

**Address by Roberto Ridolfi, Director for Sustainable Growth and
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Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today on behalf of Neven Mimica, European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, about the undeniable link between the environment and poverty reduction. I must thank in particular the Chair for hosting this conference devoted to addressing the significant environmental and development challenges that lie ahead for all of us.

Last autumn, we have agreed on 17 Sustainable Development Goals and a deadline of 15 years to hit some pretty ambitious targets. By 2030 we should see (among other things) an end to poverty and hunger, protected and restored ecosystems and sustainable and healthy lives for all in peaceful and inclusive societies.

With this broad and complex agenda there is no time to lose. Whether this agenda can be successful in a context of increasing and important global challenges, from mass migration and disease, to the threat of terrorism and global climate change and environment degradation, is the open question we are debating here today.

The 2030 Agenda recognizes that the degradation of the global environment on an increasingly crowded planet is calling for urgent action to curb this trend. However, even though the SDGs are universal they remain an aspiration to be achieved on a voluntary basis. Unless we are serious about our commitments to implement them and get to work, we cannot achieve them by 2030.

A traditional model of economic growth will neither lead to sustainable development, nor achieve the eradication of poverty. If we continue to grow as we have done up until now, it will take 100 years for poverty to disappear, not

the 15 years the SDGs promise, which in addition to making our planet uninhabitable will obliterate any gains against poverty.

There is, therefore, an urgent need to change course and to put the planet on a sustainable development path by promoting a transition to sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Mobilising a wide array of means of implementation with all stakeholders involved is essential and its true implementation test.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda agreed in July 2015 set out an ambitious Global Partnership for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda which is about generating investments for tackling a range of economic, social and environmental challenges. It is important to recall that the Addis Agenda stressed the need to mobilise all means of implementation –financial and non-financial, domestic and international, public and private. But it also underlined that domestic resource mobilization, for example widening the revenue base, improving tax collection, combatting tax evasion and illicit financial flows, is central to the 2030 Agenda, along with public policies and regulatory frameworks that set the right incentives.

In a world with fewer low-income countries, in which official aid is declining in importance relative to other sources of finance, we need innovative business and technology approaches at scale to make international cooperation for development more effective.

The EU has led by example and initiated new public-private financial partnerships to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.

EU resources in the form of grants have been allocated to leverage and boost public and private lending and risk capital investments. Together with a large network of financial institutions the European Commission leveraged EUR 2.2 billion into EUR 44 billion of investments under the previous financial perspectives (2007-2014). In the period 2014-2020, EUR 6 to 8 billion are expected to generate at least EUR 100 billion of investments from financial institutions and private investors.

The Climate Agreement in Paris, combined with policies being developed on a circular green economy, sustainable energy, climate smart agriculture, resilience, all in line with the SDGs, give a clear direction on where the greater

part of these investments will flow to ensure sustainable growth and development in those countries which are most in need.

Mobilising finance is important but it is equally important to make finance reach the real beneficiaries through innovative approaches and structured dialogues with partner countries and with the public and the private sectors. In this regard the two flagship initiatives ElectiFI and AgriFI just launched by the Commission to finance access to energy and boost productive climate smart agriculture and value chains are particularly important.

But one country alone, one region alone will not be in a position to address these global threats nor implement a highly interlinked SDG agenda that relies on sustainable global development as the condition for security, stability, social justice and democracy – abroad as much as at home. Only multi-stakeholders, policy coherence and comprehensive national action plans paired with collective action plans that can encourage each other will be able to provide a response to these challenges.

This year's UN Environment Assembly will offer a great opportunity to discuss the challenges of implementing the ambitious 2030 agenda and notably its environmental dimension. How do we avoid that our efforts towards one SDG undermine the efforts towards another? What do we actually mean when we talk about policy coherence, about integrated policy making, both at global and at national level? Ministers will have the occasion to discuss and to look at the links between health and environment as a case study how to turn those theoretical principles into practice. I am reassured by the constructive cooperation between the African and the EU delegations that we have seen in February at the Open ended Committee of Permanent Representatives.

Indeed, Africa and Europe have been strong allies for a long time in fighting global environmental challenges. The current priority topic of wildlife trafficking is a good example.

The scale of wildlife trafficking is such that it poses a genuine threat to certain species and to biodiversity at large, affecting livelihoods, jobs and incomes in local economies and depriving governments of the taxes they rely on. Wildlife crime is also a driver of insecurity sometimes fuelling armed conflicts. The African Common Strategy to Combat Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora and the EU's Wildlife Trafficking Action Plan for 2016 – 2020 to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna should join forces and

advocate for large scale conservation efforts to curb wildlife trafficking and poaching. A decisive and comprehensive response is needed, including all members of the international community, civil society organisations and relevant business sectors.

And our cooperation must go beyond financial and technical support for conservation and enforcement. We also must have a clear joint commitment at political level to address the corruption on which wildlife trafficking - as many other criminal activities - thrives.

Another example of the strong EU – Africa alliance is the excellent initiative of Botswana to promote, through the UN Environment Assembly, the use of natural capital accounting. Through this prism, countries can take full account of the value of their natural assets and base their policy and commercial decisions on it. It provides a much better idea of our dependency on goods and services provided by nature and, by putting a monetary value on them, ensures their role is properly reflected in our economies.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,.

A sustainable planet is not just possible and desirable; it is imperative.

We need now more than ever a strong national and international shared vision to engage in a process for a transformation to a climate resilient, environmentally sustainable development pathway.

As custodians of the future, it is our responsibility to make the right choices and seize every opportunity for a greener and more sustainable future.

I encourage you to decisively take the lead in making the implementation of the 2030 agenda a reality. The EU stands by to support you in your initiatives

Thank you