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Reflections on the 2025 UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

Songwriters urge us to reach for the stars; poets appeal to our desire for justice - - both calling us to live with greater purpose, for ourselves and for others.

First, we must dream of a peaceful and just world. Then we must act - - knowing with certainty that some things are worth doing. In a time of overwhelming and mounting crises, let us remember Archbishop Desmond Tutu's message: *"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse, and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality."*ⁱ

It is time to double down on universal respect for all people, to reaffirm our commitment to freedom and justice for all. We must confront the norms and prejudices that feed fear, disdain and mistrust. We must push back - - against rising inequality, persistent poverty and hunger, unemployment, technological disparities, biodiversity loss and climate change.

Your voice matters. Your actions matter more. Let us course-correct, reverse the backsliding on civic space and women's human rights, and reignite our commitment to empowering all people with fundamental rights and freedoms. Act in your local communities - - ensure all voices are heard in decision-making processes and leadership positions. Recognize that everyone contributes critically to the well-being of their families and communities.

Never forget that a sustainable world depends on the empowerment of all women and girls, and their full enjoyment of human rights. Remember the words that are inscribed in marble above the entrance to the US Supreme Court in Washington DC: *Equal Justice Under Law*. Persevere in campaigns to eliminate legal barriers that restrict women's employment opportunities and access to health care and justice. Challenge archaic laws allowing child marriage, female gender mutilation, and gender-based violence to persist with impunity.

Raise your voice and continue to advocate. As our National Youth Poet Laureate reminded us, *somehow, we've weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken but simply unfinished.*ⁱⁱ

For more information about the 2025 United Nations High Level Political Forum on *Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science-and-evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development goals for leaving no one behind* go to ⁱⁱⁱ