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STATEMENT BY

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**AT
THE FIRST MEETING OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

**March 15, 2015
New York**

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Co-Chairs,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this first meeting of the Open Working Group (OWG). We are delighted that the procedural hurdles that caused delays have been overcome, and look forward to the OWG beginning its substantive work in earnest.

My delegation congratulates the distinguished Permanent Representatives of Kenya and Hungary, upon their election as Co-Chairs to lead the Open Working Group, and pledge our full support. We also commend them for their tireless efforts earlier as Co-Facilitators.

Uganda associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Permanent Representatives of Fiji and Chad on behalf of the G77 and China and the African Group respectively.

Co-Chairs,

At the outset, my delegation would like to stress that the greatest challenge facing many developing countries, particularly in Africa, is the eradication of poverty, which is an indispensable requirement for achieving sustainable development. While we acknowledge that significant progress has been made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), many developing countries are off-track to meeting the goals by the target date of 2015.

Yet even if all the MDGs were met, many challenges would still remain. For instance, one of the targets for achievement of MDG 1 on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger is halving the number of people living below the poverty line, meaning that the other half, over a billion people, would still live below the poverty line. This is a reality that must underpin the development of SDGs, which should build on and complement the MDGs.

We would not like to see a situation where focus is diverted from efforts to fully achieve the MDGs. We agree that SDGs should be forward-looking, but the starting point must be addressing the current pressing needs that many people in developing countries face. In the Rio+20 Outcome, "The Future We Want," our leaders committed to mobilizing means of implementation: financial resources, technology transfer and capacity building for achieving sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental dimensions.

It is essential to ensure that SDGs are accompanied by adequate means of implementation. To this end, we underscore the urgent need for the intergovernmental Committee of experts on the financing strategy to start its work as soon as possible.

In formulating the SDGs, we need to take into account the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and recognize different national circumstances, capacities and levels of development. The SDGs should be based the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, among other major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields. The SDGs should also be linked with, and form an integral part of the post-2015 UN development agenda.

Co-Chairs,

Regarding the process, we wish to emphasize the need for the Open Working Group on SDGs to conduct its work in an open, transparent and inclusive manner. It should take into account all inputs and contributions from all member states and other stakeholders.

Yesterday's Panel presentations and discussion put in sharp focus the enormity of the task before us, as well as the need to get input from various stakeholders. In so doing, the proposal for SDGs that the Open Working group will present for consideration and action by the 68th Session of the General Assembly will be fully owned by the membership.

Thank you for your attention.