

UNCSD 2012, PrepCom 2, New York, 7-8 March 2011.

Session 1: Objectives of the Conference - gaps in implementation, new and emerging issues.

Statement by Norway.

Mr. Chairman,

There are, in our view, not a great number of truly new and emerging issues that we have not addressed in Agenda 21 and the Rio Principles or in the years since. What is emerging is not so much new issues as it is the consequences of our inadequate ability to give proper attention to sustainability over the last several decades. This is at least part of the reason why we today have to deal with the simultaneous crises of food security, energy, finance and economy, as well as natural disasters.

To deal effectively with these challenges - in a world which has changed in major ways as globalization has taken place since 1992 - more than ever requires strong international cooperation and institutions. This, in our view, strengthens the arguments for UNCSD 2012 to continue to focus on the main themes of green economy and institutional framework.

Let me mention two areas which experience from the last two decades shows need to be emphasised in this context:

First and foremost, we need to realize that pursuing sustainable development requires that we approach its three pillars simultaneously, as inseparable goals. If we continue to pursue environment and development goals as separate objectives, and social goals as a third, sometimes even portraying them as opposites, we will never succeed with either. Poor people are often dependent on their natural environment to earn a living, and are hence among the most vulnerable to environmental degradation and the effects of climate change. Another example is that according to WHO, environmental conditions cause 13 million deaths each year, and it is again the poorest that are the most vulnerable. In addition to the human suffering, this situation places a heavy burden on national budgets and health systems, and hampers economic growth. Pursuing development goals without concern for the environment will easily backfire on the very people it is intended to help.

Secondly, if development is to be sustainable, it has to be inclusive. There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating that our efforts to reach the MDGs and other important sustainable development goals will not succeed if we are not serious about our stated intentions to ensure the empowerment of women. Ensuring women's social and economic rights and their full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels, is a precondition for inclusive and sustainable development. The decision by the Commission on the Status of Women last week that calls upon Governments "to integrate a gender perspective in their environmental and climate change policies, and to strengthen mechanisms and provide adequate resources to ensure women's full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels on environmental issues, ..." is therefore both timely and important, and needs to be followed up and implemented.

Thank you.