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UNIDO
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CONFERENCE
BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

**Statement of Mr. Gerd Müller
Director General-elect
during the
19th session of the UNIDO General Conference**

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Vienna, Austria





Ladies and gentlemen,
Excellencies,

Distinguished members of the UNIDO General Conference,

I want to thank you for your great support and for electing me as the new Director General of UNIDO.

I feel deeply honored by your trust and support. I look forward to working with all of you to move UNIDO forward in solidarity with all members.

It is a special conference, unfortunately largely virtual. My special greetings and thanks therefore go to the participants at home in our member countries. I very much hope and look forward to meeting you all in person soon.

That I have been elected – a European and a German Development Minister – is a sign of confidence, but also a signal to industrialized countries to take on more responsibility so that we can jointly meet global challenges.

If we want to solve the global challenges of our time,

- we need global solidarity
- and a partnership-based cooperation between industrialized countries and developing countries.
- And we need stronger commitment from the industrialized countries!

I am an optimist. Today, our world has the necessary technologies and knowledge

- to create a world without hunger,
- to successfully address climate change, and
- to end pandemics such as COVID-19 and Ebola.

When I look at the outcomes of the COP26 in Glasgow, I am sorry to say: This is by far not enough!

From the perspective of the developing countries, the G77 and UNIDO, the decisions are disappointing and totally insufficient.

What is missing: the necessary financial commitments to tackle the climate crisis and to finance a global green recovery programme. We need huge levels of investments for the transformation and decarbonization of energy systems in developing countries. Here, we are not talking about billions but about thousands of billions (trillions)





Ladies and gentlemen,

UNIDO is responsible for sustainable development, climate and environmental protection – , and must give an even stronger voice to the interests of developing countries, emerging economies and the G77 in the international debate – and – UNIDO has to present practical solutions for the challenges of our time.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In order to resolve the global challenges, we also need the larger nations – Russia, India, Japan, as well as France, the United States and the United Kingdom. I am pleased that the representatives of the US and the UK are participating today as observers and I hope that they will soon rejoin the UNIDO family. But we also need China as a strong partner!

Mr. Li,

On behalf of everyone, I want to thank you and the staff of UNIDO for your successful work over the last eight years. You have set many things in motion, launched many initiatives, and I will continue to develop many of the programmes that you have started. One example is the PCP.

I would like to ask you to encourage China to continue the strong cooperation with UNIDO. We want to thank you with a big round of applause and our very best wishes and sincere thanks to you, and also to your wife and family.

Ladies and gentlemen, now let us look ahead. What will the world look like in 2050?

- We will have a global population of ten billion.
- Africa's population will double.
- Demand for food will rise by 50 per cent.
- Energy demand will rise by 70 per cent.
- Climate change will continue, with all its consequences.
- Resources will become scarce.
- Digital technology will change our lives.

UNIDO is a key player in addressing these global challenges

We need concrete and practical solutions:

1. Protecting the global climate and global goods – our oceans, forests, soil and water
2. Feeding a growing world population and ending hunger and poverty
3. Creating jobs for hundreds of millions of people – especially young people

The international community knows what must be done, we must:

- implement the SDG agenda,
- implement the Paris Agreement, and
- comply with the Biodiversity Convention.





My goal is: UNIDO must become the leading UN Organization to implement the SDG Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

Ladies and gentlemen,

80 per cent of all people on our planet live in low-income and middle-income countries – in developing and emerging economies. UNIDO must be the voice of these countries.

- They must be heard in UN organizations,
- at international conferences – and they must have a vote in decision-making.

The industrialized countries, must realize that cooperation offers huge opportunities. And the industrialized countries must also realize that the gap between rich and poor mustn't get any wider and that the exploitation of people and nature in many developing countries needs to end.

What is needed is:

- Investments in infrastructure
- Industry and digitalization
- Agriculture and education
- Fair trade relations
- access to energy to achieve industrial upgrading.

Let me highlight three major areas for growth and investment, for sustainable development, industrialization and job creation.

First, the development of sustainable energy supplies.
Our goal is access to sustainable energy for all.

- Nearly one billion people do not have access to electricity or energy yet.
- Energy is the precondition for successful development across all sectors, and also for health system development.
- Energy is needed for education, digitalization, health, for a modern agricultural sector, for new industries and new jobs.

Energy and climate are linked.

For successful climate change mitigation, we must decarbonize the energy sector. There are the technologies we need, and most of your countries have the potential we need, in terms of solar-, wind-, hydro- and bioenergy.

I have seen the most modern solar power stations in the world – in Morocco, in the Aswan desert in Egypt, and recently in Abu Dhabi, where the world's largest solar park is being built and where the industrial use of hydrogen is being developed together with Siemens Energy.





Second, there are the growth opportunities in construction, infrastructure and digitalization.

In addition to energy, the precondition for development and industrialization is the development of, and investment in, fundamental infrastructure such as roads, grids, ports and railways and digitalization. So the construction sector will become a big driver of growth and a huge job generator. Increasing urbanization is both an opportunity and a challenge. UNIDO can – and must – develop vocational training programs and center, that help to train young people for these new kinds of jobs and new production lines for example in the automotive industry.

Rwanda, for example, is showing the world in Kigali that modern, urban mobility in African cities is already feasible today. And Rwanda has successfully started the production of cars - made in Africa. The developing countries will need up to one billion cars and trucks by 2050. Production must take place on the ground and create jobs – this must be our goal, not only in Rwanda. Many Asian countries have their own car production, and so do Brazil, Mexico and other countries.

Our goal must be to develop new industrial parks and establish production capacities in developing countries.

This is also needed in the pharma industry. India and other Asian countries are showing us how to do it. Drugs and vaccines for developing countries must be produced in these countries. Germany is currently assisting Senegal, South Africa, Rwanda and Ghana in setting up their own production plants in particular for COVID-19 vaccines.

Another growing sector is chip production. Not only Asian countries are successful here. Costa Rica is also a big player in the world market. The food and agriculture sector is the third major area for development and growth that I want to mention

I am the son of a small farmer and I am a professor for international agricultural policy. So the development of the agriculture, forestry and fishery sector and the food industry is particularly important.

The most urgent task is to end hunger!
Millions of farmers are still living in poverty.

Our common goal must be to invest in sustainable agriculture, develop processing industries and create fair supply chains. Young people in rural areas need better opportunities, jobs, and incomes.

I think this sector has huge potential for job creation and the development of local value chains. Sustainable agriculture requires investment, training, fair prices and local value addition. This must be one important focus for the future work of UNIDO. Investments in value added manufacturing.

Let me give you a few examples. It must become possible for countries, after the cotton has been harvested locally, to also develop processing facilities nearby. It must become





possible for countries not to sell their raw coffee or cocoa beans to Europe or the U.S. for a few cents.

The future must be for the processing of the coffee to take place in the producer countries. Local value addition can increase tenfold. Then children won't need to work on the plantations anymore – they can go to school. I could give you many other examples of product and supply chains.

In Mexico and Brazil, I have seen how hard people have to work on the banana plantations. The large global companies are buying a kilogram of bananas at 15 cents – and selling it in Europe at one euro twenty.

This is not a fair deal for the plantation workers. The people on the ground and their families cannot live on that. UNIDO must work for a fair global trade and agricultural system. Recently I met the new head of WTO, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala from Nigeria. With her, we have a chance to change things.

I mentioned three major areas for growth. There are many more issues, which we must address. But not everything can be done at once. We will have to focus on priorities. But we're only at the beginning of my term as Director General. The most important thing for me is to hear from you what your specific interests are. So I will start a review process and develop together the UNIDO 2025 strategy and programme for the future – based on your ideas and proposals. All UNIDO employees are invited to participate.

- UNIDO has to develop further,
- undertake reforms, a gender strategy,
- operate closer to the partner countries,
- and strengthen its partnership and field approach.
- The ITPOs should play a stronger role in the organization
- Cooperation with the private sector and private investors must become a priority
- I will also work on stabilizing the budget,
and maybe it will be possible
to get some former members to return to UNIDO.

If UNIDO hadn't already been founded 1966, it would need to be founded today - to support inclusive and sustainable industrial development for a green recovery. But *Building back better* must not remain an empty promise. I want to tackle these tasks with all my strength and experience. Your vote and your confidence is a great honor for me and fills me with a sense of duty and responsibility. I am an optimist. Together we can achieve a lot.

Let's get to work. Together, we are strong. Thank you very much.

