

UNAIDS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REMARKS

WINNIE BYANYIMA

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XI

GLOBAL
BAKU
FORUM

FIXING
THE FRACTURED
WORLD

14-16 March 2024 | Baku, Azerbaijan



14 MARCH 2024, BAKU, AZERBAIJAN

XI GLOBAL BAKU FORUM, FIXING THE FRACTURED WORLD, OPENING CEREMONY



Your Excellencies, co-chairs Ismail Serageldin and Vaira Vike-Freiberga;

Your Excellency Bajram Begaj, President of the Republic of Albania;

Excellencies and distinguished guests;

Colleagues from the United Nations;

It is an honour to be back here in beautiful Baku to join the 11th Global Baku Forum.

Thank you to Secretary General Rovshan Muradov and your team at the Nizami Ganjavi International Centre (NGIC) for bringing us together around this year's theme: "Fixing a Fractured World."

The Fractured World

The poet Nizami Ganjavi was a bridge-builder who believed in helping neighbours and friends. Someone who held respect for other cultures. So it is very fitting that it is the Nizami Ganjavi International Centre who are bringing us together.

These are qualities we need to fix today's fractured world.

Our world is going through multiple seismic shifts that our outdated multilateral system is failing to respond to effectively. A technological revolution is disrupting the world of work, disrupting liberal democracy model, generating lethal weapons that threaten our very existence. The climate and energy transition is just beginning but it will transform our lives and our countries and relations between them. The change will have to be huge for the planet to survive. Geopolitical tensions are at their highest, the world is adjusting to a post Cold War reality and as Guy Ryder said, moving towards a multipolar world. The neoliberal free markets paradigm is exhausted. Inequality between and within nations is growing exponentially.

The rules of the international economic order are not working.

Be they trade, intellectual property, debt, finance, tax... name it. We need a reset, an urgent reset. That is why platforms such as the Global Baku Forum, like the Non Aligned Movement are so important. They reaffirm global solidarity, inclusivity and equality and they point to a reformed multilateral system.

Non Aligned Movement

I therefore take the opportunity to congratulate His Excellency President Aliyev for revitalising and strengthening the Non Aligned Movement during Azerbaijan's recent chairmanship. I commend the President's vision and the reforms that he has brought to the NAM. UNAIDS, which I lead, was honoured to be associated with the President's efforts to bring women's interests and perspectives into the Non Aligned Movement. We at UNAIDS supported the successful and ground-breaking *International Conference on Advancing Rights and Empowerment of Women* hosted by the Government

of Azerbaijan here in Baku. The outcome of this meeting, the Baku Declaration, emphasized the vital role of women and girls in sustainable development. It was adopted by the Bureau of the NAM, and Uganda, the current chair of NAM, is carrying this torch forward. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan is hosting a secretariat of the youth of countries of the NAM. We hope to see both the youth secretariat here in Baku and the women secretariat in Kampala formally integrated in NAM structures and processes at their next summit.

Solutions

Excellencies, we need a rules based global order that is just and based on consensus of all countries, with each sovereign state equal to another.

We must break out of the post World War 2 arrangements which were crafted by the winners of that war while other countries were not part of it—many had not yet broken out of colonialism.

Summit of the Future

That is why the Secretary General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres has called for the Summit of the Future to start the reform of the global financial architecture, so that it reflects the economic needs, social needs and political realities of today.

At the Summit of the Future in September of this year is opportunity to ensure that the world is prepared for when—not if—there is a future health crisis. We need to be able at the next pandemic, for the world collectively respond quickly, efficiently and equitably in all countries, and so that the rights and dignity of every person in this world are respected. To end current pandemics like the HIV pandemic that my entity fights.

Reforms for health

To be prepared for future ones we must update trade rules and in particular intellectual property rules. The world lost the opportunity of a TRIPS waiver during the Covid pandemic. As a result we lost millions of lives that could have been saved. Economies shut down. Millions of jobs were lost. Schools closed and girls lost their place of safety. Gender based violence and teenage pregnancies peaked. And we were set back in our global fight to end HIV.

Today we see wealthy nations implementing measures to overcome IP barriers, they have learned from Covid. They are determined not to allow excessive profits of pharma companies to come before the lives of their people. However, we are seeing at the same time in the ongoing Pandemic Accord negotiations at the WHO, the same countries are opposed to solutions that would allow all countries to get access to medicines in future health crises.

The pandemic accord, as my brother Tedros has said, is an opportunity not to lose. We call on all governments to use the opportunity of the Pandemic Accord to ensure equitable and rapid access to medicines, including measures to overcome intellectual property barriers. Its mission critical for humanity, as Tedros has said.

Reforms for debt

Excellencies, this is not the only reform that we need if we are to guarantee health for all, end Covid and avoid future pandemics. Low- and middle-income countries are choking on debt. They are unable to deliver healthcare and quality education for their children.

75% of people living with HIV live in Africa. And it is the continent with the highest burden of many other diseases. Yet in 2022, African countries paid an average of over three times more on debt service than they invested in health, over 12 times of what they spend in social protection.

Zambia for example spent 9 times more on debt servicing (70% of public expenditure) than on health. My country Uganda spent 4 times more servicing debt than on health.

More than 3.3 billion people live in countries that spend more on paying interest on debt than on health and education, including over half of Africa's population.

Not only that: Borrowing rates for low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa are four times higher than for the US, the richest country, and eight times higher than for Germany (UNCTAD).

So that is why the Secretary General called for an SDG stimulus. That we put money on the table, but that would also offer an effective debt relief mechanism that supports payments as pensions, long and ending terms and lower rates. The current system isn't working. It is too slow and offers too little. Countries that sought debt restructuring, two years on, still have nothing, to open space to pay for health and education and other needs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, all of us here—leaders of governments, the multilateral system, civil society, from cooperations—we can affirm that global solutions can be found for global problems.

We live in a fractured world, yes, but we don't have to. We can agree and take solutions from here in Baku and take the outcomes to the Summit of the Future and begin to mend that broken world. Where I come from the word hope is a name. Suvi. Suvi is a popular name. because hope is what leads to action. I am hopeful that a forum like this one can make a difference and refresh our multilateral system to offer solutions to our broken world.

Thank you.

