

**Third International Conference
on Financing for Development
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**Statement by H.E. Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson,
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President,

I would like to thank the Ethiopian Government for its generosity in organizing this conference.

This is a year of opportunities for all of us, for future generations of mankind and the future of our planet. This is the year when we will set the course towards a more sustainable way of life and a more just and prosperous future for all of us.

We all know that the global development landscape has changed considerably since the MDGs were adopted at the start of the new millennium. We now see even more clearly that our actions – and indeed, our inaction - have consequences, that our lives are interconnected. Thus we must treat each other and our planet with respect. Our new path must be guided by respect for human rights and the dignity of all. The eradication of poverty and hunger is at the core of the new agenda and our vision must be clear and forward looking: we cannot afford complacency. In ensuring a universal agenda, we must at the same time focus on the special challenges facing the least developed countries.

We are about to set ourselves ambitious sustainable goals and targets. Achieving them will require an unprecedented mobilization of resources. An enabling environment, including the rule of law and effective institutions, and including the massive potential of business will be essential for success.

In leveraging the resources available, including ODA and domestic private and public resources, we must not lose sight of where resources can most effectively be targeted. Much can be gained through the careful cultivation of what is already there. Along with others, Iceland fought to include a strong focus on sustainable land management, investment in sustainable energy systems, and sustainable fisheries. Furthermore, Iceland has underlined the importance of investing in health, including the treatment of neurological disorders that affect hundreds of millions of people in developed and developing countries alike. Last but not least, gender equality and women and girls empowerment are an essential element in a transformative agenda.

Nothing will yield as much gains as legally and economically empowering women to become active participants in all societies. I speak from experience. Iceland has invested in social infrastructure that has effectively promoted gender equality in all spheres of society, allowing for Iceland's economic and social development.

Gender equality does not happen overnight by setting new rules. Clear policies and social advocacy will be needed to create a better life for women everywhere, which in turn will enable them to contribute effectively to the society for the benefit of all. In practice, this means that policy makers and private businesses alike should consider the positive or negative impacts on gender equality of every action they take.

Iceland's perspective is different from many other developed countries: we share the history of the developing countries with our centuries-long experience as a colony and deep poverty until the middle of last century. This is why our development cooperation is focused on sharing our experience. In recent decades we have used the medium of the four UN University Programmes established in Iceland to achieve this objective.

Iceland has systematically been working on restoring and rehabilitating its degraded lands for over 100 years. Through persistence and much effort we have succeeded in halting degradation in many areas and in reversing desertification. And indeed, restoring and rehabilitating land will be among the most effective actions we can take to achieve many of our other goals and targets.

Every year, over 10 million hectares of arable land are degraded. Over 40% of the world's poor depend on degraded lands for essential services, such as food, fuel, raw material, and water purification. Restoring the productive capacity of the land will decrease economic vulnerability, promote long-term development and allow us to feed the growing population of the world. The outcome document of this conference emphasizes the necessity to invest in land-degradation neutrality. This will have far-reaching positive impacts, including for food security, poverty eradication, women's empowerment and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

In recent decades, Iceland has invested heavily in technology for the harnessing of our vast sustainable energy sources to the point where Icelanders mainly use geothermal and hydro-based energy for their heating and electricity needs. I am confident that harnessing sustainable energy in developing countries, many of which have geothermal potential will be

transformative for their future development and prosperity, as it has been for us.

Sustainable management of resources is the leitmotif of Icelandic foreign and domestic policy – it is how we have survived and prospered – it is the only way our world will survive and prosper. For over three decades, Iceland has implemented a sustainable, scientifically based fisheries management policy, which has enabled us to continue to build on our marine resources as a main source of income. We were close to depleting fish stocks in waters ill managed and overfished, but we were able to reverse the course and steer towards prosperity. For the hundreds of millions that depend on the oceans for their livelihoods, we have to invest in healthy oceans and forgo short-term gains for long-term sustainability.

Mr. President

The spirit of global partnership and solidarity that has brought us together in Addis Ababa will, I am convinced, carry us through to the summit in September and on to the Post-2015 Agenda and to the COP21 in Paris. We must shoulder our responsibilities as world leaders to ensure that no-one is left behind as we create the basis for sustainable development and that the planet is preserved for our children and future generations