



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY THE CHAIR OF THE GROUP, H.E. MR. PETER THOMSON, AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FIJI TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77, AT THE TWENTIETH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CSD-20) (New York, 20 September, 2013)

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Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
2. At the outset, I wish to express the Group's sincere appreciation to you, Mr. Chairman, for your efforts in convening the twentieth session, which will be the last formal meeting of the Commission of Sustainable Development. At this historical moment, it is important to recall that the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) has been the high-level intergovernmental body responsible for sustainable development within the UN system, and the only forum premised on addressing sustainable development in an integrated fashion.
3. The idea of establishing the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) originated from the need to elevate the profile, influence, and authority of CSD, replacing it with a higher-level body. The basic rationale was that given the recognition of the priority of sustainable development concerns and their increasing significance over the last 20 years, along with significant gaps and shortcomings in coordination, cohesion, and implementation, stronger institution with increased political visibility was needed.
4. Therefore, the HLPF should essentially continue the functions carried out by the CSD, supplemented by high-level political leadership. It would thus recognise the urgent need to give greater priority and standing to functions already being carried out by the CSD, as well as the desired to strengthen the level of performance.

Mr. Chairman

5. As we look forward to the work of the newly established HLPF, it is important to reflect on some of the major lessons we learned from the CSD:

(i) Centrality

6. The CSD played an important role in keeping the broad sustainable development agenda under active review. Therefore, it is important to keep a central forum which deals exclusively with sustainable development issues, in order to keep it under focus, and under active review. This eventually does not jeopardize the role of other bodies such as the GA or ECOSOC in addressing sustainable development; on the contrary it would contribute to better coordination and cohesion in the UN response to sustainable development needs.

(ii) Institutionalization

7. The Commission for Sustainable Development has been the main institution addressing sustainable development following the Rio Summit of 1992. Given the greater number and scale of sustainable development issues since 1992, it became even more necessary not to lose this institutional dimension in addressing sustainable development, in order to ensure follow-up and monitoring of implementation of outcomes of major UN summits related to sustainable development and commitments made in this regard.

(iii) Integration

8. Integration remains one of the main challenges facing sustainable development. The area of integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development is an area where the CSD was

under-performing as it was limited, especially in its late years, to address mostly environmental issues.

(iv) Implementation

9. The CSD adopted a work program on indicators of sustainable development, which resulted in the preparation of a first indicators set in 1996, a second set in 2001, and a third revised set finalized in 2006. Furthermore, the CSD maintained a system of national voluntary reporting. The Commission has improved linkages with the regions through the holding of Regional Implementation Meetings (RIMs) during the review year which encouraged the participation of regional actors, including the UN regional commissions.

(v) Participation

10. A common criticism to the CSD was that high-level participants are mainly from environmental portfolios, as opposed to other ministries – finance, economy, trade, development – that are regarded also playing a critical role in sustainable development at the national level.

(vi) Agenda setting and developing policy recommendations

11. The fulfillment of the agenda-setting role has seen the Commission serve as the focal point for sustainable development issues. CSD outputs have contributed to the setting of the agenda on sustainable development issues, including agriculture, forests, oceans, freshwater, education for sustainable development and energy. The CSD was instrumental in advancing intergovernmental consideration of forests, oceans, water and energy.

12. An important lesson to be retained from the CSD experience, functioning based on its two cycles approach: policy review and implementation, is the need to link the dots between interrelated and interlinked themes, in order to examine sustainable development issues, particularly, new and emerging ones from an integrated and comprehensive approach, instead of identifying only one major theme for each session. It has been suggested that ways of establishing more robust connections with those UN actors responsible for implementation at the country level may be worth exploring. It also points to the need to have enough flexibility to address new and emerging issues and to be able to react quickly if and when the need arises.

(vii) Coherence

13. Coherence among relevant bodies should be improved. At present intergovernmental bodies operate in silo fashion. There has been little interaction between the CSD and the Commission for social development, the Commission on the status of women (CSW), the statistical commission or the Commission on population and development. The HLPF could engage more in-depth with these functional commissions on common sustainable development concerns, promoting more coherent treatment, and even working on mutually beneficial projects that would involve more than one commission.

(viii) Partnership and multi-stakeholders

14. The CSD has been characterised by openness toward the participation of major groups. Multi-stakeholder dialogues, introduced at CSD-6, have given greater prominence to major group participation. CSD set out guidelines for partnerships and requested the Secretariat to establish a database to register CSD partnerships. The provisions related to partnerships established a flexible framework and provide a solid mandate to work with all stakeholders, notably the private sector. These mechanisms promoted a participatory approach to the

implementation of sustainable development. Partnerships need to be revitalized, especially public-private partnerships, making them more effective in advancing the sustainable development agenda.

Mr. Chairman

15. The Group of 77 and China welcome the establishment of the High-Level Political Forum, which replaces the Commission on Sustainable Development. The Group stresses the importance of its universal character and for the Forum to carry out the functions mandated for it by paragraph 85 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development; “the future we want” in all aspects of sustainable development, that is, in the economic, social and environmental fields. The HLPF should also be guided by GA resolution 67/290 as well as building on the strengths of the Commission of Sustainable Development while addressing its shortcomings.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.