



Statement by H.E. Dr. Rohan Perera, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations at the High Level Segment of ECOSOC, 7 July 2015

“Managing the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals: What it will take”

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, let me align ourselves with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and also with the statement, which I had the honour to deliver, as the Chair of the Group of 15.

I believe that the theme for this year’s ECOSOC High-level segment is timely, as it addresses the most critical issue of managing the transition from the MDGs to SDGs.

As we are about to formulate the most ambitious development agenda in the current global order, the significant role played by the Millennium Development Goals in bettering the lives of billions of people on earth, cannot be ignored. Yet, we must not forget that the business of the MDGs is unfinished. Our challenge will be to build the new development agenda on the unfinished business of the MDGs, paying particular attention to where we failed, so that we would not repeat the mistakes of the past.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka’s overall success in achieving MDGs is remarkable and compelling. We have already achieved the targets of 13 important MDG indicators out of 44 indicators and is mostly on track to meet the remainder by 2015. We have made significant progress in poverty eradication by achieving the target of halving poverty at the national level, seven years before 2015. Sri Lanka has almost achieved the universal primary education target with net enrolment in primary schools having reached 99.7% in 2014. Sri Lanka has made progress in achieving gender equality at all levels of education. The ratio of girls to boys ‘enrollment has increased at all levels, and has reached the target of 100% in secondary schools.

We have also been very successful over the years in remarkably reducing the child and maternal mortality rates due to improvements in free healthcare services. While the infant mortality rate was 9.2 per 1000 live births in 2012, the maternal mortality rate was 33 per 100,000 live births in 2010. (The maternal mortality rate was closer to 100 per 100,000 live births in 1990).

The proportion of births attended by skilled birth attendants had almost reached 99.8% in 2010 and the immunization of one-year-old children increased to 99% in 2011. Sri Lanka has given highest priority to combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases as well. We have managed to bring down malaria cases to 23 by 2012 and had no indigenous cases since November 2012 and no malaria-related deaths since 2007.

We have made considerable progress in ensuring environmental sustainability. Sri Lanka has met the target for the proportion of people with access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

Carbon dioxide emissions stabilized after 2001 while the carbon footprint remains negligible at 0.6 tons per capita per year.

Mr. President,

As we have now come to the stage of embracing another set of development goals the world will face a number of challenges in the transition from MDGs to the SDGs. The transition must be managed keeping one prime objective in our minds. That is, that eradication of poverty has remained the greatest challenge faced by humankind, and poverty, if not addressed properly, will be the greatest impediment to achieving sustainable development goals.

Financing and technology transfer as a critical complement to implementation will play a pivotal role in the realization of the new Agenda. It must be noted that these two areas were seriously lacking as far as the MDGs were concerned. These were the principal drawbacks in their implementation. Ensuring adequate financing and the transfer of new and innovative technology and capacity building to implement the new agenda are vital.

To do so, it would be imperative for the developed nations to honour their ODA commitments to the developing world. Establishment of a technology facilitation mechanism that would energize the means of implementation of the global development agenda beyond 2015 would also be crucial.

It would be critical to address the challenges faced by developing countries when managing the transition from the MDGs to SDGs. We should focus on the specific challenges faced by middle income countries who are handicapped vis-à-vis concessional development financing. One of the key challenges that Sri Lanka would face in the transition will be the reduced access to concessional ODA following the transition into middle-income country status. It is imperative that Middle Income Countries have continued access to concessional international public finance throughout their development, even after graduation to middle income status. However, we are confident that Sri Lanka would be able to manage the transition from the MDGs to SDGs with a concrete policy framework that would boost export growth and development, with improved collaboration between the Government and private sector, expansion of ICT, better trade facilitation mechanisms and a vision for a greener, safer and cleaner environment.

Mr. President,

Enabling environments will be critical in the transition from MDGs to SDGs.

With a view to creating such an enabling environment, Sri Lanka has recognized the clear linkage between sustainable development and good governance. The present government, which assumed office following the Presidential elections in January this year, had campaigned on a platform of restoration of peace, good governance, rule of law and justice. Important constitutional

amendments that were recently adopted following the political change in Sri Lanka are far reaching in the context of advancing good governance and the rule of law. These positive changes have created a conducive environment for Sri Lanka to achieve sustainable development in a post-conflict context. The new Government is planning to increase the per capita income up to 6000 US \$ over the next five years while creating one million job opportunities in the country.

An efficient, vigorous, inclusive and transparent follow-up and review process must be an essential component of the new global development agenda in the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs. That process should be owned by Member States according to their national circumstances, needs and priorities, and should respect the balance between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. We believe that the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the auspices of ECOSOC would be the most suitable and key forum to review the global progress of the implementation of the agenda.

We wish to emphasize that the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development must foster coherence and progress in implementing the post-2015 development agenda. ECOSOC and the High Level Political Forum must have an integrated approach in the period of transition from MDGs to the Sustainable Development Goals.

I thank you.