

**Fourth Meeting of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals
June 17-19, 2013**

[Discussion on: Health and population dynamics, Employment and decent work for all, social protection, youth and education]

Statement by India on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Troika of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka)

Mr. Co-Chair, distinguished delegates,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of our troika consisting of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

We endorse the statement made by Fiji on behalf of the G-77 & China.

Mr. Co-Chair,

The issues being addressed in today's meeting are of core interest to developing countries. Several of these are also part of what constitutes the unfinished agenda of the MDGs. As such, it is important to take them on board the post-2015 development agenda, so that the remarkable progress made under the MDGs can be continued apace. There should not be any slackening of efforts to address these core human development challenges, both before and after 2015.

As we are addressing various important issues in this 4th meeting of this Working Group, we propose to share some of our key priorities in this opening statement and look forward to participating in an interactive debate which is to follow in the next 3 days.

First and foremost, ensuring full and productive employment for all should be a fundamental focus of the SDGs. And for this to happen, we have to undertake growth promoting policies. With the demographic dividend of the developing countries, creation of decent employment for all is the only way to promote rapid economic growth and social inclusion. This challenge was duly recognized in Rio+20 which noted the *'importance of job creation by investing in and developing sound,*

effective and efficient economic and social infrastructure and productive capacities for sustainable development and sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth. Investments in skill-based training, vocational education and promotion of business opportunities are key ingredients for employment generation. Career guidance during the final stages of school education is instrumental in creating a responsive workforce. Providing more opportunities and financing for self-employment enable meeting the growing demand for formal employment.

Second, despite the impressive progress made in the past decades, education outcomes continue to be a key priority for developing countries. Universal access to education is the key, both at the primary and secondary levels. Along with access, quality of education and learning outcomes also need attention. Skill development through technical and vocational training is necessary for diversifying economies and creating productive employment for all. Use of ICT for education can be a force-multiplier for enhancing the effectiveness of interventions in education. On the other hand, we must have appropriate indicators to assess the impact of school education, higher education and vocational training, for successful development of an SDG around this theme. An SDG approach should benchmark these qualitative factors and in addition target closing the gap between formal and informal education systems enabled through nationally determined social safety nets.

Third, the youth constitute the most valuable human resource in any country, the building blocks of development. This is particularly true of the developing countries where are experiencing a 'youth bulge'. We owe it to the youth to create meaningful opportunities for education, skills development and employment so that they have the wherewithal to fashion their own destiny. Accordingly, investment on children aiming at productive and disciplined youth is a more proactive approach. Our focus on youth in the post-2015 development agenda must be anchored in such policy interventions. Next year's World Conference on Youth in Sri Lanka will provide opportunities for all stakeholders to actively engage in mainstreaming youth in global development agenda. We also welcome the UN Secretary-General's appointment of a Special Envoy on Youth as well as the establishment of an Inter Agency Network of all key UN agencies working on youth matters.

Fourth, health indicators account for 3 of the 8 MDGs. The fact that many of them will not be achieved till 2015 should not deter us from making this a key pillar of the new development framework. At Rio+20, we recognized the importance of universal health coverage. This remains the key challenge for developing countries. Prevention of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, influenza, polio and other communicable diseases remain serious global concerns and redoubling of efforts is required to tackle these threats. At the same time, we are witnessing a gradual increase in burden of non-communicable diseases. As such, we should also focus on non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, heart diseases and also the neglected tropical diseases. We commend the efforts of UNICEF and WHO, especially awareness campaigns for preventive healthcare. One thing we must not forget is the need to accommodate indigenous healthcare practices, which are readily available in many developing countries.

Fifth, on population dynamics, as confirmed by Rio+20, we need to have a positive agenda that focuses on forward-looking planning so that we can seize the opportunities and address the challenges associated with demographic change, including migration. The role of education and ensuring full and productive employment for all cannot also be overemphasized in this context. Equally relevant is the need for flexible migration policies to address population dynamics and movement of people.

And, finally Mr. Co-Chair, while the challenges we are discussing today relate to fundamental human development for which national policy action is no doubt the key, we must not forget the crucial importance of international factors and cooperation in assisting developing countries to address these issues. Enhanced trade opportunities, market access, enhanced investments, access to medicines including through flexibilities in the TRIPS, and flexible migration policies are extremely important and relevant in addressing these challenges. Such linkages must be meaningfully woven into the SDGs framework.

I thank you Mr. Co-Chair.
