

**The Eighth Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals
(SDGs)
3 - 7 February 2014**

**Statement by Ambassador Masood Khan, Permanent Representative of Pakistan
On
Oceans and seas, forests, biodiversity**

Mr. Co-Chairman,

I have the honour to express these views on behalf of India, Sri Lanka and my own country Pakistan.

Our *Troika* aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We thank the guest speakers for their contribution and for the scientific analysis they have shared with us.

We also recognize the Technical Support Team's steadfast and supportive role in our work.

Mr. Co-Chairman,

The oceans cover more than two-thirds of the Earth's surface and contain 97% of the planet's water. Oceans and seas contribute to development, as well as livelihoods, employment generation, biodiversity, and food security through fisheries and marine aquaculture, shipping and shipbuilding, ports, tourism, oil, gas, mining, and maritime transportation industries. The list is much longer. The UN Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), once described as the constitution of the oceans, provides the framework for managing the oceans and seas but our knowledge of this vast area has improved and our challenges have become more complex. With global warming, sea level rise, pollution, increased acidification and fish stock depletion, not only are the livelihoods of millions threatened, the very existence of many low lying states, home to millions including in our troika region, is brought in to sharp focus.

Against this background, we must determine goals with an emphasis on the long-term sustainability of the oceans and seas, while being conscious that many related issues are being addressed elsewhere.

At least 90 % of the volume of the global trade is seaborne. Over three billion people, some 40 percent of the world population, depend on marine and coastal resources for their livelihoods. Oceans play a vital role in the economic, social and political development of the small island states.

For each nation, forests play a crucial role in environmental sustainability, food security and agriculture, energy, clean water, biodiversity conservation, mitigation *of* and adaptation *to* climate change, combating desertification and land degradation, and

disaster risk reduction.

Estimates suggest that more than 1.6 billion people worldwide depend on forests for food, medicines and fuel, as well as for their livelihoods. Forests cover 31% of the global land area and contain more than 80% of the world's terrestrial biodiversity. Forests, most of which remain in developing countries, must not be treated as a cost free air purifier for those who have historically over-occupied the space in global commons. There must be an equitable sharing of the real costs of preserving globally important forests.

Similarly, biodiversity is critical for the Earth's life support system. Without fully acknowledging the role of biodiversity, a sustainable development goals' framework will remain deficient. We know that the three-quarters of the top-ranking global prescription drugs contain plant extracts. Genetic diversity is central to the seed industry. Insects and other animals that carry pollen between crops, fruit and vegetables contribute billions of dollars every year to the global food economy. We should not forget the increasing importance of oceanic biodiversity. Thousands of new patents are based on biodiversity from the oceans as our knowledge base increases exponentially. The exploration, management and exploitation of marine biological diversity in areas beyond natural jurisdiction needs to be a collective effort and must address the financial and technological needs of developing countries. Biodiversity conservation is also intimately connected with the livelihood of people particularly in developing countries and plays a crucial role for eradication of poverty.

Mr. Co-Chairman,

We believe that any sustainable development goals' framework that the Open Working Group crafts should include the vital aspects of the eco-system, not in parts but as a whole.

The Group's mandate is to ensure that we agree on a set of SDGs that are concise, limited in number and integrated between and amongst them.

An important lesson we have learnt from the MDGs is that we should not operate in silos. Lone, singular and numerous SDGs removed from their entire context are not likely to produce desired results. Our troika therefore strongly recommends that we build on the knowledge base we have acquired to craft a holistic goal on the ecosystem.

Mr. Co-Chairman

The issues that we want to address under this theme relate to the management of an integrated eco-system in its entirety and the delicately balanced interrelationships between residents, living resources, and habitants. In this effort, we should not encroach upon the natural boundaries necessary to sustain interdependence of natural elements such as birds, animals, plants, water and soil. Also, there are several other areas - water, food security, energy, health, to name a few – that are linked directly to the healthy functioning of oceans and seas, forests and biodiversity.

We therefore favor a holistic approach along the lines of an integrated goal on eco-system management. At this point, we are offering a *conceptual*, not a *drafting* suggestion. Whatever goal we adopt should be easy to communicate. Our effort should be to design a crisp goal, not a goal that is cumbersome, cluttered and easy to communicate. Such an inclusive goal could have conservation and sustainable development targets on oceans and seas, forests and biodiversity; and cover water, fisheries, tourism, health, food security, natural resources management and animal life, recognizing and building on the linkages of such issues with poverty eradication.

While doing so, as many other delegations have also emphasized, we need to recognize the important work being done under the relevant international instruments relating to forests and biodiversity. The SDGs should promote synergies with such instruments, and avoid duplication. Under the Convention for Biological Diversity, parties have already agreed to a Strategic Plan for the decade 2011-2020 and the detailed Aichi targets. In the 11th Conference of Parties to CBD held in India in 2012, there is also the commitment by Parties to double total biodiversity-related international financial resource flows to developing countries by 2015 and at least maintaining this level until 2020. These commitments need to be reinforced and strengthened.

In terms of promoting the conservation of global biodiversity, the international community took a historic step in 2010 with the adoption of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing. However, even after three years of its adoption, the Nagoya Protocol is yet to enter into force. Early ratification of the Nagoya Protocol for Access and Benefit Sharing would itself be a big contributor to global efforts to conserve biodiversity and is an issue that needs to be prioritized. Having crossed the halfway mark for required ratifications, a further push is needed to expedite ratifications. This is a low-hanging fruit for protection of biodiversity that can be achieved even before the SDGs come into play.

Mr. Co-Chairman,

Our *troika* underscores the importance of a *global partnership for development* as a decisive factor in achieving a host of targets that we may set under an integrated eco-system management goal. This partnership is important and inevitable. Right now the global partnership includes debt problems of developing countries, ODA, market access under trade, new technologies and pandemics such as HIV. Now a global partnership for development should be extended to cover the eco-system management, supported by an international financing mechanism, to achieve the targets that we would set under this goal. Such a financing mechanism must be based on tangible and verifiable deliverables.

To this end, we believe that integrating mechanisms such as the Global Fund, the Green Climate Fund, Climate Investment Fund, and the Bio-diversity Fund should be associated more closely with the UN system to enhance the effectiveness and coherence of the global partnership.

I thank you Co-chair.

