



THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

FIRST SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OPEN WORKING GROUP ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Check against delivery

S T A T E M E N T

by

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New York, 14 March 2013

Mr. Secretary-General,

Mr. President of the General Assembly,

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Belarus. Our countries joined world leaders in the pledge to eradicate poverty, achieve environmental sustainability and ensure social inclusion and equality, as spelled out by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015. This global partnership has come a long way since its adoption in 2000. The UN Millennium Goals Report 2011 confirms the significant progress made on a number of goals; however, there is a global concern that the goals will not be achieved as planned.

I would like to congratulate distinguished Co-Chairs on their election and give assurances that our delegations will support all your efforts aimed at adoption by consensus of a substantial report on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Mr. Chairman,

Let me use this opportunity to express the view of Serbia and Belarus that the first meeting of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals should set timeframe deadlines and present an ambitious but realistic work plan for the completion of its work. As indicated in the outcome document "The Future We Want" of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 (Rio + 20), SDGs should be coherent with, and integrated in, the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015 and contribute in that way to the achievement of sustainable development, serving as a driver for implementing and mainstreaming sustainable development in the United Nations system as a whole. The Sustainable Development Goals should remain global in nature and universally applicable to all countries and take into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development, while respecting national policies and priorities. At national levels, the open, inclusive and transparent consultative processes should support the creation of SDGs. The SDG cores definition should include resource and energy efficiency and climate change mitigations and adaptations.

For this reason, we have been supporting elaboration of SDGs while preparing for, and participating at the Rio + 20 Conference. The set of SDGs, as agreed in Rio, should be based on Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, fully respecting all the Rio Principles and taking into account different national circumstances, capacities and priorities. We are convinced that international cooperation on development must ensure

that developing and middle-income countries receive adequate and effective international assistance, including through the facilitation of their transition to green economy and distribution of sustainable future-oriented technologies.

The Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Belarus are fully committed to achieving sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the process to review them. Poverty eradication, changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns and protecting and managing the natural resource base are essential objectives and requirements for sustainable development, as agreed in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

The overarching aim of the global goals and targets is to achieve sustainable development and to eradicate poverty. These goals and targets should be coherent with, and help achieve, the MDGs and contribute to a post-2015 framework.

Recognizing that the natural resource base underpins the economic and social development of many of the world's poorest countries, we are of the opinion that the goals and targets for key natural resources essential for social and economic development should include new and renewable energy, water, land and ecosystems (including forests), and resource efficiency, including sustainable waste management. These areas are vital to human development and represent important starting points, upon which poverty eradication, food security, human health and livelihoods and disaster resilience depend.

We also consider it important to address the issues, such as food security and nutrition, decent employment, in particular youth employment, social protection, gender equality, as well as other issues, including sustainable cities and education for sustainable development.

As concluded in the Rio + 20 outcome document, it is important to provide the transition to sustainable energy. We believe that this specific SDG should build on, and further develop the Secretary-General's initiative "Sustainable Energy for All", aimed at ensuring universal access to modern energy services by 2030, doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency by 2030 and doubling the share of renewable energy sources in the global energy mix by 2030. This SDG should enable elaboration and wide distribution of new sustainable energy technologies that are of utmost importance in establishing a solid ground for well-being in the future. A set of measures should be developed to ensure action towards phasing out environmentally or economically harmful subsidies, including for fossil fuels, in a manner that protects the poorest and eases the transition for the affected communities.

Efforts should be made to ensure universal access to water and sanitation, as well as sustainable water use through integrated water resource management and increased resource efficiency. In this context, we are convinced that the forthcoming High-Level Interactive Dialogue on Water Cooperation of the UN General Assembly, to be held on 22 March 2013, will provide a solid basis for the negotiations on these issues.

Also, we would like to emphasize that it is important to restore land and soil quality to good condition and manage land, forests and soil resources sustainably. This will also lead to enhanced food production that would meet the growing demand. We recognize the significance of promoting sustainable agriculture with a view to achieving food security and protecting and maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem services. In this regard, we stress the importance of securing access of smallholder farmers to agricultural markets and finances, training, capacity-building, knowledge and innovative practices. Particular attention should be also paid to the support of sustainable forest management with the collective aim of halting the global forest cover loss by 2030 at the latest.

Let me also emphasize the importance of resource efficiency, in particular in regard of waste and chemicals. We have to change unsustainable production and consumption patterns and promote sustainable management of natural resources over their life-cycle and eventually reach a decoupling of economic growth from natural resource use with the aim of making it possible to current and future generations, in particular people in poverty, to meet their needs. It is important to agree upon, set up and use international indicators to measure resource efficiency at global, regional and national levels on key natural resources.

In addition to the targets referred to above, SDGs should also tackle the issues of climate change, including our aim of zero emissions, sustainable tourism and cities, issues of health and environment, as well as education and awareness-raising for sustainable development.

In concluding my statement, let me express the confidence of the two countries on whose behalf I have the honour to speak that, with your experience and stewardship, Mr. Chairman, negotiations within the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals will reach a fruitful conclusion.

Thank you.