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Closing Keynote Speech

Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and
Rector of the United Nations University
Professor Tshilidzi Marwala

April 6, 2023

Dear distinguished participants,

It is a great honor for me to be here today as a new rector of the United Nations University, whose objectives correspond to Mr. Nakata Atsuhito's commitment to peace and democracy.

While UN presence has been almost evident in every country through the peace-building process, it has been more prominent in some countries than others. Africa has shown remarkable progress as the largest host to UN Volunteers, with 49 percent in 2021, up 9 percent over 2020. From the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement to the Sun City Agreement, all of which were facilitated under the UN guidance, particularly the Sun City Agreement by Former Secretary General of the UN Kofi Annan and his Special Envoy, Moustapha Niasse. While not every country has experienced a UN presence on a large scale, I would like to draw attention to Africa, where I come from.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DPR) is one of the top three recipients of UN Volunteers, with 600 UN Volunteers under the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). With 21 programs, funds, and specialized agencies, the UN mission in Congo has also provided humanitarian assistance for those in most need. Despite all efforts, Africa remains a continent that requires substantial progress, which can only occur through implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The UN has identified 17 global goals, including six that have the most relevance for Africa:

1. Poverty: With 41 percent of the population living below the poverty line in Africa, SDG 1 must be met to provide long-term development.
2. Hunger: Food insecurity and malnutrition are pervasive in many African countries. Therefore, the successful implementation of SDG 2 will positively impact food security and nutrition.

3. Education: Access and quality are major challenges in many African countries, and improving both is critical. A key goal of SDG 4 is to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all and to ensure that quality education is accessible to all.

4. Clean Water: The lack of access to clean water and sanitation is a significant challenge in many countries, affecting health, education, and economic development. Implementing SDG 6, which ensures efficient and sustainable water and sanitation management for all, is crucial to Africa's development.

5. Energy: Access to reliable energy is essential for poverty reduction, economic development, and environmental sustainability. Sustainable Development Goal 7 ensures everyone can access affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy.

6. Sustainable Cities: While African cities are growing rapidly, urbanization, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability remain major challenges. Achieving SDG 11, which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, and sustainable, is crucial for sustainable development.

To implement such strategies efficiently, member states have recognized the value of voluntarism as an effective method for Agenda 2023. This is because UNVs are important in mobilizing and expanding support by engaging citizens in the national planning and implementation of SDGs. Designed to simplify UNV's work, the AI tool has been recognized as one of the key components of achieving sustainable development goals. Since the UN mobilizes volunteers worldwide to support development projects, AI can enhance UNV's work by providing tools to make volunteers' work more efficient. As an example, AI can be used to analyze development data, identify development needs, and provide recommendations for future interventions.

Furthermore, the use of AI must serve ethical and morally justified purposes, not to harm the well-being of humanity and the environmental impact on the earth's ecosystem. In other words, we must be able to manage the use of AI technology to enhance the lives of not only human beings but all living creatures on earth based on four principles. First, respect and care for the community of life. Second, social and economic justice; third, nonviolence and peaceful resolution. And finally, ecological integrity.

As we have gathered today in memory of Mr. Nakata, a UN District Electoral Supervisor for Cambodia, we must pay attention to how we can minimize the risk of such incidents. This is one of many cases that demonstrate the need for a change in the UN process of promoting peace and democratic values, values that seem almost impossible to attain. Despite that, it is time for more

advanced implementation of the UN's objectives through SDGs and AI strategies, which would pose fewer risks to volunteers and staff.

Having said that, I would like to express my gratitude to Kyoto University of the Arts for providing a forum to discuss strategic reforms for the UN. I am confident that the Kyoto Peacebuilding Center will play a pivotal role in raising public awareness of the peace and democracy process. Also, I would like to commend the Japanese government and its people for being among the largest donors to Africa, contributing more than $30 billion last year (2022). On behalf of UNU, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the Kyoto Peacebuilding Center, Kyoto University of the Arts, MOFA Japan, and Japan Parliamentary Committee of the Diet of Japan, and I look forward to discussing with you how UN Volunteers can make a greater impact on the world in a more secure environment and more efficiently.

I conclude by paying homage to Mr. Nakata.

Thank you!