

OWG – CLOSING STATEMENT

I am speaking on behalf of the Netherlands, Australia and the United Kingdom.

Co-chairs: you have done a tremendous job in bringing us to this point. I congratulate you for your tireless efforts, conviction and perseverance in getting us to where we are today.

Turning to the report. We welcome the focus on eradicating poverty and completing the unfinished business of the MDGs, the stand-alone gender goal and the carefully crafted goal to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. We welcome the fact that the proposal covers the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced way.

We see this report as a useful reflection of the discussions we have had. There are a range of issues here with which we are content. There are others on which, to be frank, we have serious concerns. In the chapeau our mandate is misquoted. Our role is not to develop SDGs – that is for the inter-governmental process – our role is to make a proposal. We have concerns about para 5 of the chapeau. We have issues on gender, where a woman's right to own, inherit and control land and other forms of property is not properly recognised. There is a similar problem in the poverty goal target 1.4. Our attitude to unpaid care and domestic work is inadequate. We regret the absence of a target on ending open defecation in goal 6. The goal on economic growth does not properly address the drivers of economic growth, with the absence of issues like a sound macro-economic policy framework, the importance of trade, and an enabling environment for growth – issues that our troika has consistently raised. We regret the absence of the rule of law in goal 16, and are puzzled about the absence of the language on illicit arms, which commands strong support. Goal 17 is unbalanced, pre-judges decisions that lie within other processes, and lacks the key issue of development effectiveness. And the way that Means of Implementation actions are handled in goals 1-16 is unbalanced and repeats issues properly covered in goal 17.

We fear that, if the text is reopened, we will have an open-ended debate. We feel that we have made significant concessions on the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights and in other areas. There is a delicate balance, which could easily unravel. So we should stick to the text. As the distinguished delegate from the Russian Federation said, we will all have an opportunity to raise our concerns in the inter-governmental process to come.

Looking forward, we believe that as Member States we will need to reflect whether seventeen goals and 170 targets provide the inspiring, actionable vision of the future we want. Will line ministries in our capitals will be able to take and implement that vision? Will they enable political leaders to build support for sustainable development? Will teachers and parents be able to use them to enthuse our children about the world we want? Do they reflect the state of the art in international technical discussion?

So there are questions we will have to come back to. With all this in mind, Mr co-chair, we are prepared for the report to go forward to the inter-governmental process for consideration, while stressing that there remains substantial work to do.

In the meantime, let me thank you chairs once more for all the work you have done, and let me, on behalf of Australia, the Netherlands and the UK, also thank colleagues all around the room for the spirit in which you have entered into the discussions.