

**Speech for the High Level Conference about the SDG 2030 agenda**

Your Royal Highness, honoured ministers, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the organisers of this important conference.

As a planet, we are currently facing some major challenges. Challenges that will impact us all, and which have such far-reaching consequences that we will have to take action and change our behaviour. Working with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals provides us with a new important understanding and highlights the fact that no country, organisation or company can solve these challenges alone.

In the debate on sustainability, it is frequently the case that sustainable development is regarded as something that only concerns economics, social issues and the environment. From a Greenlandic perspective, I would also like to emphasise the value of getting native Arctic people's cultures involved and appreciated in the work of implementing the sustainable development goals.

We frequently speak of growth, so it can often sound like a goal in itself. But when we are talking about growth in a sustainable development context, then it is because we want a development that can ensure that our citizens have food on their tables, roofs over their heads and that all age groups have a social and cultural life in a safe society. I would like to see that we in Greenland can continue to develop our version of the Nordic welfare model towards becoming an Arctic welfare society that can form the basis of our independence. So yes - we need growth, but not at the expense of our planet.

Greenland is a part of the world, and in many areas, we have the same challenges that a large majority of other countries have. In some areas, however, Greenland is particularly challenged. We have a relatively small population of around 56,000 people who live scattered across a huge country.

The demographic challenges in Greenland, resulting from migration and urbanisation, mean that the younger people are moving to the larger cities, while at the same time, the smaller settlements are being depopulated. Unfortunately, Greenland is also experiencing declining population numbers.

Our traditional way of life is also undergoing changes. The people of the Arctic regions are experiencing climate change as a real impact on how they live their lives. The sea ice that previously allowed for people to take the dog sled out on to it and fish is now gone in many places. In a lot of places, the hunters have had to abandon their traditional occupation, buy a dinghy and become fishermen instead. This contributes towards putting the fish stocks under increasing pressure.

To a large extent, the infrastructure of our country is defined by decisions made in the past - and not based on the challenges of today or the future. Naalakkersuisut has therefore prioritised the planning and building of future infrastructure that are more cohesive - and which also support future development potentials to a greater extent. A better and less expensive infrastructure can help increase productivity and competitiveness and open up new business opportunities, especially as it relates to tourism and raw materials.

In 2016 Naalakkersuisut published a sustainability and growth plan that is completely in line with the international efforts towards ensuring a more sustainable social development. There are four main themes to the sustainability and growth plan: 1) a higher level of education, 2) boost growth

and conversion to a multi-faceted economy, 3) modernisation of the public sector, and 4) greater self-sufficiency through reforms of welfare benefits, the tax system and housing.

Part of the philosophy behind thinking in sustainable terms is to be able to see shared challenges as new opportunities. For Inuit in Greenland, this is deeply rooted in our original culture. Throughout many generations, Inuit have been ready to embrace change and have been good at adapting themselves to unpredictable weather and the subsequent changes to how they live. The particular climatic and geographical conditions in Greenland also allow for some new investment and business opportunities.

Many are probably aware that some of the large car manufacturers have had test facilities in Greenland for many years. Here, the car manufacturers could test their new car models in peace and quiet in some of the most extreme climatic conditions on the planet. This allowed for the final products to be quality-checked and refined to a level that was not possible under their domestic conditions.

There are also probably not a lot of places around the world where digitisation makes more sense than in Greenland. The great geographic distances and the scattered settlement pattern make investments in this area absolutely necessary. We have just established a new undersea cable from Nuuk to Disko Bay which will mean improved telecommunications for a major number of residents. Here we are really talking about an investment that benefits innovation, education and the entire society.

In order to solve the structural problems in society and take advantage of the country's great business potential in a sustainable manner, it will require a greater degree of transparency and cohesion in the planning and execution phases.

Better maps and the latest technological strides within the geodata area have a lot to offer everyone in our large country and will be able to support growth, development and change in society.

For the same reason, it was a huge joy to us when - with support from the A.P Møller Foundation in 2014 - a pilot project was launched aimed at a new topographical mapping of four areas of Greenland. I fervently hope that the plans can proceed and funding can be found for a subsequent mapping of all of the areas of the country not covered by the ice sheet.

Among other things, this will support urban development, the building of infrastructure, utility companies, climate-change adaptation, raw materials production, management of wild areas, outdoors activities, tourism, etc. The new maps will also enhance maritime security, increase the opportunities for sustainable exploitation of raw material sources and sustainable energy sources and create knowledge-based growth and development. In other words, sustainable development can also increase economic growth.

Greenland is facing a number of particular Arctic challenges in a long series of social areas - building and construction, tourism, management of wild areas, climate change, digitisation - and we are very interested in collaborating with our Arctic and Nordic friends to find new innovative societal solutions to these challenges, and it would be great if these benefitted the planet as a whole. I hope that this conference will take us a step further in that direction.

Thank you for your attention.