

**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA
AND CO-CHAIR OF THE SDG GROUP OF EMINENT ADVOCATES,
NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFO-ADDO,
AT 2021 SDGs MOMENT AT THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ON
MONDAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER 2021.**

UN Secretary-General, His Excellency Antonio Guterres,
UN Deputy Secretary General, Her Excellency Amina Mohammed,
President of ECOSOC, H.E. Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile,
Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Norway, Co-Chair of the SDGs Advocates
Your Excellencies Heads of State
Fellow SDGs Advocates
Heads of UN Agencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

In September 2019, world leaders at the SDGs Summit in New York unanimously declared the years 2020 to 2030 as the Decade of Action, and called on all Member States to step-up and scale up significantly actions to give our world a fighting chance of achieving the Global Goals by the end-date of 2030.

Sadly, a few months after this historic Declaration, our world was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has since had a devastating effect on lives and livelihoods, and significantly undermined prospects of achieving the SDGs. Available estimates indicate that, in 2020 alone, some one hundred and twenty-four million people in the world were pushed back into extreme poverty, with some one hundred and thirty-two million people experiencing hunger as a result of the pandemic. The net effect of these adverse developments is that our world is unlikely to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2030.

The quest to achieve the SDGs has, indeed, become more daunting, but this cannot and should not deflate our efforts. Rather, this is the time to think big, act big and act smartly. As countries take action to address the effects of the pandemic, we cannot afford to perpetuate unsustainable development, by disturbing the critical balance between economic, social and environmental imperatives.

Amid the ongoing detrimental effects of the pandemic, I hold the strong view that the SDGs remain even more relevant today than ever. Our recovery measures and interventions cannot and should not be de-linked

from actions to ensure prosperity, promote peace, protect people, and safeguard the planet. Undeniably, the SDGs provide a sound framework for responding to the pandemic, and putting communities, businesses and ecosystems on a sustainable pathway.

Excellencies, I want to emphasise two essential ingredients for the task of building forward better, and scaling-up actions to hasten progress towards the realisation of the SDGs.

First, there is a pressing need to bridge the US\$ 2.5 trillion SDGs financing gap, especially for developing countries, where the human development deficit is indeed greatest. With an estimated US\$360 trillion available in global financial assets, as of 2019, the resources to finance the SDGs are certainly available. The question raised is whether the rich countries of the world are, thus, prepared to accept the new paradigm of the SDGs, and play their part or not.

Secondly, the ability to access and deploy innovative solutions and new technologies will greatly speed up progress towards the goals. New forms of social practice and organization, as well as new and improved technological products and processes, are key enablers for achieving the SDGs. Whilst embracing innovation, deliberate steps should be taken to discourage innovations that contribute to environmental degradation, that are disruptive of livelihoods, and that exacerbate inequalities.

As our world strives to deal with the challenges posed by the pandemic, we have to turn the crisis into an opportunity, and ramp up actions necessary to achieve the SDGs. We should accelerate and deepen our efforts during this Decade of Action to build a fairer, healthier, safer and more prosperous world for all.

I thank you for your attention.