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Ministerial Dialogue on expectations for Rio+20

Friday, 13th of May 2011

Statement of Italy

*Delivered by Mr. Paolo Soprano - Director for Sustainable Development
Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea*

Honourable President of the Commission on Sustainable Development,

Mr. Under-Secretary General Sha Zukang,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Italy aligns itself to the statement made by the EU Commissioner Janez Potocnik on behalf of the European Union and its Member States and would like to add a few remarks of its own.

We also share many of the issues and ideas that have been already highlighted.

Italy is fully committed since the very beginning in the preparatory work for Rio+20 to make the next year Conference a success and an innovative and substantive step for SD implementation. In particular, we consider the current phases of submitting contributions and inputs for preparing the zero-draft negotiating document as a crucial one and would like to take this opportunity for call and invite all stakeholders to submit to the UN Secretariat their inputs and concrete proposals.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me briefly indicate more specifically some of our views.

First, on green economy.

We believe that rather than replacing sustainable development, it should be considered as a driving force to achieving SD, being instrumental to the reduction of environmental risks and ecological scarcities, as well as to the improvement of human well-being and social equity.

Along the same line, it should also be clear that, in the medium-long run, an effective green economy strategy will be a powerful drive for delivering growth, increase employment and eradicate poverty. Transitional difficulties must not be neglected and have to be adequately addressed, but should not be seen as an obstacle to fundamental changes.

We believe that Small and Medium Enterprises, in particular, have the potential to become key-players in the process of expansion of the green economy. Because of their size and dynamism, they are more likely to adapt faster than big companies to the new environmental standards. What they need from Governments is improved regulatory frameworks, easier access to international markets and supporting incentives.

Italy also believes that to make this change possible and achievable, we need a supportive, efficient and effective institutional architecture of international governance, including the international financial institutions; and first of all, we need to modify the status quo and eliminate the unbalances in power and responsibility that exist between the institutions representing the three pillars of SD, in particular the unbalance between the economic pillar on one side and the social and environmental pillars on the other.

We support therefore the upgrading of the existing UN Environment Programme into a specialized agency and in the same time we look forward for an effective improvement of existing SD institutions.

Mr. Chairman,

let me conclude by calling also for an inclusive preparatory process both at international and national level, and for an inclusive conference in Rio next year.

We need the involvement of the civil society representatives, we need the advice of women, of young people, of the private sector and trade unions representatives, as well as of other major groups: they know what are the needs of people and of the society, they are the only that can inspire governments in achieving tangible results and feasible implementation. This will be the recipe for a successful Rio+20.

Let's continue to work hard in the coming months to prepare for this historical opportunity.

Thank you.