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STATEMENT

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Mr. President,

I have the honor to deliver a statement on behalf of the constituency of the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Serbia, in which I would like to address a number of issues.

Oceans, Seas, Forests and Biodiversity

Let me start with biodiversity. Biodiversity covers many issues, like, among others, seas, forests, food, water. It is absolutely clear that any setback in the area of biodiversity, which is the variety of life on Earth, adversely affects human wellbeing, with vulnerable and marginalized groups certainly suffering first and foremost.

There is very good reason to believe that increased attention has been paid to this overarching issue. Indeed, we currently have in place the United Nations Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for 2011-2020, as well as relevant conventions for its component parts, like forests, oceans, and seas. Moreover, this issue featured prominently the national post-2015 consultations, held in many UN Member States. This all points to the need to reflect the critical role of biodiversity in the future sustainable development framework.

The integration of biodiversity into the SDG framework would be facilitated by improved data and the identification of suitable metrics, indicators and targets that link biodiversity to the various Goals of the framework.

In our view, biodiversity, owing to its wide scope, must be addressed through several SDGs, like for instance, a stand-alone goal for forests, and relevant multiple targets. Nonetheless, Belarus and Serbia remain open to review options that favor a stand-alone goal for biodiversity itself with appropriate targets for its various components.

Conflict Prevention, Post-Conflict Building, Rule of Law

Let me now move to the cluster of issues related to conflict prevention, post-conflict building, and the rule of law.

Environment, biodiversity and conflict are interconnected. Peace, rule of law and governance are critical foundations of sustainable development. Indeed, if one takes a closer look at a geographical map, one cannot but see that many environmental and political hot spots on the globe coincide, because the former often give rise to the latter. That is why a well-conceived sustainable development framework is extremely vital not just for development *per se*, but for peace and related issues as well.

A sound cooperation on sustainable development requires full respect of international law. The UN system based on three main pillars should provide a sound example in this context, discharging its duties in a duly transparent and accountable manner. It is evident that Member States often need the UN technical assistance to enhance their compliance with international obligations, accelerate ongoing improvement of legislation and judiciary system in line with the international best practices.

The imposition of coercive economic, financial or trade measures is detrimental to the achievement of SDGs and these measures should be used strictly in accordance with the provisions of the UN Charter. Countries should refrain from imposing such measures as they invariably lead to human suffering, hampering of growth and development and fulfillment of basic human rights and decent existence.

With this mind, we believe that the topics of conflict prevention, post-conflict building and the rule of law should have a prominent presence in the post-2015 UN development agenda, as a stand-alone goal.

Inequality, gender inequality, women's empowerment

Let me now touch upon the third cluster's issues comprising inequality, gender inequality and women's empowerment.

When people talk about inequality, they mainly have in mind economic inequality. Economic inequality is one of the largest single challenges of our time, the greatest paradox, if you will. Indeed, the world has grown in recent decades increasingly technologically sophisticated and prosperous, but the gap between the world's rich and poor, according to various authoritative studies, is as wide as it has ever been. What is behind that seemingly illogical conundrum? It is nothing other than the process, which we call uneven globalization. While acknowledging the positive effects of globalization, by and large, the world has failed to "harness" the powerful force of globalization, hence the latter has not been the "wave that lifted all boats".

Inequality is inherent not just to economics, but to other realms of human activity, too. Gender inequality has particularly stood out in this regard, especially in recent decades. Much has been done to redress skewed gender imbalance, including in the framework of the current MDG agenda. However laudable such gender-related achievements may be, much certainly remains to be done to make gender equality a constant and irreversible feature of our everyday life.

Achieving gender equality is essential for the development of society as a whole, including family as nucleus. As we succeed in redressing this grave challenge, we will be able to lay ground for a more healthy and sustainable society, and thus, for better human life.

Our opinion with regard to the set of issues related to inequality and gender is that it would be important to elaborate stand-alone goals on economic inequality and on gender inequality, while also integrating the latter issue firmly in the future SDG framework as a cross-cutting theme.

Thank for your kind attention.