

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**OPENING REMARKS**

**BY**

**MR. SHA ZUKANG**

**UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE 2012 UN CONFERENCE  
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20)**

**Ceremonial opening of the Conference**

**Rio de Janeiro, Pavilion 5, Plenary Hall, 20 June 2012**

Madam President,  
President of the General Assembly,  
Secretary-General of the United Nations,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour to address the ceremonial opening of Rio+20.

There are moments in history when both political commitment and broad participation converge to change the course of history.

The Earth Summit in 1992, convened right here in RioCentro, was one such moment.

It adopted Rio Principles and Agenda 21. It recognized the nine Major Groups as stakeholders.

It launched sustainable development across the world.

Today we are living another such moment.

This gathering of world leaders, and representatives from governments and Major Groups, in the same venue, promises to be another historic turning point – a turning point that re-energizes action, re-invigorates partnership.

The collective will, evident in this hall, indicates to the world that by working together, we can respond to the inter-linked crises that have brought our world to a tipping point.

But will history prove this true?

That depends.

It depends on Governments - will Governments turn pledges into action, implement policy measures guided by Rio Principles?

It depends on all nine Major Groups – will you continue to step forward and take initiatives?

Will you remain on the frontline of action and implementation?

Will you push forward sustainability with even stronger vigor?

Finally, it depends on each and everyone here – will we live up to the expectations of our people?

Will we honour our commitments and take the sustainable development forward and meet sustainable development goals, come what may?

I am hopeful that the answer will be a resounding yes.

I am optimistic.

During the last two years of preparations, as Conference Secretary-General, I have seen sustainable development in action.

There have been successes since 1992 – for example, in reducing poverty, improving child and maternal health, providing access to clean water, electricity, housing, and in ensuring education for all.

Such successes bear testimony to one basic truth – given political will, leadership, broad participation and global partnership, we *can* advance sustainable development.

But the multiple crises have sounded the alarm. Laudable though it may be, what we have achieved is not enough. We need action on a scale that matches the magnitude of the crises.

We must address the gaps in implementation, head-on, rather than delaying.

We must give priority to people's livelihoods.

Adapted to national circumstances, green economy *can* be a tool to that end.

We must strengthen institutions for sustainable development – at the global, regional, national, sub-national and local levels – in short, at all levels

We must strengthen development cooperation in the true spirit of partnership.

All countries must pursue economic growth, social development, and environmental protection simultaneously; but developing countries have to do so within decades... rather than over the span of hundreds of years.

It is therefore in everyone's interest that *all* countries, not just some or even most of them, advance towards sustainable development.

This is one planet - with one common future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to recognize the remarkable leadership of Brazil in advancing sustainable development. Brazil's commitment to multilateralism is an example for the entire world.

Born as a simple idea, sustainable development is an inexorable historical trend.

Sustainable development rises above short-term, narrow interests. Sustainable development unites north and south, east and west.

Sustainable development is about you, me, today's youth and tomorrow's children.

Nothing binds us more closely. We are in this together.

Let us join hands and work together for a sustainable future – a future we all want.

Let us implement the actions and follow-up measures contained in the outcome document before you.

Today, history offers us a chance to make a difference.

Let's seize it and make it happen.

Thank you.

\*\*\*\*\*