



OPENING STATEMENT

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**High-level Expert Group Meeting for the
Global Sustainable Development Report**

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Strengthening the science policy interface:

Global Sustainable Development Report and National Inputs

Excellencies, Vice Minister, Mr. Wang Weizhong,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege to be here with all of you today.

On behalf of the United Nations, let me express my sincere gratitude to the Government of China for hosting this High-level Expert Group Meeting.

I expect today's meeting to be an important contribution to a strengthened science and policy interface. In particular, it will help guiding future editions of the Global Sustainable Development Report.

21 years ago at the Earth Summit, the scientific community was not very present. Last year in contrast, many scientific and policy assessment reports were presented at side events for the Rio+20 Conference. Some of these assessments have informally influenced Government's negotiation positions. However, the balance of evidence arising from thousands of existing sustainable development assessments was not readily accessible to decision-makers at Rio+20. The need for an authoritative global report that can bring together the many assessments and perspectives has never been clearer.

Member States at Rio+20 agreed on a new Global Sustainable Development Report to be produced regularly. The Report is envisaged as one instrument of the newly created high-level political forum for sustainable development, in order to strengthen the science-policy interface.

In response, my Department has worked on a prototype version of a Global Sustainable Development Report. I presented a summary of the prototype Report at the inaugural session of high-level forum in September. I hope the prototype Report will support Member States' deliberations on the precise formal role and approach of the Global Sustainable Development Report in the coming years.

Coordinated action on sustainable development by the 193 UN member States has proven rather challenging since the 1972 Stockholm Conference on Environment and Development. In the past, much political and analytical focus has been on cooperation between the developed and developing countries and on action by developed countries.

Both have failed to meet earlier expectations, as became apparent at Rio+20. Yet, cooperation among rapidly growing developing countries would make a decisive global difference, in view of the economic rise of a number of developing countries.

Against this background, I am particularly pleased to welcome today experts and delegates of developing countries representing the overwhelming majority of the world population. We need your ideas and inputs! Your engagement and cooperation can trigger real global sustainable development progress. The Report shows that the unabated increase in the scale of material consumption has increased global environmental, social and economic pressures, as illustrated by the repeated crises in water, energy, minerals, food, social cohesion, employment, and the financial system. Countries trapped in persistent poverty have suffered most from these impacts.

The challenge before us is to achieve a global sustainability transition by 2050, when more than nine billion people will live on Earth.

The Report sketches alternative sustainable development pathways for the future, based on findings of leading global scenario modelling teams.

It shows that, if we significantly adjust our current development models, we can help building a more sustainable world in 2050.

But, today's world continues to face many challenges. Examples include persistent poverty and high unemployment in many countries; food and fuel crises; climate-related stresses; natural disasters and their impacts on poor people's livelihoods, infrastructure

and vital ecosystems. These challenges can undermine poverty eradication, social and economic development.

As an international community and as national policy makers, we need to refocus.

Special efforts are needed especially on finance and technology. Estimated global investment requirements are on the order of tens and hundreds of billions of dollars per year in key areas of sustainable development. Infrastructure investment in developing countries needs to more than double.

We also need to enhance technology cooperation and capacity development. The Secretary-General has made proposals to the General Assembly on options for technology facilitation to promote development and transfer of clean and environmentally sound technologies.

At national level, planning and assessment must take into account the inter-linkages among sectors and interdependencies across national borders. Many countries are adopting innovative policies that take into account the inter-linkages for example among climate change, land, energy, and water. This can help governments and others achieve important synergies and extend the range of options for tackling both local and global challenges.

In the future, the Global Sustainable Development Report could look at these broad issues deemed important by government policy makers.

Let me be frank. Coordinated action on sustainable development by the 193 UN member States has proven challenging. The political aspirations expressed by the world's leaders at Rio in 1992 and in Johannesburg in 2002 have not been met. There has been a serious "implementation gap". Developing countries continue to face serious technology, finance, trade and capacity constraints. And – by virtually any measure used - developed countries have not achieved anything close to the envisaged changes in consumption and production patterns. This was all too apparent at Rio+20.

Yet, we all share the same planet. Failing to live up to our own expectations is no option.

Cooperation among rapidly growing developing countries can potentially make a decisive difference globally – not least because of the economic rise of many developing countries.

I believe we need an institutional mechanism to make sure your guidance and inputs are considered in the Global Sustainable Development Report. The creation of a working group or advisory group comprising of national focal points might be a concrete step forward in this regard.

I look forward to hearing your views during the discussions, particularly on how to define the scope and methodology of future the Global Sustainable Development Report.

Vice Minister, Mr. Wang Weizhong,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me just highlight a few lessons learned from our end.

The preparation of the prototype Report pointed once again to the scarcity and inconsistency of data. Most nations of the world are addressing sustainable development issues. Yet, approaches vary considerably. It is thus difficult to evaluate the global impact of initiatives.

The development of flexible national assessment frameworks - similar to the Millennium Development Goals - might be a useful approach.

In the future, the Global Sustainable Development Report will provide scientific inputs for the high-level political forum's deliberations. It could report on global progress in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, once established in 2015. It could provide scientific evidence for linking global goals with required means. Ultimately, I believe the Report will help improve the science-policy interface for sustainable development.

There are many issues to be discussed. If you raise a question in this meeting, I'm sure you must have an answer. That's what we all expect.

I very much look forward to joining you in these discussions.

Before I conclude, let me say a few words about our host and the host city.

Since I joined the UN Secretariat, my Department has worked in close collaboration with the Chinese government on a wide range of issues, on sustainable cities, water, and now on the Rio+20 follow-up: the Global Sustainable Development Report.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chinese government, the Ministry of Science and Technology, and the Administrative Centre for China's Agenda 21, for your leadership, commitment, collaboration and generosity.

I wish you all the best for deliberations!

Thank you.
