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OPENING REMARKS

BY

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**DURING THE INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE FOR THE SUMMIT OF THE
POST 2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

**THEME: TACKLING INEQUALITIES, EMPOWERING WOMEN AND
GIRLS AND LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND**

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STATEMENT BY H.E HON. UHURU KENYATTA, C.G.H., PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER- IN -CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES DURING THE INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE FOR THE SUMMIT OF THE POST 2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA, THEME: TACKLING INEQUALITIES, EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS AND LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND. NEW YORK, 25TH SEPTEMBER 2015

Heads of State and Government, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Under the overarching theme for the interactive dialogues, **“Transforming the World: realizing the post 2015 development agenda”**, this Interactive Dialogue will focus on **“Tackling inequalities, empowering women and girls and leaving no one behind”**.

At the outset, let me extend a warm welcome to all of you participating in the discussions today. It is a great pleasure to Co-Chair this interactive dialogue together with my dear friend, the President of the Republic of Croatia Her Excellency Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic. (We have agreed that she will Chair the first half of the dialogue and I will take over the Chair for the second half. I will now make some introductory remarks).

Inequality continues to be a critical social, economic and political challenge. The widening disparities continue to weaken the structures that hold our societies together and undermines the momentum to move forward. Resulting from the effect of the global financial crisis, the incomes at the bottom of the ladder have declined. The middle incomes have been squeezed too. While budget austerity measures in many countries have only worsened the situation, especially the delivery of services such as healthcare and education, particularly to women and girls.

Indeed inequalities within and among states are real. Much progress has been recorded in various sectors across the world over the past 15 years during the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However this progress is skewed and uneven within various groups of people and among states.

Sadly, disparities continue to widen. This is exacerbated by the fact that the gap between the rich and the poor is not getting any narrower as demonstrated by the Gini-Coefficient measurements. We continue to have urban and rural disparities in income distribution especially in developing countries. The situation is not any better with the rising levels of unemployment especially among the youth. Even amongst those who are employed, very few people feel completely secure in their jobs. Globally, we see glaring cases of inequality, an example being the share of contribution of developing countries in cumulative world trade.

We note that millions of people, especially women and children, have been left behind in the unfinished work of the MDGs. Going forward, I would like to pose the following questions for this interactive dialogue;

- How then do we ensure that our women and girls and even our youth and children access key services spelled out in the SDGs such as education and health.
- How do we ensure that we attain societies that have achieved zero tolerance of violence against or exploitation of women and girls.
- What can be done to ensure that women and girls get equal access to financial services, and the right to own productive assets.

Highly unequal societies do not do as well as compared to low inequality societies. The sustainability levels of growth are usually lower in highly unequal economies. Similarly, such economies take longer to recover from economic downturns.

I am glad to note that the overarching objective of the new Agenda of attaining a world free of poverty and hunger within the next 15 years, is a good starting point of addressing inequalities. The headline goals 5 and 10 of the Agenda, and their targets address gender issues and inequalities within and among states.

It is good news that the new Agenda defines the means to achieve these goals. This requires governments to ensure that the entire new Agenda is embraced at all levels. So I would like to pose the question to this interactive dialogue, how then do we frontload the already defined means of implementation relevant to tackling these inequalities? And what will be of priority in tracking these inequalities? First we must ensure that quality disaggregated data is captured for all categories of people and groups. Also this should be complemented by measuring progress beyond GDP, to ensure that no-one is left behind. But what else must we do to ensure quick and fast start up of the new Agenda? The role of governments in developing legal and regulatory frameworks and making policy choices in this context remains important. Mobilization of resources, putting in place adequate capacities, building institutions, will be critical in tackling inequalities. In order to address the imminent inequalities and ensure that no one is left behind, we will need to focus on a range of measures. These could include;

1. Eliminating discrimination; increased investments and focus on quality education. Relevant skills and high quality education remain critical in shaping the future of more than 1.8 billion youth and adolescents. The youth are an engine for change.
2. Provision of health care services, including for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Empirical evidence indicates that public spending on high quality education, health and family care reduces inequality by about a fifth on average.
3. We need to create decent work and strive towards attaining full employment. We need to develop incentives for Micro-Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This is a necessary condition for inclusive economic growth.

4. Improved infrastructure for water and sanitation, transportation, energy and information technology are key. Measures to reduce and redistribute unpaid care work; legal and policy reform to ensure full and equal access to financial and productive resources and assets, especially for women; and universal social protection floors should be a priority.

Let me conclude then by saying the following:

Inequality can be tackled, it is up to policy makers to build comprehensive strategies for inclusive growth and better wealth distribution. I am happy to note that the new development Agenda voices the needs and rights of those who are furthest behind. Reaching them can only be possible with the involvement of all the relevant stakeholders. Governments have a role of defining legal and regulatory regimes, and interrogating policy choices that can address market failures. Drawing on best practices, we can design and promote better policies and better lives. I look forward to an open and interactive exchange of views around this subject.

I Thank You