

Statement of H.E. President János Áder

Hungary

Sustainable Development Summit

New York, 25 September, 2015

Mr. President, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has been more than forty years that the report of Club of Rome on the limits to growth was published. We have known for forty years that development, we thought was without limits, cannot be sustained any more. It has taken more than forty years to ultimately agree on the sustainable development goals. This happened today, and we owe gratitude to everybody who worked on this project. However, during these forty years the world itself has also changed a lot. It bears very little resemblance to itself of 40 years ago. Over the past forty years the population of the world doubled. Greenhouse gas emissions doubled. Over these forty years the quantity of fresh water per capita was reduced by half. Over the last forty years, every year we have been losing agricultural land, the size of Belgium. Over these forty years the quantity of some of the key water-born protein resources, like tuna fish, has fallen by seventy-five percent.

Today we adopted seventeen sustainable development goals, and one of these, number 13 deals with climate change. This document leaves open quite a lot of issues, so there is still a lot of work to do on the road to Paris. So we can safely say that the road we are facing is a long one, while the time we have, is extremely short. Not that we have forty years. Within a few days we will have only forty days left to agree.

Many people have often quoted an East-African saying. It says: “We have not inherited this world from our ancestors to do with it, what we want. We borrowed it from our children.” However, looking at the INDCs so far, if we don’t come to our senses, what will happen is, we will destroy and squander the inheritance of our children. We have indeed adopted very spectacular sustainable development goals in other areas. However, if the climate objectives are not met, this will render hopeless the achievement of all other development goals. If we are not successful in Paris, if the Paris agreement is not concluded, if we continue to emit more CO², if we continue to heat our planet further, if we continue to increase the adverse impacts of the last years, then the ideas of sustainable agricultural food production, or sustainable water management will only remain dreams. It is not really difficult to understand that if we continue to reduce the size of agricultural land, we are also going to be reducing the amount of food produced. If we are going to shorten the circulation of water further, the so-called hydrological cycle, then we will have more

frequent and more serious natural disasters. If we continue with the acidification of seas and oceans, we will be endangering the primary food source of at least a billion people.

What is the consequence of all this, then? Poverty will not decline, instead, it will grow. This will also mean that social inequality will grow. Consequently social tension will also increase, which of course will not be favorable, in fact it will make good governance, security and peace completely impossible. The logical consequence in the end, can be war and mass migration on a scale much larger, than the one we are witnessing now.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today morning Pope Francis said the following in his speech in this very Hall. He said, “Mankind is not authorized to abuse, much less to destroy the environment”. He also went on to quote the words of his predecessor, Pope Paul the Sixth, which were spoken on this floor fifteen years ago. He said “the real danger comes from mankind”. You, we, all of us gave a standing ovation to the words of Pope Francis, and we also had a standing ovation for the adoption of the sustainable development goals. One year ago we all stood here and applauded the words of Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, from the Marshall Islands who asked all of us to agree, as soon as possible, on the climate objectives, because if not, they will be forced to move away from the Marshall Islands due to the rise of sea water levels. If this enthusiasm, back then or today, is genuine, if the applause, back then and now, were not only for the moment, then I ask you all to reconsider your positions before Paris, please think about what we stand to risk if we do not have a tangible agreement at the end of the year in Paris.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

We don't even have two times forty days left to conclude an agreement that will substantially influence the future of the our children.

Thank you for your attention.