



Australian Government

Australia's Intervention delivered in the 2nd Rio+20 Intersessional meeting on 15 December 2011

Thank you Mr Co-Chair.

Australia associates itself with the statement made this morning by the distinguished representative of New Zealand on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum countries.

At Rio+20 Australia believes we must take the opportunity to address sustainable development challenges looking forward to the next twenty years and beyond.

Australia is committed to working with other countries to achieve long-term sustainable development globally, and an important part of our commitment is to assist the poorest and most vulnerable meet the challenges of the three integrated aspects of sustainable development. That is why Australia is doubling its aid budget by 2016.

As evident from the compilation document, we share many priorities with other countries, civil society and stakeholders. So I will only briefly address a few of the questions and highlight Australia's view on critical areas where progress is needed at Rio next year, in terms of specific outcomes.

The outcomes for Rio+20 must reflect the intrinsic link between the objective and themes of the Conference and recognise that renewed political commitment to sustainable development is fundamental to the success of the Conference.

Australia would like the outcomes document from Rio+20 to reflect a set of clear, practical outcomes, including actions and responsibilities that will address the key challenges of sustainable development. Australia supports a short and focused outcomes document which includes a high-level political declaration. The outcomes document should not be duplicative of past Summit outcome documents. It should address the objective and themes of the conference in a clear and succinct manner, proposing short and focused lists of high-level outcomes and means of

implementation under relevant agreed priorities. The zero draft should reflect those areas of common ground shared between Member States.

Our political declaration must be ambitious and capable of galvanizing political commitment as we did 20 years ago in Rio. Australia is committed to working closely in the coming months to set the stage for a common sustainable future for the next 20 years and beyond.

In terms of substantive outcomes I would like to highlight the following. Australia supports the Colombian-Guatemalan-Peruvian proposal to develop Sustainable Development Goals and we welcome the constructive engagement of many countries on this proposal, through their submissions to the compilation document and at informal meetings. Australia will continue to work with countries to develop this idea as a collective construction, keeping in mind the strong need to ensure coherence with the Millennium Development Goals framework. We see these sustainable development goals as cross cutting and bridging the two themes of Rio.

As well as we see the institutional framework for sustainable development as key to supporting and driving sustainable development efforts into the future. Existing institutions need to be reformed to integrate our considerations of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. This should involve strengthening UNEP and developing a system-wide strategy for the environment in the UN, the transformation of the Commission on Sustainable Development into a significantly more effective organisation and consideration of how ECOSOC can better perform its role as the primary high-level decision-making body for all three aspects of sustainable development.

In terms of critical areas we believe Rio+20 should urgently address the global challenge of food and water security, including through increased funding for agricultural and rural development and research to sustainably boost production; liberalisation of trade and the elimination of trade-distorting agricultural subsidies and market barriers; and improving water access and water use efficiency at a national level.

Rio+20 outcomes should improve biodiversity conservation. Despite our efforts since the 1992 Summit, biodiversity is in decline both in Australia and globally. Rio+20 needs to emphasize the integrated management of biodiversity at landscape and seascape scale, using market-based mechanisms where appropriate; and better recognise indigenous,

traditional and community-based approaches to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Australia is also committed to promoting sustainable mining practices and improving environmental management of mining activities. When managed properly, mining offers the opportunity to promote broad-based economic development, reduce poverty and help countries meet the Millennium Development Goals.

We believe Rio+20 should agree to develop credible frameworks for measuring sustainability in a manner which goes beyond the scope of traditional measures of progress, and as part of our contribution to Rio+20 Australia will share our expertise in developing a set of sustainability indicators which reflect priority sustainability issues of relevance at both regional and national levels.

And finally, concerning oceans and the 'blue economy' Australia welcomes countries' references to the responsible management of our oceans – the 'blue economy' – in their submissions and the words today of many, including the PIF, Monaco and others. And we thank the Principality of Monaco for the Oceans workshop they hosted a few weeks ago.

For island nations such as Australia, preserving the rich biodiversity of our oceans is one of our highest priorities. For Small Island Developing States, the resilience of the oceans, fisheries and marine environment is crucial to the livelihoods of millions of people. Healthy oceans are also vital to some of the earth's most important systems and services, and thereby, our sustainable development. The 'blue economy' should be a priority for us all and is about deriving sustainable, direct and equitable benefits from the oceans and sustainable livelihoods.

Australia will be strongly supporting oceans and 'blue economy' outcomes, with a focus on promoting regional frameworks that deliver practical action to progress sustainable development as we have seen in the Coral Triangle Initiative. Oceans outcomes are important to us all and should no longer be forgotten or treated as the sole domain of one sector. Oceans are the lifeblood of our planet and need our attention at Rio+20.

Thank you Mr Co-Chair.