



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

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**Statement of Mr. Paolo Soprano
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**Interactive exchange of views on
“Energy”**

Excellencies,
Distinguished co-Chairs,
Ladies and gentlemen,

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

1. Energy is crucial to achieve sustainable development. Meeting the global energy demand and ensuring access to clean, reliable and affordable energy for all should be common global priorities. Sustainable economic growth and social wellbeing cannot be achieved without access to affordable modern energy services. However, these goals have to be linked to the protection of the environment if we want to ensure the well-being of present and future generations and contribute to long-term, sustainable and equitable social and economic growth.

2. Energy in itself holds the many contradictions of modern society. While we need energy to lift people out of poverty and sustain our economies, the unsustainable use of energy is causing an increase in pollution, greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and a depletion of non-renewable resources.

3. Fossil fuels constitute the lion's share in overall energy consumption and energy consumed per capita is still below humanitarian level in the majority of the world.

Access to energy, as one of the basic needs, has to be considered as a must of any development agenda but at the same time increasing emphasis has to be given to the challenges it creates.

4. Modifying the current patterns of production and consumption of energy resources is a major challenge that we can no longer afford to further postpone. Climate change not only is here to stay but it is moving at a pace which is much faster than what we had originally anticipated. Urgent and significant action to reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases is needed to limit both climate change and its impacts.

5. The fifth assessment report of the IPCC Working Group I highlights the unequivocal human impact on climate change driven predominantly by burning of fossil fuels. It provides for the first time a global threshold for emissions which cannot be exceeded if devastating levels of global warming are to be prevented. The need for dramatic efforts to reduce GHG emissions and promote sustainable energy and sustainable development has to be greater than the past.

6. As the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons has affirmed, energy is the golden thread that connects economic growth, increased social equity, and an environment that allows the world to thrive. Sustainable development goals bear the responsibility to emphasize such crucial nexus. Addressing the interrelated dimensions of energy is an enormous challenge which brings also incredible opportunities. In this regard, the issue of improved governance is key to address energy policies. In concrete, the definition of tasks and roles of the different actors (governments as regulators; private sector as entrepreneur; and civil society as compromises guardian) should be well established.

7. Universal access to clean, reliable and affordable energy should be explicitly integrated into the new development agenda, by creating a specific sustainable development goal. The objectives indicated by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, call for immediate global action and are a valuable input to build

upon. The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), recently designated as the Renewable Energy Hub in the framework of the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, is working on the development of a roadmap for doubling the global share of renewable energy by 2030 by identifying policy needs, opportunities for international cooperation and technology options. International organizations with global representation that promote sustainable energy and development provide useful contributions on the way forward.

8. Goals and targets focused on access to sustainable modern energy services and technologies, energy efficiency and renewable energy together with the phasing-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies without compromising other dimension of sustainable development represent key elements to be considered. Several interlinkages have been highlighted in the relevant TST Issues Brief and should be further developed by addressing the crosscutting nature of energy as an enabling factor to grant access to clean water, food security, health, education, poverty reduction, and environmental sustainability. Therefore, specific goals on energy should be embedded in other development goals or areas such as reducing poverty, combating climate change, food security, sustainable agriculture and water.

9. The transition to sustainable energy needs to be cautiously driven with a particular attention to the vulnerable and the poor. There are 1,300 million people without basic access to sustainable energy. Giving them access would not impact negatively in efforts to mitigate climate change. Studies calculate it would increment emissions only a 0,7% (given it would be basic and in rural areas). Providing access to modern, reliable and affordable energy needs to be coupled with a significant improvement in energy efficiency in particular in the building, industry and transport sector.

10. A sustainable development goal on energy should be tailored to enhance our efforts in promoting renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable transport worldwide. Promoting sustainability in the energy sector via investing in energy efficiency, renewable energies and sustainable transport fosters economic development. Sustainability efforts in the energy field are also an opportunity for creating new jobs and ensuring energy security in countries which have lack of sufficient energy resources.

11. As governments, we thoroughly seek to ensure growth, prosperity and wellbeing for our people. In doing so we learned that an enduring and sustainable prosperity is possible, by promoting less energy and carbon intensive growth and privileging those solutions that have a lower environmental, social and economic impact in the medium and long term perspective. In recent years, the severe financial and economic crisis has exacerbated this factor.

12. Innovations and technology development, transfer of know-how and expertise have a central role to play to support the transition to sustainable energy in particular for developing countries. It is important to rely on research and development to drive technological innovation and support clean energy technologies. Sustainable development goals need to create opportunities and enhance the leapfrogging process, allowing for countries to adopt new and more sustainable models for growth and development, and eliminate negative impacts on the economic, social and environmental development. Aspirations to spur fossil fuel consumption with either new sources, such as shale gas or ultra deep and arctic off-shore, and/or inefficient subsidies to final customers – which amounted last year to more than \$ 600 billion according to the International Energy Agency – should be tailored and their impacts on the environment should be monitored.

13. Such models require significant upfront investments that are outset by long term financial, environmental and social payoffs. There is a need to identify mechanisms that balance out high initial costs against the very low operational costs of energy technologies. A sustainable development goal on energy could tackle such constraints by providing different solutions to the challenge. Effective and coherent fiscal measures, namely taxes, subsidies, regulations and public private partnerships, could encourage investments in cleaner technologies. A gradual phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies could redirect a significant amount of revenues to other pressing priorities such as creating jobs, reducing pollution, supporting renewable and cleaner energy technologies.

14. Mr. Chair and colleagues, before concluding, as we have done for the previous themes, I would like to highlight the importance of indicators which has been mentioned in

all Issue Briefs submitted to our attention, including this one on Energy. We believe that indicators need to be part of our exercise from the outset. Knowledge about indicators will support us in elaborating credible, measurable, transparent and effective SDGs. Indicators will enable us to measure progress and evaluate the process to go towards sustainable development. Indicators will support us in going beyond MDGs by questioning ourselves on the issue of disaggregated data, interlinkages, missing pieces and steps forward. To do so, however, we encourage the UN Technical Support Team to go into further details by investigating on the existing and/or proposed indicators related to a field, also linking its work with the UN Statistical Commission.

15. As a team, we have analysed the issue of energy indicators. As UNECE countries, we can benefit from the findings of the Report of the Joint UNECE/EUROSTAT/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development. Globally, we need to look at the World Bank and at the proposals made in the context of the Sustainable Energy for All and of the High Level Panel. We need to explore convergences, set a common ground, go beyond MDGs. In these contexts targets are identified, inter alia, in access to energy, energy efficiency, increase renewable energy, address fossil fuel subsidies. We need indicators to measure global commonly shared goals. We also need to find indicators allowing us to understand interlinkages between energy and specific issues such as water, land use, food and poverty eradication. This is crucial to set a credible path towards sustainable development.

16. Environmental issues need to be taken into serious considerations when dealing with economic and social issues, in particular in the energy sector. Environment is one of the main drivers for poverty eradication, health and global security.

17. The energy challenge is too large to tackle alone; all partners have a role to play. Governments, civil society and the private sector must work together to support the transformation needed in the energy sector. Coordination and joint action by all stakeholders will be crucial; concerted action by public and private sectors is essential to overcome financing challenges and promoting regional cooperation among stakeholders is required for better performance and reduced overall costs.

18. In this Open Working Group on sustainable development goals (OWG on SDGs) we bear the special responsibility to deliver a strong message in support of a transformative change in the way we address global issues, in the way we think of potential solutions to key challenges, in the way we deal with development priorities and so on. We need to work towards being the catalyst of such a change of perspective in particular on a key sector such as energy.

Thank you.