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Mr Moedas, Mrs Pandor, esteemed holders past and present of the Prince Claus Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

A very warm welcome to you all, also on behalf of my mother-in-law. Together, we are celebrating the 15th anniversary of the Prince Claus Chair in Development and Equity. Fifteen years in which my father-in-law's legacy has served as an inspiration.

My father-in-law's ideas were not rooted in abstract theory and ideology. They originated from his social involvement and his insight into human nature as well as his personal experience in Africa and other parts of the world. He had a natural understanding of how people interact and of how progress comes about. The key question is not: 'how can we work out clever solutions?' But: 'how can we help to find solutions that are embedded in the community?'

Thirty years ago, when he received an Honorary Doctorate from the Institute of Social Studies, he made this perfectly clear.

He said: "It is better to have a project that is technically only 80 % successful but completely integrated in the local environment and thus sustainable, than one that scores 100 % in technical terms but which one knows for certain will not be sustainable once our own experts actually withdraw."

The true essence of the Prince Claus Chair is to gain deeper insight into the driving forces behind development and equitable growth. This is of course a joint effort. We can create more leverage by combining a wide range of cultural and academic traditions. We want economic development to include everyone, and we need academics from all backgrounds to make this possible.

During the past fifteen years, we have welcomed sixteen esteemed chair holders. Ten women and six men... There is no gender bias in the Prince Claus Chair. But what we can say with certainty is that women play a vital role in the development and dissemination of knowledge on inclusive growth.

What is so special about the Prince Claus Chair, is that it doesn't approach the issue of development and equity from one specific point of view. Rather, it has a history of 'embracing' development, examining it from all sides.

Economics, culture, public health, business, education, innovation, law, human rights, security, natural environment and climate change, these are all relevant factors. Successive Chair holders from Africa, Asia, Latin-America, the Middle East and Europe have conducted important research in all of these fields. Their work is extremely meaningful as all countries have pledged to take ownership of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 10 in particular: 'Reduce Inequality', forms the heart of the Prince Claus Chair.

What unites all of the Chair holders is their commitment to the creation of favourable conditions for development and increased equity. In the end, it is the development impact that counts.

In my work for the UN, I have seen what development impact looks like in people's lives.

A smallholder farmer in Vietnam being able to expand his enterprise.

A mother in rural West Java managing to save just enough money to send her daughter to school.

A family in Lagos, Nigeria, getting access to health insurance for the very first time.

These 'small steps' can make all the difference to people and communities everywhere.

We need research and data to understand what the impact of development is and to show us the way forward. That is why we need academics with a keen eye for the strengths of local communities and an open mind to co-operation across borders. During the past fifteen years, the Prince Claus Chair holders have been offering just that.

As your patron, it fills me with gratitude that we have created such a unique and dynamic platform for the exchange of knowledge and experience. A platform that brings together brilliant minds from many countries and backgrounds. There is so much that we can learn from each other.