

GHANA



Statement

by

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President of the Republic of Ghana

at

United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

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Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Secretary General of the United Nations,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have great pleasure in expressing my delegation's deep gratitude for the warm welcome extended to us since our arrival in the beautiful and historic city of Rio de Janeiro where the agenda of providing cohesive, government-driven policy guidance on sustainable development and identifying specific actions to fulfill sustainable development was set in 1992.

Excellencies, we applaud the great work carried out by the United Nations and the government of Brazil to convene this important conference under its two relevant themes for sustainable development and poverty eradication for the world.

Twenty years ago, world leaders and civil society groups assembled in this city for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The Rio Conference resulted in the adoption of Agenda 21, a comprehensive programme of action to be implemented by governments, development agencies, business and civil society, in every area where human activity affects the environment.

Rio held great promise, given the high expectations at the time, including the promise of a calm world enjoying the peace dividends of the then cold war, the increasing awareness in the international community of the imperative need to address poverty in the South, the emergence of globalization as the engine of world growth, and the promise of economic reforms and democratization in Africa.

However, taking stock twenty years down the line it has become

abundantly clear that the high hopes of Rio have remained largely unfulfilled and so much remains to be done. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) of 2002 has neither mitigated global poverty which remains the over arching objective for ensuring sustainable development.

Mr. President, persistence of challenges confronting sustainable development is one of the reasons why we have come back to Rio to renew commitments to sustainable development. Ghana expects that while Rio would reinforce political commitments to sustainable development for the wellbeing of mankind as well as for the integrity of our planet the most critical action begins after this momentous conference at global, national and at local levels.

On the theme on the green economy for sustainable development and poverty eradication Ghana's stand is clear. First, we all must have a greater and common understanding of the concept and contextualize it at national and operational level. The United Nations System must further undertake the necessary studies to reveal the real identity of the green economy and foster knowledge-sharing for a commonly acceptable approach to its adoption.

Secondly, Ghana has undertaken a scoping study on the concept of the Green Economy and prioritized sectors to enable us assess opportunities and risk levels and thereby put in place the appropriate returns on domestic investments for the requisite infrastructure to reach a green economy.

Thirdly, the definition, scope and prioritization of green sectors must inextricably be linked to the means of implementation. In this way developing countries would be guaranteed the diffusion and transfer of technology to embrace this new concept, the building of capacity and assurance of the wherewithal to move forward with our national

development.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, we note with great concern that Africa's progress towards sustainable development is being severely compromised by new and emerging challenges including the adverse impact of climate change, increasing water scarcity, biodiversity and ecosystem loss, desertification, hazardous and electronic waste, low resilience to natural disasters, energy crisis, food crisis, rapid and unplanned urbanization resulting from rural-urban migration, piracy, human trafficking, migration and the global financial and economic crises. These challenges have led to the spread of new diseases, worsening poverty, and unemployment, especially of the youth in the region.

Mr. President, Rio + 20 provides the necessary platform for the discussion of new ideas on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) capacity building partnerships for sustainable development. The conference should explore specific and concrete plans of STI capacity building and how well advanced countries endowed with STI can help developing countries build STI capacity through partnerships arrangement.

We have urgent need to strengthen the institutional framework for sustainable development to respond coherently and effectively to current and future challenges of the foregoing and future ones by efficiently bridging gaps in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda.

While we in Africa acknowledge that sustainable development requires balanced integration of its three pillars - economic, social and environmental - by institutions and strategies that promote holistic and integrated approaches we also recognize that the region has responded to this requirement with varying degrees of success. However, a common challenge that persists is balancing the three pillars, especially

in planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of plans and programmes.

Institutional reforms should therefore embrace elements to enhance dialogue and participation of all stakeholders within the framework of the UN system; review new and emerging issues as well as monitor sustainable development goals on a global scale; enhance science - policy interface and progress tracking; strengthen inter agency coordination; ensure long term thinking in policy to ensure that the needs of the future generations are being catered for; establish relationships with other UN entities, such as the specialized agencies, subsidiary bodies working on sustainable development issues, as well as with other relevant intergovernmental institutions in order to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development

Excellencies, Ghana has graduated from a low to a middle-income economy, leading to overall increase in GDP per capita. However the tragedy of averages is masking existing inequalities between various parts of our country especially the northern and southern parts. It is worrisome for us to note that some structural fundamentals of the economy are still skewed, particularly when viewed from the perspective of job creation and inclusive growth. Ghana's performance in social sustainability is also mixed. For example, while primary school enrollment rate has increased, the disaggregated figure by gender shows that girls are still less likely to go to school compared to boys.

Mr. President, energy, agricultural and food security, land degradation and drought, water, forest, climate change and sustainable consumption and production are some of the priority areas for Ghana. Energy availability, security, accessibility, and affordability are fundamental requirements for any meaningful economic and social development and central to addressing several global development challenges. Access to modern forms of energy is essential to the provision of clean water,

sanitation and health, and enables the provision of vital services needed for development in a form of lighting, heating, cooking, mechanical power, transport and communication services.

Excellencies, the energy potential in Africa and Ghana is enormous. Developing the large hydro resources, natural gas, geo-thermal, wind, solar and bio gas potential would leap frog our development. In spite of this potential we continue to experience acute shortages in energy supply. Africa's largest infrastructural deficit is in power generation and this deficiency is having an adverse impact on its ability to keep up in a globalized economy and to meet the aspirations of a better life. It is estimated by NEPAD that in order to achieve energy accessibility for over 60% of Africans by 2040, an annual investment of \$43.5b would be required. Developing regional infrastructure and expanding regional energy integration are essential steps toward increasing access to energy in Africa.

It is in this light that we fully endorse the Secretary-general's Initiative on Sustainable Energy for All. We firmly believe that it will mobilize the needed resources from all sources to support our efforts.

Mr. President, land degradation is a global phenomenon but particularly acute in Africa and Ghana. The implementation of sustainable land management practices and the restoration of degraded lands can help address several global challenges such as poverty, food insecurity, biodiversity loss, drought and water scarcity, climate change adaptation and mitigation and deforestation. To effectively address land degradation, we call for a significant scale up of resources from the operating mechanism to the Convention on Desertification, Land Degradation, and Drought to enable it monitor global land degradation and restore degraded lands. To better understand and access the extent of land degradation it is necessary to set up an inter-governmental panel on science as it is the case of biodiversity and climate change.

Mr. President, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) could assist in focusing the broad international sustainable development agenda at the practical level. They can serve as a tool for countries to measure their progress as well as further cooperation between countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we must give some thought to the relationship between SDGs and the existing Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the post 2015 development agenda. Many developing countries risk non attainment of the MDGs by 2015. Therefore the Millennium Declaration will continue to be relevant beyond 2015. The MDGs have been successful in communicating a complex development problem to a wider audience and focusing energies and resources. At the same time sustainable development requires additional efforts in all areas, including those not adequately reflected in original MDGs. We therefore suggest that sustainable consumption and production related goals and targets be considered in any proposed set of SDGs. In dealing with the MDGs and the SDGs we must tread cautiously not throw away the baby with the bath water.

Excellencies, we have to challenge ourselves to develop sustainable development goals that have a wide political and policy appeal and will help focus attention, particularly in the post Rio+20 phase, on monitoring the implementation of Rio+20 outcomes. At the same time these goals need to be sufficiently rigorous to provide a valuable basis for decision making, especially at the national level, and be of use to the national policy community.

Mr. President, sustainable development cannot be realized without strengthened, accessible, responsive, sufficiently resourced and truly representative institutions at all levels. The challenge is even greater with increased fragmentation of limited resources, duplication of mandates and scattered secretariats of related institutions. It is

therefore important to streamline the operations of existing institutions in order to reduce transaction costs and channel the limited financial resources to the implementation of agreed outcomes. We support UNEP as the principal actor in the field of environment to be strengthened and up graded into a specialized institution. We also support strengthening the Commission for Sustainable Development as well as ECOSOC to handle sustainable development.

Mr. President, significant policy and institutional efforts are already underway to integrate the economic, social, and environment pillars of sustainable development. In fact Ghana is regarded as a model in the West African region for pioneering the greening of its national development plans. Attempts have also been made to mainstream climate change into sectoral and district plans. However there is a need to intensify efforts to ensure that policies and development frameworks deliver tangible sustainable development solutions on the ground.

Thank you