

Our Investment Is Beyond Limits

Putting Our Citizens First in Words and Deeds

By **Professor Rami Hamdallah**



The global efforts to promote sustainable development give high hopes and expectations for our world and Palestine. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by world leaders in September 2015. Palestine is committed to this Agenda, despite its special circumstances resulting from the occupation and limited resources. We are proud to be part of the international declaration and pursuits that were endorsed by 200 world leaders. We strongly believe that these universal goals apply to us and will be of great benefit to our country and region.

We work tirelessly and diligently to promote policies that are primarily designed to achieve the highest sustainable human development, and we have created the appropriate frameworks and institutional organization to ensure that the Agenda is well integrated into our National Policy Agenda. Consequently, the pursuits related to the implementation of the Agenda are not separate from the general developmental strategies of Palestine.

Notably, Palestine has been one of the few countries to adopt a holistic approach to sustainable development, based on the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals. Therefore, our approach has not been limited to planning but has embraced effective coordination mechanisms with the various national institutions. We want constructive cooperation so that we can achieve substantial progress for sustainable development.

Our government has committed itself to the goals of the Agenda and the aspirations of effective sustainable development, although it is not legally binding. We have also engaged the private and public sectors in determining the national priorities, with particular attention to planning, project implementation,

and intervention design. In addition, we concentrate on performance evaluation while adhering to transparent methods and participatory approaches. It is our firm belief that sharing experiences and skills serves our national interests and encourages national ownership of programs. We have taken this path, supported by the various agencies of the United Nations, and are firmly committed to not leaving any citizen behind. Similarly, we believe that concerned authorities must be actively engaged in all these pivotal pursuits.

Palestine experiences exceptional circumstances as we live under the only occupation in the world. Due to this grim reality, we need more concerted efforts to carry out this pivotal task and achieve these important goals. We are determined to succeed since we rely on the talents, resilience, and capabilities of our people, especially our youth. The impacts of occupation are not exclusively limited to direct political control and the deprivation of rights, thus obstructing the establishment of an independent state. Indeed, the occupation is a major impediment to achieving the goals of sustainable development. The lack of control over resources, especially in Area C of the West Bank, and the restrictions on freedom of movement frequently prevent us from achieving our developmental goals.

Nevertheless, these harsh circumstances will not weaken our resolve, as we aspire to make a positive difference in the lives of our people. We are committed as a government to implementing this Agenda, with the invaluable support of H.E. President Mahmoud Abbas. Obstacles to development under occupation will not diminish our fortitude and resilience, as our various national frameworks contribute to attaining the goals of this Agenda.

Our government's priority – “Our Citizens First” – has been clearly manifested in the National Policy Agenda 2017–2022, which is aligned with the highest purpose of the Agenda: No one is left behind. We strongly believe that the allocation of adequate financial resources and the empowerment of human resources are two important factors in advancing the goals of sustainable development. In fact, we have used these two factors in designing our National Policy Agenda 2017–2022. It is worth highlighting here that this effort is true investment in prosperity, peace, and stability, not only in this country but also in the entire region and the world, for the sake of present and future generations.

We commend the efforts of the various UN agencies in their support of the implementation of the development plans, which is carried out in full coordination with the government and relevant Palestinian parties. In the spirit of this cooperation, our government is diligently working to submit a voluntary report to the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development in 2018. In submitting this report, we assert that our purpose is to promote transparency and the implementation of the principles of good governance in order to solidify our institutions as we aspire to achieve statehood. This engagement will open new horizons as we share our experiences with other countries.

Our commitment to the goals of the Agenda puts Palestine in an advanced position to design the necessary plans, promote networking, intensify coordination, and deepen cooperation with national and international partners. Therefore, the convening of the ninth meeting of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination, and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG) in Palestine reflects our determination and aspiration to fully and successfully achieve and implement the goals of the Agenda.

We yearn for the prosperity of our citizens and for the solidification of the institutions of our future Palestinian state. We are confident that our joint efforts in the realm of sustainable development will be appropriately placed to tackle the many urgent challenges that our country and the world encounter, and produce positive results.

Professor Rami Hamdallah is the prime minister of the State of Palestine.

