

Statement by Mr. Mateusz Szczurek, Minister of Finance of Poland
Addis Ababa, July 14, 2015

Mister Chairman,

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Over the past 15 years we achieved significant progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in a number of areas. We see decreased mortality rates among mothers and children, reduced number of deaths caused by malaria, AIDS and tuberculosis. Nevertheless, we all recognise the need to meet much wider and universal challenge, such as sustainable development and prosperity.

The need for action seems increasingly urgent when we look at the tragic events at the Mediterranean sea a few months ago resulting from thousands of people trying to escape poverty and armed conflicts in North Africa. This provides clear evidence that something needs to be done to address the root causes of these migratory flows in this region and elsewhere.

Soon the discussion on the new set of goals – the SDGs - will be finalized. While these goals are multifaceted, economic growth is of fundamental importance to meet them all. No-one in this hall has a perfect recipe for durable growth. Conditions enabling growth are country specific, they are also time-dependent. This means each one of us needs to identify priorities and relevant action plans, overcome obstacles and find opportunities for our citizens. Sometimes the right strategy will involve seeking international assistance. International community can definitely help, and not just through financial support, but most importantly by providing best practices, lessons learnt and good incentives.

Once you get your local policies right, funding is very rarely a problem. Looking beyond traditional development model based on public finance is needed. Private investment, both domestic and international is crucial for durable growth

I am convinced that the duty of advanced countries is far greater than financial assistance. It is creating an environment which is conducive for growth and development for all countries in the world. This involves trade facilitation, easier migration and scholarship arrangements, controls on arms sale, fighting tax fraud and money laundering in all countries, even if they generate short term gain for the developed economies. I would add to this facilitating and reducing cost of remittances transfers, preventing “environment damage exports”, ruthless fight with corruption, even if it is happening on foreign soil. Let me just mention one issue in more detail.

Let me end with a word of caution. For those of you, who are middle-income, or less developed countries anxiously trying to get your societies to the higher-income club, beware. Poland is in this club, and migration can still remain a major problem. Aspirations often grow faster than the economy or wages. In 2004-2007 we lost 5% of our population this way, while there are countries in the European Union that lost as much as 20%! Even once income convergence to the richest countries is complete, you still need to worry about income and wealth inequality, obesity, unemployment and incentives for work, population decline, as well as retirement arrangements. The strive for a better society never ends.