

New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations



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THIRD MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Food security and nutrition, sustainable agriculture and desertification, land degradation and drought

Intervention by Juliet Hay, Counsellor

23 May 2013

Thank you for the useful issues papers provided in advance of this meeting and also for the panel discussion yesterday which provided more food for thought.

This cluster of issues goes to the heart of sustainable development. They also illustrate the challenge ahead for the Working Group. As we have heard yesterday both in interventions and in the panel discussion there are many interlinkages not only within the issues in this cluster but also with other issues that come up later in the Group's work programme. Obvious examples are water, health, energy, biodiversity, and oceans.

The central issue here is what sort of goals to have. It is useful to see ideas already about how goals and targets might be formulated. We agree that the goals need to be ambitious but they also need to be achievable within whatever timeframe is agreed.

One issue highlighted in our discussion is the extent to which issues can be clustered into one goal or whether they warrant their own. We do, of course, have to remember the direction given in the Rio+20 outcome document that the goals should be few in number. This raises the question of how to deal with cross-cutting issues. It seems that there may be more of these than the obvious ones like gender. At this stage we can say that, as with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), targets formulated under one goal may well help implementation of others. We agree with comments that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) need to be looked in a holistic way but at the same time would caution against trying to amalgamate too many ideas into a single goal as they risk losing focus.

We were pleased to hear that the Co-chairs will formulate some key points after each meeting as that will help our discussion going forward but agree with comments that these should be the Chairs' views and not negotiated. There will be time enough for negotiations in 2014. We would also support Colombia's suggestion to ask the Technical Support Team to

address linkages between different goals so that we can start to see options for addressing them.

There is no doubt that there needs to be a goal on **food security and nutrition**. The importance of nutrition is now recognised in a way that it was not when the MDGs were formulated. There are, of course, discussions on the detail in other fora such as the recent high level meeting and we should draw on those in formulating a goal. Colombia mentioned yesterday possible target areas including ensuring access to “safe, sufficient, appropriate, adequate, and nutritious” food and addressing waste both in the production chain and as a result of consumption patterns. These are good starting points. We also heard the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) describe the importance of sustainable fisheries. Fisheries are an essential component of food security not only for states reliant on fisheries for domestic consumption, notably SIDS, but also globally. They represent a very valuable source of protein and essential micronutrients for balanced nutrition and good health. (This is also relevant to our discussion next month on health, including in relation to non-communicable diseases.)

Sustainable agriculture is, of course, a key means of achieving food security and must have a prominent place in the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda. However, it seems substantive enough to warrant its own SDG. Agriculture is not only about food production. There are other products that generate livelihoods for farmers such as wool and cotton and there are other dimensions such as land management. New Zealand’s own prosperity has been built by the hard work of our farmers. Most of our exports are, and will remain, in the agricultural sector. We are therefore acutely aware of both the opportunities and the challenges associated with agricultural development. Key elements that have assisted New Zealand’s development include ensuring that national policy settings are appropriate, balancing environmental and economic concerns; that there is strong regulation to address market failure; and that the private sector is encouraged to respond to increasing market signals for sustainably produced goods.

Natural disasters and climate change also impact on agricultural productivity and land degradation. These issues will, of course, come up in our future discussions. We would just mention in this context the ongoing need to continue to identify climate resilient agricultural production systems. That requires innovation and technology, drawing on local knowledge. (New Zealand has, for example, been instrumental in setting up the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases to explore how food production can be increased without increasing greenhouse gas emissions.)

More generally longer-term investment is needed for productivity research and development and infrastructure development including through using public-private partnerships. New Zealand has a long record of sharing our agricultural expertise and working with partners in developing countries to improve farming practices and productivity. This sort of capacity building will be important for the SDGs going forward.

The majority of this population growth will not happen in places with untapped productive capacity. Enhanced global food security will depend on further liberalisation of agricultural trade with an open, non-distorted and fair agriculture trading system underpinned by WTO rules. New Zealand has long advocated the removal of agricultural subsidies that distort markets, this being something impacting adversely not only on developing countries but also some developed countries. We would therefore see a SDG on sustainable agriculture as potentially including a target relating to the removal of these subsidies. Ghana suggested a possible timeline yesterday which warrants further consideration.

The SDGs should also reflect the importance of sustainable fisheries, with targets needed around the following issues:

- **Rebuilding stocks.** (Traditionally this has been rebuilding stocks to “Maximum Sustainable Yield” but consideration is also needed of wider ecosystem impacts.);
- Development and implementation of **science-based management plans**;
- Addressing **Illegal unlawful and unregulated fishing** practices; and
- **Eliminating subsidies** that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and refraining from introducing new subsidies.