



Delegation of the European Union



Permanent Mission of Spain
to the United Nations

Statement on behalf of the European Union

By

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**First Meeting of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom-1) for the
UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD)**

- OPENING SESSION -

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Mr Co-presidents, Excellencies, Distinguish Delegates,

It is now nearly 20 years since Sustainable Development (SD) was recognized at the Earth Summit as one of the most important challenges of our time. Since then, it has also been an overarching objective and a fundamental priority of the EU and its Member States. However, and in spite of all the efforts, we are still facing unsustainable trends in relation to climate change, energy usage, consumption and production patterns, natural resource use, biodiversity loss, or food security. The multiple global crises the world has experienced over the past years and the fact that we still have a long way to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), are clear examples of this.

But these multiple and serious challenges can also represent new opportunities to change the development to a more sustainable path. We cannot afford inefficient use of limited resources, or overlapping or incoherent responses to the challenges in front of us. This idea becomes even more evident in times of crises. The status quo is therefore not an option.

Sustainable development is a bridging concept. Its ultimate goal is to bring convergence among economic growth, social improvement, and environmental protection. It also brings together not only environment and development but also developed and developing countries, offering a common space and the opportunity to strengthen the coherence and efficiency of our policies.

For these reasons, the EU and its Member States welcome the organization of a United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 and will continue to actively engage in the preparatory process ahead of us. We welcome the call for a renewed political commitment to SD. The two agreed themes for the Conference provide a timely and politically attractive mean of answering this call. The areas to be assessed and the elements of the preparatory process which were agreed under the Resolution 64/231 on implementation of Agenda 21 should not be re-opened. The UNGA Resolution 64/236 sets the framework for the preparation of the conference. We need now to work together within these mandates.

The EU and its Member States believe that the 2012 Conference should be forward-looking and deliver an ambitious and action-oriented outcome. UNCSD 2012 provides a unique opportunity to develop new thinking and innovative solutions and to revise current trends of unsustainable development. The assessment of gaps should build upon the work of the CSD and should avoid overlapping with already ongoing review processes. It should be well defined and focused.

On this basis, we are looking forward to our early discussions on the substantive topics of UNCSD 2012. This first PrepCom provides an opportunity to launch substantial discussions on the themes of the Conference, and build consensus on its objectives. The success in our deliberations will depend on a constant exercise of mutual dialogue, trust and confidence building.

Mr. Co-chairs

We thank the Secretary General for his report. The Report addresses the assessment of progress and the state of implementation and remaining gaps. We welcome the report's proposal of employing an integrative and holistic methodology, which allows for a general overview of the situation. The report states that, although there is evidence of progress towards convergence between economic and social pillars, the convergence of these with the environmental pillar has been much more limited or even regressive. Similarly, the environmental pillar is where progress has been the slowest.

Regarding the theme Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, we acknowledge that the report introduces the major green economy policy instruments. However, it fails to show more precisely how green economy is contributing to SD and poverty eradication. This will be one of the key topics for us to discuss in the upcoming days. In this context, we also acknowledge the valuable work and important leading role of UNEP in this debate. The preparatory process could also build on the work carried out by the OECD and other relevant organizations in this area.

In our view, the Conference should develop a common understanding of the concepts and instruments related to the theme Green Economy and its benefits and challenges, firmly embedded in the context of SD and poverty eradication. In particular, it should present best practices and develop recommendations and options for its implementation, taking into consideration the varying needs of industrialized countries, emerging economies and developing countries. Discussions should stress the importance of an equitable low carbon and resource efficient economy, and of the necessity of decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation and unsustainable use of natural resources.

Topics to be discussed should include matters concerning, among others, sustainable consumption and production as well as the role of the green economy in economic and social long term development. We look forward to discuss and share views and experiences, on the potential benefits of resource efficiency and green economy.

Regarding Institutional Framework for SD the EU and its Member States believe that the Conference should result in a strengthened institutional architecture for global environmental and sustainable development governance at all levels. The Conference offers an opportunity to strengthen the environmental pillar of SD within the United Nations System as well as its integration with the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of economic and social development. Strengthening International Environmental Governance (IEG) is perfectly compatible with reinforcing SD governance, since IEG is part of International Governance for Sustainable Development (IGSD). Environmental degradation is a serious threat to SD. A more coherent institutional framework for environmental activities, embodying a strengthened environment, will contribute to SD.

The EU attaches great importance to the involvement of all relevant UN bodies in the process in an effective manner and welcomes in this context the appointment by the

Secretary General of the UN Under-Secretary General, Sha Zukang, as the Secretary General of the Conference, as well as two Executive Coordinators.

We also welcome the forthcoming establishment of the High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability.

Mr. Co-chairs,

The final outcome of PrepCom1 should be in our view a Chair Summary and a report which contains the reports of the two contacts groups. Based on the discussions, the EU favours a Chair Summary that highlights key topics and questions related to each of the two themes, possibly indicating which UN bodies or specialized agencies, funds, or programmes can assist with providing an input/expertise. In our view, PrepCom1 discussions should allow participants to give guidance to the co-Chairs and the Bureau on a clear roadmap and timetable for the whole preparatory process as well as on a list of background documents that may be required in view of PrepCom 2.

It will be important to pave the way for practical results on concrete aspects, focusing on specific examples or success stories which can help to develop a common understanding of the best way to achieve SD.

Looking ahead, we should ensure an efficient, cost-effective and inclusive preparatory process that makes the best use of the allotted time.

Finally, it is essential that the Conference and the PrepComs allow for and ensure a greater and more meaningful participation of major groups/civil society as well as of relevant multilateral organizations.

Mr. Co-chairs,

The EU and its Member States are ready to actively participate in the discussions ahead of us and to establish an open dialogue to initiate a fruitful and constructive process towards a successful meeting in 2012. We will further elaborate our positions on the different topics in the upcoming sessions and look forward to hearing the views of others.

Thank you very much.