

Statement by
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Minister of Water and Energy of the
Federal Democratic Republic of
Ethiopia At the
United Nations Conference on
Sustainable Development (Rio+20)

June 20, 2012

Madame President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by expressing appreciation to you, Madame President, and to the Government and People of Brazil, for your hospitality and for once again hosting an International Conference called upon to address vital issues critical to the very viability of our planet. I wish also to express my gratitude and appreciation to the delegation of Brazil for their leadership in finalizing the outcome document.

It is undeniable this UN Conference on Sustainable Development is taking place at a time when economic difficulties have made states excessively inward looking, perhaps almost to the point of giving short shrift to the common challenge that humanity faces. It is perhaps necessary to frankly admit this so that it may be possible to summon the wisdom and the farsightedness of twenty years ago which made it possible for us to agree on our common but differentiated responsibilities for the care of our environment and to ensure sustainable development. What this Rio+20 conference should avoid the most is

backtracking on those commitments made twenty years ago. The least that this conference can do is renew those commitments and take a small step forward in terms of the readiness to arrive at a consensus on the means of implementation of the strategies and policies that the conference sees fit to endorse. We now seem finally to have made some progress, for which the host country should be commended. Principles, strategies and policies we endorse will continue to remain vacuous if we fail to take seriously matters that relate to the capacity that ensures their realization.

Madame President,

It could not have been possible to think of more appropriate and pertinent themes for this conference than the two that are before us. Let me say immediately that as a country, we in Ethiopia view the green economy, not as an option, but as a necessity and as the only realistic and effective tool for ensuring sustainable development in our country, for overcoming poverty, improving the carrying capacity of our land and protecting and improving our environment. It is in line with this conviction that we have launched the Climate Resilient Green Economy Strategy which, among other things, aims to improve our crop and livestock production practices, protect our forests for economic

and ecosystem services, expand electricity generation from renewable sources and resort to energy-efficient and low carbon technologies in transport and industrial sectors while creating opportunities for green jobs.

It gives me great satisfaction to state that this commitment to the green economy is widely shared in Africa and has in fact become a Common African position, the AU having decided to embrace the strategy. The African consensus statement on the issue states that the transition to the green economy offers new prospects of speeding up "Africa's progress to sustainable development through economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction".

But obviously, our commitment to the green economy, whether at the country level or at the continental, is not going to be sufficient for us to be able to carry through the strategy. That is where action is called for in the spirit of the principles endorsed in 1992 in this same city, particularly in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. It was said, and agreed in 1992 at the UN Conference on the Environment and Development, that "the developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the

global environment and of the technologies and the financial resources they command." This commitment is particularly pertinent to the situation in Africa where, as was underlined in the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development, "eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world today." That is indeed why the outcome of this conference, from which so much has been expected for so long, would have very little meaning without meaningful progress on the means of implementation. There is a great need for progress in this area that goes beyond empty generalities if we are to continue to have confidence in international partnership and in our ability to honour commitments made, and this, in the interest of our common future. As a country wholeheartedly committed to the green economy, Ethiopia, for instance, requires a great deal of support and cooperation to ensure that its strategy succeeds. There is a great need for more investment, greater business opportunities, financial support as well as support in technology transfer and capacity building. Obviously, resort to conditionalities with respect to technology transfer and in other ways should have no place in the effort made to promote the green economy.

Madame President,

It is in light of all this that it becomes very apparent that the second theme of the Conference Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development becomes indeed a very vital issue. It is critical that the international environmental governance architecture is conducive to the facilitation of the requisite support for those that are the most vulnerable. It is from this perspective that we in Africa are convinced that it is most appropriate and proper that UNEP is strengthened and upgraded so that it would have the wherewithal to provide all the necessary support to those that need its support the most and to be an effective lead institution for galvanizing international cooperation with respect to the environment. With respect to the effective integration of the three pillars of sustainable development and to ensure that the United Nations plays its proper role in this regard, it is proper that an inter-governmental and open, transparent and inclusive negotiation process is launched within the General Assembly with a view to addressing the challenges of sustainable development. The United Nations is the premier multilateral universal organization we have. It would be anomalous if it were to fail discharging its responsibilities in this regard.

I wish to conclude, Madame President, by expressing our satisfaction that we have been able to reach agreement on the outcome document. In this regard, I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm Ethiopia's readiness to contribute in whatever way possible to the achievement of the noble objectives of the conference. One hopes, that backtracking on those commitments made two decades ago would continue to be avoided. That is what is demanded from us to be able to achieve the future we want.

I Thank You