



SECOND SESSION OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, 17-19 April 2013

**Statement of Mr Paolo Soprano
Director for Sustainable Development
Ministry for the Environment Land and Sea of Italy**

Interactive exchange of views on poverty eradication

Excellencies,
Distinguished co-Chairs,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We have the honour to make this intervention also on behalf of Spain and Turkey, with which we share the membership in this Open Working Group.

In moving towards the Sustainable Development Goals, we would like to reaffirm that poverty eradication is the overarching priority, our true objective, the very reason why we are here. It is our core and unfinished business.

Sustainable development represents the instrument by which the international community can eventually achieve poverty eradication. As reaffirmed by our Heads of State and Government at the Rio+20 Conference, sustainable development is the only way forward, both for the people and the planet.

As a global issue, poverty eradication should be an overarching goal to which SDGs can contribute. It is vital to adopt a development model which ensures that everyone in the world have their basic needs covered and prevent next generations from facing unequal circumstances caused by inadequate income and access to basic needs and services in line with equity and sustainability principles. SDGs therefore should be directed to prevent next generations from facing similar unequal circumstances caused by inadequate income, coverage of basic needs and access to services.

When it was launched, the MDG agenda reflected a world where poverty was concentrated in the poorest countries (in 1990, 93% of the poor lived in low-income countries). Since then, the global economic profile of poverty has significantly changed: despite considerable progress in certain areas and following the rapid growth of middle-income economies, today the majority of the world's poor (according to 2010 data) do not live in poor countries, but in middle-income countries.

We also need to take into account that poverty goes far beyond income measurement. Poverty eradication requires a multidimensional approach capable to address not only the symptoms, but also its underlying causes, including systemic and institutional issues. We have to consider poverty as a product of structural imbalances in development processes. For part of the population, such imbalances result in limiting the right "to live in dignity and take an active part in society".

A life worth living, including the opportunity to achieve what an individual considers relevant and to widen her or his set of options, embraces labour skills, environment, health, education, housing, security, income, working conditions, self-respect and a role in decision-making. Income is a relevant component of these dimensions, but does not reflect them all.

Several dimensions of well-being strongly depend on public institutions performing essential tasks and providing public goods and services. To address inequalities the new framework for poverty eradication must take into account the specific barriers faced by minorities, persons with disabilities, women, children, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups. Poverty reduction strategies must include redistributive policies to address such barriers.

The future sustainable development framework should be universal and reflect current realities. The goals should be limited in number and apply to all countries, with targets reflecting different national contexts. It is also important to overcome the inadequacy of measurement instruments adopted so far by introducing development indicators capable of better measuring well-being and the quality of life. In order to develop effective policies for the eradication of poverty, it is crucial to distinguish and compare the contribution of each indicator, capturing the different aspects of the phenomenon (e.g. "risk at poverty" indicator, indicator of material deprivation, indicator of very low work intensity, etc).

Within the perspective of addressing social exclusion and discrimination, the new framework should also reaffirm the strategic importance of gender equality. In a context of generalized insecurity, it is important to underline that gender disparities also leave poor women and girls disproportionately vulnerable to shocks - such as rising food or fuel prices and environmental disasters - as they often have fewer assets, resources and social networks to cope with these challenges.

A greater focus on gender equality requires that women be incorporated into the development process. They should not be considered passive or marginal, but active subjects of societal processes. At the same time, an enhanced poverty eradication framework should put more emphasis on addressing the root-causes of women's vulnerable conditions. There is also a strong case for institutionalizing social protection as the backbone of wider social policy measures for protecting, promoting and transforming the livelihoods of women.

Poverty eradication should fully take into account the issues of employment and decent jobs. Despite the rapid economic growth occurred in countries, poverty is either a stark reality or a real threat for the majority of workers in most countries in the world.

It is therefore important to emphasize the importance of an inclusive and sustainable growth, as the basis for the eradication of poverty. In such a context, it is also essential to pay attention to distribution dynamics, and consequently to the issues related to inequalities in the access to the benefits produced by growth. Empirical evidence shows that poverty reduction is more effective in countries with lower degrees of economic inequality. Sustained economic growth is often accompanied by growing inequality within countries and a growing vulnerability. The notion of “decent work” can thus be regarded as a fundamental cross-cutting issue that should become, along with the concepts of inclusive economic growth, social protection and environmental protection, one of the pillars in the fight against multidimensional poverty.

To progress on our work we need to identify goals that are universally acceptable to all and may subsume measurable actions implementing sustainable development.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

finally, we should indeed look at poverty eradication as the overarching objective in the context of each of the priority areas that the working group will be able to identify.

Each thematic area should contribute to achieve equitable, inclusive social development; ensure respect for human-rights; live within planetary boundaries; contribute to peace and security; and drive the transition to an equitable, sustainable and inclusive economic development.

I thank you.