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### ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, POVERTY AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

**Statement of the Problem:** The United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Development Agenda titled *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* on September 25, 2015. It outlines 17 Sustainable Development Goals the first of which calls for an end to “poverty in all its forms everywhere.” Various studies have, however, indicated that the multifaceted forces, both internal and external, which work together to generate and sustain the circumstances of pervasive poverty universally have yet to be properly understood.

**Methodology & Theoretical Orientation:** The purpose of this presentation is to examine how some of these forces, especially those related to environmental degradation, pitiable environmental health conditions and vulnerability of the underprivileged to disasters of all types, are major hindrances to the abolition of poverty in all places. It also analyzes the complex fundamental causes influencing the vulnerability of people and social structures.

**Findings, Conclusion & Significance:** Disasters, unplanned urban development, ecosystem degradation, and fragile livelihoods undermine the sustainable development of communities. So do inequalities; weak institutions (poor governance, political instability, underdeveloped financial markets, and lack of supportive institutional and policy environments); unresponsive legal and regulatory frameworks; inadequate infrastructural development (including food and nutrition insecurity; inadequate water supply, squalid sanitary conditions and poor waste management; widespread illiteracy and underdeveloped information and communication technologies; lack of healthcare facilities and medical networks; inefficient transport networks; and lack of safeguards of urban areas against erosion, flooding, landslides, and disasters); as well as insufficient formal structures for environmental sustainability and climate change (such as meager information management systems; almost nonexistence of relevant public education amongst government and community-based agencies).

**Recommendations:** There is a need for a comprehensive and integrative approach to public policy formulation and implantation that encompasses development planning, human development and disaster risk reduction. This should be addressed through multi-level government and grassroots community efforts, cross-sector initiatives and global actions.

### Biography

Adenrele Awotona is a Professor of Urban Planning and Community Studies, he is the founder and Director of the Center for Rebuilding Sustainable Communities after Disasters and a former Dean of the College of Public and Community Service at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, USA. He was previously a Director of Studies for the British Council International Seminars (“Reconstruction after disasters”) in the UK where he has also served at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne as a Director of Graduate Studies in architecture and urban design. Through research, consultancy and teaching, he has professional experience in several countries in five continents. Similarly, he has been a principal investigator on major research projects funded by various agencies in the USA and UK. A stream of publications has, therefore, emanated from his research and consultancy services. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge, UK and a Certificate from Harvard University’s Institute of Management and Leadership in Education.

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