

**Statement by Minister Counsellor Yongsoo Lee
Of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea
3rd formal meeting of SDGs Open Working Group
Thursday, 23 May 2013, New York**

Mr. Co-chair,

At the outset, I would like to warmly thank the Co-chairs for convening the 3rd meeting of the SDGs OWG. I would also like to thank the Technical Support Team for providing the issue briefs, which continue to serve as a valuable source for our discussion.

Food security and nutrition are fundamental to human livelihood and dignity. Hunger is simply one of the greatest human tragedies, which cannot and should not be accepted. Indeed, hunger can be ended. The strong inter-linkage of food security with economic growth, environmental preservation, and social protection and its nexus with water and energy also deserve our special attention.

[In recent years, we have seen sharp fluctuations in the food supply caused by climate change, urbanization, and volatile food prices. At the same time, population growth and increased grain demand for animal feed and biofuel have led to a continued rise in food demand and food prices. Food crises have fueled social, economic, and political instability with devastating effects on developing countries and food importing countries. In particular, food security issues have had the greatest impact on the most vulnerable of our societies, namely the women, the children, and the rural population.]

Mr. Co-chair,

Sustainable agriculture is one of the most important and powerful engines of poverty eradication, sustained and inclusive growth, decent job creation, and ultimately, sustainable development. More than 70% of the poor in developing countries live in rural areas. Investment in the agricultural sector improves productivity, creates jobs, and increases income much faster than that of other sectors.

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the important role that agriculture and rural development played in the economic and social progress of the Republic of Korea. A particular initiative that deserves mentioning is the **Saemaul Movement** or the New Village Movement. A community-driven, rural development strategy focused on improving the basic living conditions and environments, building rural infrastructures and increasing income, **the Saemaul Movement** greatly contributed to reducing poverty and improving living conditions in rural areas while simultaneously fostering a strong sense of community inclusiveness and positivity.

In 2008, the *Saemaul* Movement was chosen by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to serve as the base model for the Sustainable Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Transformation or ‘SMART’ program. Thus far, we have been privileged to share our experiences with developing countries; and we will further strengthen our efforts to work together for the sustainable development of farming and fishing communities in the LDCs, Africa, and other developing countries and regions.

Mr. Co-chair,

Allow me to make two specific proposals for the SDGs. First, we suggest that the **Zero Hunger Challenge with its five objectives** be placed at the very top of the SDGs and the larger post-2015 development agenda. Dr. Norleen Heyzer, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, rightly stated, “Sustainable development will not happen on empty stomachs.” More specifically, we believe the second objective of this initiative, ‘Zero stunted children less than two years,’ is extremely important. We simply cannot promise a sustainable future to a stunted child.

Second, desertification, land degradation, and drought (DLDD) is a related issue which also deserves our special attention. In this connection, we suggest “Land Degradation Neutral World” as a target and “Zero Net Land Degradation” as an indicator moving forward.

Mr. Co-Chair,

Let me conclude by offering my delegation’s high praise for the co-chairs’ able leadership and sustained efforts in guiding this SDGs OWG process. We will continue to participate constructively in our ongoing efforts to address food security and nutrition. Thank you.