UN Commissioner-General for EXPO-2017 Cihan Sultanoğlu’s speech at Astana on UN Day Inauguration Event

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues and friends,

I am honoured to join you today as we mark the United Nations Day at EXPO-2017. I thank His Excellency Mr. Tokayev, Chairman of the Senate of the Parliament, and His Excellency Mr. Abdrakhmanov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, for joining our celebration.

The United Nations is deeply grateful to the Government of Kazakhstan, EXPO organizers, and all of you, citizens of Astana, for hosting the EXPO and inviting the United Nations to be part of it. Congratulations on your vision, dedication and hard work that have made this wonderful exhibition possible!

This EXPO-2017 and the related events, constitute an ambitious initiative, led by Kazakhstan, to appeal to the international community’s sense of responsibility by way of institutions, organizations, corporations, and individuals, with the aim of generating debate and awareness regarding the decisive impact that energy management has on the lives of people and that of the planet.

The theme of Expo 2017, “Future Energy”, relates closely to the United Nations efforts in the areas of energy, food security, women and nutrition, sustainable development and climate change, among others. It assumes the adoption, implementation and use of the best energy practices for the immediate future, raising awareness of energy as an inherent asset of humanity that should be used responsibly and efficiently.

The Secretary-General during his visit to EXPO 2017 stressed the significance of energy to realize the Sustainable Development Goals and fulfil basic human needs, including nutrition, warmth and light.

Energy is at the very heart of our efforts to make poverty history, to achieve social equity and to combat climate change. This is the key message we, the United Nations, want to send through our exhibits.

For most of us living in comfortable homes with reliable electricity, it’s hard to imagine how different the lives of 1.3 billion people who currently lack access to reliable energy are. Think of all the opportunities they are deprived of! Think of the girls who cannot go to school because they need to gather firewood for cooking and heating. Think of the farmers whose crops are dying because there is no electricity for the pumps to bring water to the fields. Imagine entrepreneurs whose small factories cannot function due to frequent power cuts.

Achieving universal access to electricity, depending on the range of services, will require between $2 and 55 billion annually. But universal access is only one challenge – sustainable energy is another. This includes improving energy efficiency and increasing the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.

Recent estimates show that doubling the global share of renewables will require an average annual investment of $770 billion up to 2030. Even this may not be sufficient: reaching the target of keeping the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees, as outlined in the Paris Agreement, requires more than doubling of the renewable energy share and therefore higher level of investment.

Recognizing the magnitude of the challenges in energy access, energy efficiency and renewable energy, the United Nations has been calling on the governments and the private sector to scale up action to achieve progress across these three pillars. EXPO-2017 offers a unique global platform to facilitate this dialogue.

EXPO will forge new partnerships among over 100 participating countries and 17 participating international organizations. It will showcase global best practices for reducing greenhouse gas emissions while generating energy in a sustainable way. EXPO will create better ways of working by bridging traditional boundaries that separate academia and industry.

The United Nations is excited to be part of this global exchange on sustainable energy. We will demonstrate through our exhibits and booths innovative solutions on reducing emissions, combatting pollution of the air, water and soil, decarbonization of the economy, and adaptation of simple but innovative technologies that make people’s lives better. We invite all of you to visit the United Nations exhibits located in the International Pavilion.
Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite the daunting challenges I outlined earlier, looking at the wealth of exhibits in the beautiful pavilions surrounding this stage, I am convinced that the transition to a world, powered by more sustainable energy, is already underway.

Kazakhstan is among the countries that have embarked on the energy transition. Despite abundant fossil fuels, the Government has initiated a series of structural reforms to support innovative models for renewable energy generation and sustainable production and consumption patterns.

Kazakhstan clearly stated its readiness to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by ratifying the Paris Agreement, and is working towards an ambitious target of reducing its national economy’s energy intensity by 25% from 2008 to 2020.

This EXPO-2017, sets the task to gather the best developments in these fields in order to demonstrate future energy and the ways to make “green energy”, its availability, sustainability and economy, the main development trend for further decades.

The United Nations looks forward to continuing our strong partnership on a range of strategic initiatives in this area in support of national policy priorities, and to advance regional and global cooperation for sustainable development. We are confident that EXPO-2017 will serve as a platform to intensify this partnership.

As we mark the UN Day, the timeless values of the UN Charter must remain our guide. Our shared duty is to “unite our strength” to serve “we the peoples”, and reaffirm our commitment to a better and brighter sustainable future for all!

Thank you.