

**Food Security and Nutrition; Sustainable Agriculture;
Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought;
Water and Sanitation**

Delivered by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on behalf of
Troika - Cyprus, Singapore and the UAE
Third Open Working Group Meeting (22-24 May 2013)

Mr. Co-chairs,

It is a pleasure to participate in today's important discussions. As you know, the UAE shares its seat on this Open Working Group with Cyprus and Singapore, and we are in close dialogue with both of our partners. Except where I explicitly note otherwise, I am seeking to reflect the perspectives of all three countries.

Before I address today's thematic topics, I would like to make a couple of overarching observations.

First, the sustainable development goals (SDGs) are taking us into a larger and more complex set of issues than did the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Some indicators are vital for some countries and simply don't make sense for others. I would urge us to keep an open mind in this discussion about how to keep the system flexible as well as comprehensive.

Second, when we turn to the issues under discussion at this meeting, I want to stress that we see them as fundamentally interconnected. Indeed, we have sought to frame potential actions in terms of an energy-water-food nexus.

This means that the indicators and goals we adopt for each of these issues should be mutually reinforcing. Energy efficiency contributes to water efficiency, and vice-versa. Access to energy is a prerequisite for providing clean water. In some countries there are trade-offs between growing food domestically and sustainably managing water resources. We can use the SDG process to aim at win-win measures in each of these areas. We will seek to bring back this kind of consideration when this Group turns its attention to energy.

I also would like to note that reflecting our commitment on taking the nexus approach, the UAE partnered with the President of the General Assembly on holding a thematic debate just last week, held on 16 May here at the UN in New York, “Sustainable Development and Climate Change: Practical Solutions in the Energy-Water Nexus” and the importance of the nexus approach was stressed from speakers and Member States alike.

Turning to today’s topics, as I am sure that we all want our discussions to be interactive, I will avoid making a long opening statement, but I would like to make a few brief points.

First, water and food are indispensable prerequisites for life, let alone development, and in our view each must be the subject of at least one SDG.

Second, while we do not have a final view on the appropriate set of indicators for water and sanitation, at an absolute minimum we would need an SDG that builds on the MDG Target 7C and takes it further. The time is right to aim at ensuring universal access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, even while we recognize that this is a challenging target.

Third, a similar approach applies to food and nutrition. Eliminating malnutrition globally is the right starting point for our deliberations.

Fourth, in a world of growing population and improving diets, food waste must be minimized. We see reduction in food waste as an important area for goal setting under the SDGs. The food currently wasted could account for half of all the additional production needed by 2050.

Finally, although I have not made any specific recommendations on agriculture or desertification, we do not dispute the importance of these issues and we look forward to hearing from other partners today.

Thank you.