

STATEMENT BY Ms EGLY PANTELAKI
PERMANENT SECRETARY

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT
CYPRUS

Mr Chair,

Allow me first to congratulate and express our appreciation to the Government and people of Brazil for the organization of this Conference and their warm hospitality. I would also like to extend the appreciation of my country Cyprus, to the UN system and services as well as to all national civil servants and experts involved in the road to Rio, for steering the path through a minefield of uncertainties.

Ten years ago, in Johannesburg, the world had decided to move forward making significant steps towards ensuring that the people of this planet could improve their lives, not at the expense of future generations, but with a view to ensuring that future generations will prosper on a planet where economic, social and environmental inequalities, poverty and hunger, would, one day, be eliminated.

However, the same challenges are still on our table today, yet to be resolved. We still need to protect and rationally use our freshwater resources, to change unsustainable consumption, to mitigate climate change and to confront the complex relationship between trade, the environment and sustainable development.

Despite the unquestionable advances made, it cannot be denied that sustainable development considerations have yet to make a substantial influence on policy-making in order to change the traditional notion that development only means the increase of material wealth.

The present on-going economic and fiscal crisis has made it amply clear that the prevailing economic models have failed to address the needs of people, both in the developed as well as in the developing countries. However, the same crisis should also be seen as an opportunity for new, people-centred and environment-friendly policies and for a renewed drive towards sustainability.

It is my belief that sustainable development can be achieved only with a never-ending and unyielding respect to democracy, human rights, good governance, gender equality, education, social protection floors, green and decent jobs.

For us, welfare of humanity means welfare of all, not some. We all need to work together to secure a political transition of complementarity of objectives, which is essential for the much needed transnational ethic of mutualism. In this respect, the fact that environment and fundamental human rights are indivisible should never be lost from sight. The right to an environment of high quality has, after all, been recognized as a human right by the UN General Assembly. Neither can we forget that ownership of development by sovereign states is a key to successful and sustainable development.

Mr Chair,

The international community has put a lot of effort in making this conference a success. The negotiations have been difficult and lengthy, since the outcome had to reflect the concerns and ambitions of the whole world.

We have reaffirmed important commitments that, once implemented, can guide the way to sustainable development. If we fail, we will be judged by future generations. Therefore, our responsibilities go far beyond the conclusion of this Conference. By next week we shall all be back our countries. Its is up to us to rise to the challenges, and guide our planet to a better future.

Thank you.