human Development Reports consistently echo five basic messages:

* Over the past quarter of a century, impressive progress has taken place on many fronts of human development, yet significant human deprivations persist. Many countries have graduated from LDC to MICs, but inequality among nations and within nations has increased.
* The aggregation of figures, defining the future based on averages has circumvented the human development journey and bypassed specific groups. It is essential to know the who, where and how of these deprivations and groups.
* Mapping of deprivations is essential, but human development for everyone also requires revisiting some human development analytical issues and assessment perspectives.
* national policy options for human development for everyone are available and they must be complemented with regional and global reforms. The world is more and more interconnected.
* the human development framework and the 2030 Development Agenda are mutually reinforcing, and they can inform and influence each other

The theme for this year’s Report**: Inequalities - Beyond Income, Beyond Averages, Beyond Today**, while very apt and relevant, is therefore a pertinent reminder to us all: that we need to do much more if we are to successfully implement and attain the SDGs. Inequalities lies at the heart of one of the core tenets of the SDGs **: Leave No One Behind** as those who are at the periphery of societal and development spheres are omitted or not constructively engaged in the growth and development process. Both the Gender Dimensional Index and the Inequality Adjusted Human Development Index express and show the loss in human development when inequalities are considered.

In South Africa, for instance, high inequality accounted for about 34 percent loss in Human Development Indicator in 2018. By implications, high income inequality reduces people’s chances of having access to quality education, health services, houses and decent incomes by more than 34 percent.

This report is a clarion call to a lifetime investment in humanity – from prenatal, education and health to labour market and retirement in order to avoid intergenerational inequality.

I want to appreciate the UNDP South Africa, under the leadership of Dr Ayodele Odusola for launching the HDR in South Africa and hence providing for us a broad-based view of inequalities in South Africa and in the rest of the world and thus sowing the seeds of engaging more deeply in reducing inequalities within and between groups and communities.

In conclusion, human development for everyone is not a dream, but a reality. South Africa We can build on what we have achieved, we should be decisive and courageous in exploring new possibilities and we can attain what once seemed unattainable. For the next 10 years, in our marathon towards the finish line of SDGs in 2030, let us ensure a journey from exclusion to inclusion, deprivation to prosperity; from challenges to innovations for opportunities, from hopelessness to hope. And in this journey, let us line up our youth in front and ran towards those who are farthest behind. Together, we shall not relent until no one is left behind.  
And I would like to conclude my remark with a quote from former President Mandela: "As long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality persist in our world, none of us can truly rest."

I wish you all a robust discussion towards finding solutions for reducing inequalities in South Africa.

Siyabonga Kakhulu.

Thank you.