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**Closing Remarks**  
**by**  
**Mr. Sha Zukang**  
**Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs**  
**Secretary-General of The 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Intersessional Meeting for Rio 20**  
**New York, 16 December 2011**

Mr. Co-Chair,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank you for your active engagement in the discussions over the past two days.

The main task of for the intersessional was to hear your views on the structure, format and content of the outcome document. The meeting has risen to this task.

In closing I would like to summarize, in a general way, the rich discussions on the three interrelated issues.

Let me first say a few words on the proposals regarding the structure and format of the outcome document.

Many reiterated what was stated in the GA resolution (64/236) calling for Rio+20, that we must have a focused political document. Many indicated their preference for a single document, not multiple documents that would need to be negotiated in parallel tracks.

The message on structure I hear is to follow the guidance of the GA resolution, focusing on the objective and two themes. The document should address the deficits that have been identified in implementation, integration and coherence through an action-oriented outcome. Let actions speak louder than words.

Most want a concise document, though the precise interpretation of that term remains elusive. One delegation has even put a number on “concise” – 5 pages.

The overall message from all submissions is clear: be brief and to the point. Be understood by the world; avoid a text full of jargon. Many prefer that the vision and declaration of renewed political commitment be accompanied by a set of agreed actions – some called it a framework for action, others a plan, and still others a roadmap. Some want these to be attached in annexes.

It was also emphasized that actions agreed must specify actors, timeframes, and means of implementation. The need for a compendium, or registry, of voluntary commitments, to accompany the negotiated outcome, was also raised.

Much stress was placed on accountability for delivery on commitments, whoever the responsible actors, and whether negotiated or voluntary.

Let me turn to the question of the contents of the outcome document. I heard a number of themes repeated.

It was stressed that the starting point should be reaffirmation of all the Rio Principles and prior sustainable development commitments. There should be no regression.

Building upon that reaffirmation, the outcome must be forward-looking. It must provide a vision for the future and endorse a concrete set of actions that address the implementation gap.

Our vision must be ambitious, yet attainable.

Our minimalist ambition at Rio+20 should be to eradicate poverty. This should be a centrepiece of our efforts to achieve sustainable development.

To start with, this will require that stability and inclusive growth be restored to the global economy.

At the same time, we must ensure that we entrust to future generations the conditions for leading full, productive, and healthy lives in harmony with nature. To do this, we must tackle the major environmental threats we face, which are becoming more serious by the day. And we must tackle growing social inequities.

So, Rio+20 must once and for all integrate the three pillars of sustainable development ... **in practice**. Progress on only one pillar will not be sustainable without progress on the other two. This is one of the most important lessons we have learned since Rio 1992.

To ensure that the Rio+20 vision and actions are realized, there are three key requirements that I heard mentioned. First, these must be strongly endorsed at the highest level of government. Second, they must be owned by all stakeholders. And third, actors must have at their disposal the necessary means of implementation.

There was broad agreement that a green economy must be inclusive, advance poverty eradication, and be a means to sustainable development.

Building green economies is necessary to a sustainable future. In addition to national actions, it will require strengthened international cooperation, a reinvigorated global partnership for sustainable development. Actions to build green economies should be guided by agreed principles, beginning with the Rio Principles.

It is also widely understood that an *inclusive green economy* must be built in each country according to its own national priorities, characteristics, and capabilities.

This calls for flexibility, for a menu of policy options and not a straitjacket. Countries will need to share their experiences and lessons learned, and a platform is needed for such sharing. Likewise, capacity building support will be needed for developing countries:

- to develop national green economy strategies and plans,
- to mobilize the necessary resources and
- == to make the necessary investments.

Goals, timelines, and milestones are not only helpful but also essential for measuring progress towards sustainable development. Several have proposed that these be developed in the context of a green economy roadmap. Others have proposed them more broadly, in the form of sustainable development goals -- SDGs. It was stressed that these could be an effective tool for bridging the implementation gap.

Given the broad support for SDGs, the outcome document will need to reflect proposals in this regard.

Strong support has also been expressed for improved measures of progress towards sustainable development that go beyond GDP. Different interventions have stressed different priority areas for action, but several recur often.

These include oceans; food security and sustainable agriculture; sustainable energy for all; water access and efficiency; sustainable cities; and green jobs and decent work; and disaster risk reduction and resilience. Other issues mentioned include: desertification and land degradation; mountains; forests; biodiversity; and climate change. The particular vulnerabilities and challenges facing the small-island developing states, the least developed countries and Africa in particular have also featured prominently.

Among cross-cutting issues, broad support was expressed for reaching agreement on a 10-year framework of programmes to promote sustainable consumption and production. Countries see this as a critical component of an agreement on a green economy for sustainable development at Rio+20.

Other cross-cutting issues stressed were gender equality and empowerment, social equity and social protection, education, access to technology and finance, and capacity building.

Let me turn briefly to the institutional framework for sustainable development.

It was stressed that a robust institutional framework is essential for effective implementation of the actions agreed at Rio next June.

The guiding principles mentioned were once again: the need to stress implementation and to promote integration of the three pillars. These tasks add urgency to the need for coherence at all levels. Coherence to promote integration ... coherence to promote implementation.

In this regard many stressed that reforms to the institutional framework should be considered in a coherent manner:

- strengthen each of the three pillars;

- strengthen UNEP/elevate it to a specialized agency, as the core of the environmental pillar;
- strengthen the institutional mechanisms that promote balance and integration among the three pillars. I sense that there is growing interest in considering a proposal for creating a sustainable development council to replace the CSD, building upon and strengthening existing institutions, including the ECOSOC and GA.

It was stressed by many that the institutions of economic and financial governance must also be included for improving governance for sustainable development.

Reform must also include clearly defined mechanisms and processes to follow-up the decisions made in Rio.

We heard substantial interventions from the Major Groups. I am happy that they are participating as never before. Rio+20 has to be a conference for all. The Bureau and the Co-Chairs have expressed their readiness to see how to make the involvement of Major Groups more effective and meaningful.

We all know that, while governments must take responsibility for delivering on the commitment they make at Rio+20, other stakeholders must be meaningfully engaged in shaping and implementing that outcome.

If I were to try to distill the rich interventions of the past two days in a single clear message, it would be one which was stated by one of the Member States -- the outcome should be strong in will and strong in action. Only in this way will Rio+20 be an historical and ground-breaking conference.

We now look forward to the zero draft which will be tabled by the Co-Chairs in consultation with the Bureau.

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