South Africa's Statement to the Second Meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) – Rio+20 on the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development
08 March 2011
New York

Thank you Co-Chair,

South Africa wishes to associate itself with the statement made earlier by Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Since the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 will mark the tenth anniversary of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) which produced the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), a clear course of action towards the implementation of Agenda 21. We therefore think it would be appropriate that Chapter 11 of the JPOI on institutional framework for sustainable development should guide our debate on this issue.

Strengthening of the institutional framework for sustainable development should consider the needs of all countries and pay greater attention to the specific needs of developing countries that depend on enhanced means to implement internationally agreed goals on sustainable development, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

While we acknowledge with appreciation the central role played by the Commission on Sustainable Development in driving the sustainable development agenda, we are concerned about the inadequate implementation of its policy decisions and the lack of a mechanism to systematically evaluate and monitor implementation of the sustainable development agenda.

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development should therefore focus on options for an institutional framework that will reinforce the three pillars of sustainable development by synchronizing planning and implementation among the relevant multilateral agreements, as well as the various UN agencies dealing with the different aspects of sustainable development. This should also include the international financial institutions.

With your permission, Co-chair, we would now like to move on and respond to your first question, namely:

1. What are the most significant challenges facing international institutions charged with promoting sustainable development? What concrete measures could be considered to address these challenges?

In this regard, Co-chair, we take note of the outcomes of the 26th session of the Governing Council of the UN Environment Programme the options suggested to improve the institutional framework for sustainable development in order to enhance coherence and coordination of the United Nations system.

We are however cautious of promoting the creation of new structures, taking into account already constrained human capital and financial resources. It is South Africa's view that we should aim at the strengthening of existing structures such as the CSD and UNEP and work together to ensure that they are adequately capacitated and function optimally.

The CSD could be augmented with an implementation mechanism and systematic peer review structures that will promote policy convergence and coordinate a global approach towards the implementation of the sustainable development agenda. The CSD could not just remain a forum for discussion: implementation should also become one of its core functions.

Co-chair, the main challenges the existing institutional framework charged with the implementing sustainable development face are fragmentation, a lack of concerted policy coordination and inadequate synergies among various structures. This often leads to duplication of efforts while drawing from a limited pool of resources. In this regard, there is a need for enhanced harmonization, coordination and cooperation between organizations, agencies and multilateral environmental agreements supported by greater involvement of civil society and the scientific community.

Finally, Co-chair, successful implementation of the sustainable development agenda requires an institutional framework that promotes a rational interface between science and policy formulation linking it with the much needed means of implementation including finance, technology and capacity building.

I thank you.

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