

Elements of Summary
Concluding Remarks of Co-Chair of Bureau
United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

We have heard many interesting ideas and had good interactive discussions in the past two days on the objectives and themes of the conference. We have made some progress in defining what it is we hope to achieve as an international community at Rio next year, but we still have a lot of work ahead of us.

The overall discussion has been very rich, but I will only try to summarize salient features of the discussion. The full Co-chairs' Summary, which does aim to be more comprehensive, will be available for downloading from the Conference website next week (www.uncsd2012.org).

The multiple crises of the past few years – food, energy, financial and economic, climate – were cited by Member States and other stakeholders as an important impetus to renewed political commitment for sustainable development. Multiple shocks to the world economy and to individual countries remind us all too starkly of our failings over the past two decades to implement effectively the sustainable development agenda.

Rio 1992 made important advances for sustainable development, as did Johannesburg 2002, including the Rio Principles and Conventions at the former case, the emphasis placed on the social pillar and the prominent role of partnerships at the latter. The international community has also taken important actions to address the vulnerabilities and special development challenges of small island developing States, beginning with Barbados and continuing through Mauritius and the Mauritius + 5 review last September.

Many countries noted the inadequate delivery on financial and other commitments made since Rio in the spirit of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. It was suggested by many that remedying this shortfall is an essential task before the Rio 2012 conference.

The Synthesis Report has begun to shed light on the key areas of progress and remaining gaps in implementation, but many felt that more could be done in the coming period by the Secretariat in cooperation with the UN system to fill out the picture, giving a finer grained account of gaps and emerging challenges in specific areas of the sustainable development agenda.

We had a far ranging discussion of the themes of the conference. A common definition of green economy remains elusive, but still delegations cited many examples of national policies and initiatives which by almost any definition would qualify as part of a green economy. The most important message is that our overriding objective as an international community remains sustainable development, with convergence among the three pillars. If green economy strategies succeed in accelerating our progress towards sustainable development, then they will have proven their usefulness.

Almost all agreed that we need to be thinking in terms of bottom-up approaches to a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, defined by national and local priorities and through national and local stakeholder processes.

Many countries raised legitimate concerns and questions about a green economy, which will need to be answered if we are to find a way forward towards an agreed outcome on this theme at Rio 2012. The next months will be very important in seeking answers and resources from across the entire UN system should be mobilized to that end.

A few of the areas of concern mentioned in the past two days include relationship between: (i) green economy and poverty eradication, (ii) green economy and employment, (iii) green economy and trade, and (iv) green economy and technology. Also, how can Least Developed Countries be assured access to the technologies needed to pursue a green economy on favourable terms?

So we have some way to go before it begins to become clearer what is achievable on this theme in Rio next year.

On the institutional framework for sustainable development, strengthening of the sustainable development architecture should follow from an assessment of the gaps in implementation and why existing institutions have proved ineffective in filling those gaps.

While strengthening the institutions for sustainable development was recognized as important, a number of countries emphasized that access to the means of implementation remains a crucial issue. The means to achieving this is by strengthening coordination mechanisms and synergies across sectors at all levels, taking into account the three pillars of sustainable development, and which meaningfully involve all stakeholders, including women and vulnerable groups. In this regard, building strong partnerships among government, civil society and business was encouraged.

Several countries addressed the process of international environmental governance and its relationship with sustainable development governance. In this regard, it was stated that IEG is a component of sustainable development governance.

There was support expressed for strengthening UNEP, as part of the broader institutional framework for sustainable development governance. Other countries stated that institutional reforms should streamline existing structures and make better use of existing resources.

The view was expressed that in strengthening the CSD, consideration be given to revitalizing its original role as an assessment, implementation and review forum. There is also need to review the established work programme of the CSD to make it more flexible and responsive to emerging issues.

Many countries underlined the importance of strengthening institutions and mechanisms for integrated policy-making, including at the national and local levels through greater support for capacity building. The need to improve coordination with the IFIs and the MDBs was also emphasized.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The 2nd PrepCom will take place on 7-8 March 2011. Although the subject matter of the conference will continue to be discussed during the entire preparatory process, it is important that the 2nd PrepCom should start looking at the solutions to the challenges and problems we

have identified so far. I am confident that the results of this meeting will contribute in steering our thinking in that direction.

I thank you.