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**Statement by Mr Surya Deva  
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*High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development*

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Dear Madam President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

In my capacity as the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to development, it gives me pleasure to speak at this session on “SDG 16 and interlinkages with other SDGs: Peace, justice, and strong institutions” of the 2024 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Madam Chair

Let me start with a stark reminder of where the world is in terms of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On average, only 16 percent of the SDG targets are on track to be met globally by 2030. SDG 16 is particularly off track. Our development model is leaving behind millions of people and destroying the planetary ecosystem. The world is witnessing the highest number of violent conflicts since the Second World War. More than 460 million children are living in or fleeing from conflicts, and at least one billion children suffer violence annually. The growing inequalities and climate change are likely to lead to more conflicts, triggering forced internal displacement or migration. Finally, nations part of the United Nations are far from “united” to act decisively to deal with ongoing conflicts.

It is clear to me that we need a course correction. As part of this course correction, I will suggest five actions that must be taken urgently:

First, human rights must provide the foundation for development as well as peace and security – development cannot be inclusive and sustainable without human rights; nor can peace and security be sustained by ignoring human rights. States should therefore strengthen the current human rights architecture and allocate more resources. As one of three pillars of the UN Charter, human rights must not receive merely 5 per cent of the UN’s regular budget.

Second, to make peace sustainable, the perpetrators of human rights violations must be brought to justice. International community should strengthen accountability of States indulging in systemic violations of human rights, especially during conflicts. Companies profiting from conflicts must also be held accountable.

Third, in line with Article 7 of the Declaration on the Right to Development, the goal of disarmament must be prioritised, because the accumulation of weapons has not resulted in more

peaceful societies. It is estimated that the global military expenditure was over USD2.4 trillion in 2023. If even 25 per cent of this money is devoted annually to achieve the SDGs, that will immediately give millions of people a dignified life.

Fourth, the UN Security Council is not fit for the purpose in maintaining international peace and security. It must be reformed. The current permanent membership of the Council is not representative of today's world order. Nor should we allow the veto power to shield States infringing territorial integrity at will or committing crimes in clear breach of international law.

Fifth, as conflicts worsen existing inequalities and impact children, women, minorities and marginalised groups disproportionately, an intersectional approach must be adopted to peace building and sustainable development.

Madama Chair

The Summit of the Future is an opportunity for States to come together and give hope to millions of people suffering from armed conflicts and consequent violations of human rights. If they fail to act again, this will undermine the very foundation of United Nations as an institution.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.