



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

New York, 17-19 April 2013

**Statement of Mr Paolo Soprano
Director for Sustainable Development
Ministry for the Environment Land and Sea of Italy**

Interactive exchange of views on conceptualizing SDGs and the SDG process

Excellencies,
Distinguished co-Chairs,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We have the honour to make this intervention also on behalf of Spain and Turkey, with which we are pleased to share the membership in this Open Working Group.

We thank the Technical Support Team for preparing the Issues Brief which we consider very useful in guiding the preparation for this second meeting of the OWG. In view of the upcoming scheduled meetings and to allow Member States to organise effective consultations both at national level and with our team partners, we stress the need and importance to receive any background information and documents in a timely fashion.

In moving towards the SDGs, the international community is not starting from scratch. It can build on decades of policy making experience in the field of development cooperation and in more than twenty years of evolution in sustainable development strategies. Analysing successes and addressing the main gaps is therefore crucial in order to better define our work for the years to come.

The implementation of the Millennium Development Goals is still undergoing, as recently stressed by the UN Secretariat General in the 1000 days campaign to Keep the Millennium Promise, and we should spare no efforts in continuing to pursue our objectives by 2015. In this regard we underline the significant role of the UN special event on MDG, which should emphasize the importance of the achievement of the MDGs and its connection with the development of a post 2015 agenda. The MDG framework proved to be successful in catalysing attention, at the global, regional and national levels, on a concrete set of common human development goals and targets, creating priorities for national and international development cooperation policies and initiatives.

In defining the MDGs the general objective of the Secretary General was to make development cooperation more communicable, transparent, efficient and accountable. It is generally recognized

that these objectives have been met. The global community has gained from the establishment of these goals and the UN development cooperation system has built upon them vigorously. On the other hand, not all the MDGs have been attained and progresses have been unevenly distributed not only between countries, but also within countries. The UN 2012 MDGs Report highlights several milestones, together with numerous projections on the challenges the world will be facing beyond 2015, including in crucial areas such as poverty eradication, hunger, child and maternal mortality, health, nutrition, biodiversity loss and gender equality.

We thank the co-chairs for this opportunity to exchange views on conceptualizing the SDGs and the SDG process.

Being cognizant of the increasingly interrelated social, economic and environmental challenges, the international community as a whole needs to thoroughly address these challenges through a coherent, integrated and comprehensive approach.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

In preparing for this meeting, we have asked ourselves, also through national inter-ministerial consultations, three main questions.

- What is the added value in moving towards SDGs?
- What can we bring with us from the past experience and what do we need to define in order to make this exercise successful?
- What elements should we consider in order to facilitate a coherent integration in the post 2015 framework?

The initial answers that we could find are the following.

The process leading to the definition of Sustainable Development Goals represents an extraordinary opportunity to define a unified policy framework. It is widely recognized that one of the main flaws of the MDGs has been the inability to fully capture the inter-linkages among the goals, as each MDG has been dealt with on the basis of a “silos approach”. An overarching framework is instead needed in order to tackle poverty and to advance sustainable development in its three dimensions, by promoting prosperity, wellbeing and progress within the existing planetary boundaries.

The major focus of MDGs is on basic human needs. The SDGs should go beyond basic human needs and aim at improving living standards through inclusive growth, increased employment, in particular through new green jobs, and decent jobs, improved income distribution, sustainable consumption and production and productive life expectancy.

Consistently, the Sustainable Development Goals should address key inter-linkages and crosscutting issues in order for them to represent a natural next step in the evolution of the development agenda. As the challenges are highly interdependent, the SDGs - through a new, more integrated and holistic approach - should provide for policy coherence and for the capacity to fully integrate the social, economic and environmental dimensions into the post-2015 development agenda.

Another important point is that the transition to the Sustainable Development Goals, and therefore also the work of this Working Group, should be based on appropriate scientific data and findings and supported by a strong science-policy interface.

The Sustainable Development Goals should also be measurable and linked to possible concrete targets and indicators. In this respect we should build upon the valuable work that is being carried out at different levels and take into account the various international experiences and initiatives, including in the context of the UN Statistical Commission, on the measurement of wellbeing and sustainable development. To this end, we should include some key words in our debate - such as consumption and income, food security and nutrition, health, labour, education, equality, housing, physical safety, land and ecosystems, water, air quality, institutions - that can provide us with the opportunity to translate general concepts into measurable sustainable development goals.

Our aim should be the development of a single overarching post 2015 framework, with a single set of goals. For this, the activities of the SDGs working group should be coordinated with the post 2015 discussions and every effort should be made to integrate, as soon as possible, the MDG review and the work for the elaboration of the SDGs in an inclusive and universal process. In this respect, it is important to ensure opportunities for the timely interaction of the two processes, as to ensure a smooth integration.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

Allow me to conclude by highlighting that the MDGs did not include any goal related to innovation and technological developments, aspects which have instead a very critical role in sustainable use of natural resources especially in developing countries. Hence, the future SDGs should give importance to the continuous improvement and effective use of technology and promotion of universal access to ICT, considering externalities by production and utilization of knowledge. In this respect, experiences such as the Green Growth Knowledge Platform and the International Centre for Science and High Technology might constitute useful references.

I thank you.