

Statement delivered by Amb. Michael Grant, Deputy Permanent Representative, Canada
Combined session on the Declaration and the Goals/Targets – January 20, 2015

Thank you, Mr. Co-facilitator.

Allow me to take this opportunity to reinforce and expand on some of the points we made yesterday with respect to the declaration and the goals and targets.

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The Declaration should be short and inspirational, and rooted in a strong foundation of human rights. It should underscore the importance of addressing the unfinished business of the MDGs.

It should motivate citizens and governments, as well as civil society and the private sector to take action. And it should express a high level of ambition based on a credible path for success.

The six elements from the SG's Synthesis Report offer a good basis to help us frame the Declaration, and ensure that we cover critical principles while at the same time remaining focused on our mandate.

While we agree that the post-2015 development agenda should incorporate the three dimensions of sustainable development, it cannot address all of the world's challenges and problems.

So we will need to be disciplined in our efforts to focus. If we try to encompass everything, we risk setting ourselves up for failure.

It is for that reason that Canada favors a strong focus on the needs of the poorest and the most vulnerable.

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On goals and targets, we believe that we should focus on our common ultimate objective—and that is to develop a framework of goals and targets that are compelling, measurable and most importantly that will drive action.

With this in mind, we agree with the recommendation contained in the Synthesis Report that the proposed targets undergo a technical review by technical experts by the UN system.

We also agree with others on the importance of developing clear criteria for this exercise. In line with what our colleague from the United States said earlier, this would make it possible to chart a path forward that is strategic, without being politically charged.

We have a total of 169 targets—and we are not convinced all these targets fit the criteria of being quantifiable and measurable, or consistent with the latest evidence and technical thinking.

We also wonder whether some may serve better as indicators.

And we believe it is critical to ensure that the targets do not in any way lower the level of ambition as expressed in existing international commitments, standards and agreements.

Our colleague from China mentioned earlier that we need to focus on substance rather than the number of goals and targets. Dr. Birdsall also reinforced this point in her remarks yesterday. The primary goal of the technical proofing, in our view, is to ensure that the targets will drive action and achieve results – effectively focussing on substance.

In this regard, we are interested in the proposal just made by Australia on how to move forward with this exercise, and believe it merits further discussion.

We encourage the technical experts to be thorough in their assessment of the targets.

If they are not ambitious enough, tell us.

If they will not help us achieve the results, suggest better options.

If they cannot be measured, or they will be too costly to measure, let us know.

If the experts tell us that a particular target is not measurable, we need to consider what the purpose would be of maintaining it in its current form if it risks undermining the credibility of the agenda.

We value the work being done on indicators, and we see this as an essential part of the process.

We believe it is important that the development of indicators is evidenced-based, and not subject to intergovernmental negotiations.

We would be interested in hearing more about the process to develop these indicators including who is involved.

We stress the importance of ensuring that the timing of their work suits our needs and will be able to inform our discussion in March.

An additional point to note on this is that we see the targets and indicators included in the Post 2015 framework as being inextricably linked. The development of indicators must inform the review of targets.

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To conclude, we all agree that we are striving for an agenda that is transformative and people-centered.

For this ambition to be translated into reality, we need to ensure that the targets we include in the agenda are clear, simple and accessible enough to allow the citizens of the world, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, to use the SDGs as a mechanism by which they can hold their governments accountable.