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**STATEMENT BY  
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ON  
BUILDING CONSENSUS/IDENTIFYING SHARED GOALS  
AND FORGING PARTNERSHIPS AS AN IMPORTANT SKILL  
FOR FUTURE LEADERS IN THE CONTEXT OF VARIOUS  
AREAS  
AT  
LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS**

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Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I start by thanking the London School of Economics for inviting me to speak on the theme of building consensus/identifying shared goals and partnerships as an important skill for future leaders. Indeed, I feel privileged to stand before you as I recognize the role that this premium institution continues to play in academic excellence and innovation. This institution has a rich alumni holding senior and responsible positions in governments and organizations across the world.

I will start by stating the role that I play at the United Nations. My role is basically to provide leadership and guidance in various areas that are in furtherance of the objectives of the UN as contained in the Charter of the United Nations. The role can be in such area as the international economic and social cooperation, as was the case with the open working group on sustainable development goals. Similarly, the role can span across other areas spelled out in the Charter of the UN such as trusteeship, security and justice.

The leadership roles played in all the contexts resonate with the theme of today's discussion. The business of the UN revolves around mostly multilateral negotiations that go beyond two nations. Member states act to advance their interests and collective idealism. They orient their actions around larger principles such as human rights, justice and development for the common good. Players represent various agencies such as sub-governments, UN organizations, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector.

Indeed it is right that different countries and regions have varying viewpoints on matters of common good. It becomes even more complex and challenging in cases where multi stakeholder participation exercises serve mainly as a cover for powerful interests determined to drive forward certain agenda. This allows limited scope for any meaningful inclusion of alternative views and information. Cases where few powerful countries and political elites dominate multilateral debates are common. The constellation of the agencies represented can just but add to the complexity of the negotiations making it difficult to reach consensus.

I had an opportunity of leading the open working group process which led to the Sustainable Development Goals. Like any other multilateral negotiation, the process has its share of multi-layered challenges. The formative phase of the process was characterized by lack of consensus on the methods of work. This was followed by need to balance the interests of the different groups and regions. Issues of representation in the OWG membership, handling of the negotiation process and the members' reservations on the outcome document surfaced during the process.

The challenges were surmountable, but nevertheless the situation called for the leadership that looks at the larger issues with a strategic vision. There was need to deliberate on these issues with an open mind and deeper thoughts. It called for deeper understanding of the context in which the multilateral negotiating system operates. Visionary thinking that brings about change instead of managing a process that maintains or steadily improves current performance became necessary.

Member states act to advance their interests and a collective idealism. More often, some want the negotiations to work because they see it as the only way to negotiate complex global challenges with chances of achieving a fair outcome. Others focus

on the process to gain traction on specific issues, especially where progress might be slower at the national level.

There are cases where few powerful groupings and political elites usually tend to dominate the multilateral debates. The process can be characterized as a multi stakeholder participation exercise that mainly serves as a cover for powerful interests determined to drive forward their own agenda. This allows little scope for the meaningful inclusion of alternative views and information.

Governments of wealthier countries have a louder voice as do the international financial institutions, civil society groups from developed countries and activists from urban areas and socio economically privileged communities. Leadership and building consensus in such context requires asking difficult questions. Such questions can be; How can minority voices be better heard in the process of reaching international consensus? For instance, is there a tendency for those with less capacity to attain development be held more accountable for achieving it?

Leadership has to demonstrate the ability to moderate power and interests. It should balance idealism and realism in the interest of achieving common objectives. It should be premised on fairness in decision making where everyone agrees to consistently abide by common rules and values. Weak partners should not be tempted to imagine that powerful partners are usurping the process primarily for securing short term national interests in a competitive world. So that the weak ones do not see multilateral arena as full of contradictions and double standards.

As future leaders in various fields, you should note that building consensus can bring together a wealth of different perspectives and capabilities needed to achieve various

objectives. Partnerships can counteract forces that stand in the way. Some of the important messages going forward are as follows;

- Competing needs of global significance must be fairly and equitably moderated through consensus and partnerships.
- There should be recognition that there are diverse ways of realizing the same objectives and that individual interests will always be there. They only need to be aligned with collective imperatives.
- In a multilateral arena there tend to emerge new alliances forged around common human rights and development priorities rather than conventional alignments based on region or economic size. States, particularly those that otherwise would have little voice, can operate from a stronger collective bargaining position.
- Decision making is better served through involving a more limited number of participants. However, equal representation remains imperative.

Allow me to conclude by stating that in spite of the diversity on the African continent, the leaders have effectively managed to galvanize common ground in areas that are of mutual interest to the African people. We have in place a Common Africa Position (CAP) for the Post 2015 Development Agenda which spells out the priorities that the continent has to pursue within this context.

The CAP identifies the following six pillars for common cooperation; Structural economic transformation and inclusive growth; science technology and innovation; people centred development; environmental sustainability, natural resources management and disaster risk management; peace and security; and finance and partnerships. These areas as identified have already been taken care off by the sustainable development goals set which will be the main basis of integrating the

SDGs into the post 2015 development agenda. Indeed even as we continue with the intergovernmental negotiations in the post 2015 development agenda, the CAP document remains the “True North” for the African Countries.

Lastly, the advice that I can offer to students who are aspiring to become leaders in various field is that you should be judicious in making your career choices. This should be informed by your competency. Lastly, you should strive to excel.

**Thank You**