

Statement by Mr. Mustafizur Rahman, Deputy Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN at the Eighth Session of Open-ended Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals on “Ocean and Seas, Forests, Biodiversity”

New York, 3 February, 2014

Mr. Co-Chair,

Let me begin by aligning ourselves with the statement made by Bolivia -on behalf of G 77 and China, and Benin – on behalf of the LDCs, on the topic “Ocean and Seas , Forests , Biodiversity”. We would also like to thank the keynote speakers for their informative and thought provoking presentations.

Mr. Co-Chair,

We agree with those who said that oceans and seas are critical to sustainable development. Oceans regulate greenhouses gases by capturing and storing carbon human produce. As one key note speakers told yesterday, oceans produce half of the oxygen that living being need so critical for their survival. The sea level rise and other consequential events pose existential threats to Bangladesh and many Small Island States. Oceans are not only essential for the Earth’s ecosystem but also are crucial for global food security. Ocean resources are the major source of protein for more than 2.6 billion people globally. Also, the ‘doctrine of necessity’ compels us to look at the oceanic space for economic opportunities. Just to remind us that the entire global ocean economic activities are estimated at around 3 to 6 trillion dollars a year. Moreover, over 90% of global trade is seaborne.

Despite their economic, social and environmental benefits, oceans, seas and their related ecosystems are facing enormous challenges caused by human activity and climate change. Pollution, ocean acidification and unsustainable exploitation of marine resources are causing degradation of marine environment and leading to enormous losses in biodiversity. Given that ocean resources are finite, as the Rio processes have underscored, we need to harness oceans resources, causing least possible damage to the ocean health.

Mr Co-Chair,

As a coastal country, Bangladesh and her people have long and deeper connections with Seas. She has considerable dependence on seas in ensuring food security, eradicating poverty and delivering shared prosperity and well-being to a sizable portion of her population. Based on our experience, we recognize the need to accord high priority to the oceans and seas – to ensure protection, conservation, sustainable exploration of the marine resources. While we embark on exploring the untapped potentials of seas, an eco-system approach must be at the heart of all our engagements in the seas. In this regard, effective, efficient and equitable ocean governance remain key. We also recognize the need for collaborative partnerships in the wider space of ocean governance. In our view, UN Convention on the Law of the Seas fairly covers the issues concerning exploitation of marine resources, maintenance of marine environment and healthy oceans and seas. Respecting the provisions of the Convention would take us a long way in conservation of ecology of our beloved mother earth.

Given the diversity in levels of economic development among the littoral States, we would stress that the resources of global common must be governed based on the principles of mutual trust,

respect and benefits and indeed equitable sharing of benefits. Many of the developing countries like Bangladesh do not possess the critically required resources, capabilities and technologies. International cooperation in this regard is much needed in the form of capacity building, marine scientific research and transfer of technology.

Mr. Co-Chair,

The critical role of forests and biodiversity in sustainable development were recognized in the Rio+20 outcome. Biodiversity is an important foundation of the Earth's life support system. And the benefits of forests are far-reaching. Forests catch and store water, stabilize soils, prevent landslide, harbour biodiversity and make an important contribution to adapting and mitigating climate change by absorbing greenhouse gases. These are well-known facts. UN Convention on Biodiversity generally covers issues of conservation of biological diversity of the earth. The Convention need to taken seriously. We need to intensify efforts to protect forests and biodiversity before the depletion reaches to an irreversible stage.

We have taken note of the suggestion to have a stand-alone goal on this cluster. What is essential to us is to capture all these very important issues adequately and appropriately. We have also heard that oceans, forest and biodiversity should not be looked in silos, rather mainstream in many other related goals, like agriculture, food, health, energy, etc. We incline to support this position. And the proposal to adopt a goal on the broader issue of ecology is also an interesting one. Alternatively, we may consider inclusion of some of these issues under a climate change goal as oceans, biodiversity and forests are very closely linked to climate change and global warming.

I thank you.