



New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

SIXTH SESSION OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

**New Zealand intervention on countries in special
situations, African countries, LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS as
well as specific challenges facing Middle-Income
Countries**

**Ambassador Stephanie Lee,
Deputy Permanent Representative**

12 December 2013



Co-Chairs

New Zealand welcomes this Open Working Group focus on the needs of African countries, LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and Middle-Income Countries in our deliberations on the nature and form of the post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs. This has been the kind of substantive session that genuinely helps to build greater knowledge and understanding of these complex development issues.

It is countries in special situations that overwhelmingly make up the ranks of the most vulnerable. LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS constitute the world's 90 most vulnerable countries. In LDCs, 75% of the population live in poverty; 53% in extreme poverty. Three quarters of the world's 1.3 billion poor live in middle-income countries and 10 of the 20 countries with the highest level of inequalities in the world are middle-income. The scale and range of issues faced by countries in special situations means that the special issues these groups face must be a key focus if no one is to be left behind.

The SDGs should therefore include goals, targets and indicators that address these challenges. Yesterday we heard proposals from expert panellists and member states about what some of these goals should be, including goals on sustainable energy and oceans. New Zealand supports the development of standalone goals on these two critical issues. Furthermore New Zealand believes that the situation of countries in special circumstances should be addressed as cross cutting themes across the whole range of development goals and targets that will eventually be agreed. This will help to ensure that the needs of countries in special situations are not silo-ed or easily marginalised, but are addressed in the context of a holistic and integrated multi-sector approach. How we include the most vulnerable countries will be the mark of success or failure of this process.

Countries in special situations face many challenges in common: growing inequality, food insecurity, youth unemployment, energy poverty. These common issues provide opportunities for regional, interregional and global approaches and responses. It is also important, however, to recognise the diversity of contexts within which these countries operate. For instance, for some countries climate change will result in increased desertification, and for others, rising sea levels. We still need to consider how the SDGs as universal goals can deal with these complex development issues. The international community will need to find approaches to the global challenges of our time that leverage common experiences while considering particular local circumstances.

As a small island state New Zealand has first-hand experience and understanding of many of the unique needs, vulnerabilities and opportunities that are faced by countries in special situations. We are a small nation dealing with the challenges of limited human resource and economics of scale; we are surrounded by a big ocean and situated a long way away from major international markets; and we grapple with many of the same 'second generation' issues - such as an aging population and an increase in non-communicable diseases – that many middle income countries also face. We look forward to continuing to work closely with countries from our Pacific region and from around the world to ensure that the needs and aspirations of countries in special situations are articulated, heard and responded to. That is why we have supported and will continue to support the SIDS Conference in Samoa in 2014 as this will be one opportunity for countries with special needs to articulate their vision for the future they want.