

Statement by Mr. Md. Mustafizur Rahman, Deputy Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN at the Ninth Session of Open-ended Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals on the document produced by the Co-Chairs with Focus Areas, New York, 3 March, 2014

Mr. Co-Chair,

My delegation thanks both of you, the Co-Chairs for presenting the paper on focus areas. The document is comprehensive, balanced and generally reflects the views expressed by various delegations and groups over the past year. It can be a very good basis to carry forward our task in formulating sustainable development goals.

Identification of focus areas has been apt, though there is a scope to streamline it, may also be possible to squeeze some areas without losing their essence or importance in future development goals form. It is reassuring that economic and environmental issues have been well reflected alongside social issues. In that way, this paper tries to remedy perceived shortcomings of MGDs.

My delegation would like to start specific comments with re-emphasizing that the means of implementation should be built across all sustainable goals. Without means, it will be a bunch of nice words and a wish list. Some goal areas need special attention for the countries in special situations. For example, in the possible goal on poverty eradication, countries with lesser endowment, like LDCs, should be supported and provided with necessary international assistance, be it in the form of ODA, trade facilitation or technology transfer. I do not see that is duly reflected in the focus areas or action points. If we talk about 'structural changes' and 'transformative shifts' in the economies with resource scarcity and capability shortage, the developed world have to fulfill their commitments undertaken, under the auspices of Doha Round, UNFCCC, Monterrey, etc. There is a need to re-affirm commitment to 0.7% ODA target and within that 0.15% - 0.20% for the LDCs as a target. It is well proven that trade can be an important enabler of sustainable development. Rule-based, equitable multilateral trade regime is the demand of the day. This must be reflected.

My delegation is pleased that climate change has been taken as a standalone focus area amid skepticism expressed by some colleagues in this forum. Our development agenda would be incomplete if we can not agree on the incorporation of such a crucial sustainability challenge in it. In our view, a goal and reiteration of a few agreed targets on climate change, for example, specific target on CO₂ emissions and adaptation challenges would inspire the discussion in other fora and bring in desired result. We note with satisfaction that some aspects of climate change, have been rightly included under various other closely related goals for example on agriculture, water and sanitation, health, energy and technology transfer.

We are also happy that water has finally been 'freed' from the 'confines' of safe drinking water and sanitation and it is rightly taken on its broadest scope in this document. It must be retained as such in the next phase of our consideration. The competing use of water can no longer be seen in isolation from each other. There is an urgent need to address pollution, declining environmental flows, watershed degradation to secure river basin resources and ecosystems. The social, economic, and ecological consequences of water are real as much as the effects of water-related disasters exacerbated by climate change. As such, water governance, including through trans-

boundary cooperation in river basin management is the demand of the day and should be maintained in the progress report.

Mr. Co-Chair,

There are some important missing elements, like disaster risk reduction. The G 77 statement mentions this. Millions of people globally are affected by disaster associated with natural hazards every year. We can not or may not stop natural disasters, but the damages of disasters can be minimized. Poverty and poor policies and practices in land-use, planning, urbanization, natural resource and ecosystem management exacerbate disaster risks. So, the future development model needs to be risk sensitive, adaptive and disaster resilient. The interconnectedness of disasters with poverty reduction, social protection and sustainable development makes a strong case for inclusion of these issues under the sustainable development framework.

Migration did not get due focus it deserves in this document. Welfare of migrants, migration costs and remittance transfer cost are three fundamental areas on the migration issue that should find places in the new development framework. As we are aware, greater mobility is inevitable in a context of globalization, increasing economic disparities, climate change, environmental challenges and demographic changes. We have to overcome organizational and political challenges of orderly and safe migration. Given the robust size and potential, we recognize the significant role that the remittance can play in development financing as it offers much-needed foreign currency. Overall population dynamics and particularly, youth has been inadequately reflected in the paper. Youth, which constitutes a significant portion of population in developing countries, should be captured across SDGs, not only in the area employment but also in the areas of education and skills development, entrepreneurship and innovation, ICT, health, etc.

Mr. Co-Chair,

There are factors that impinge on sustainability of development, like rule of law, governance and rights situation. Rule of law and good governance are critical enablers, beyond doubts, but best suited to be included in the narratives of the post 2015 development agenda, not as goals or targets. As for rights, the proposed focus areas broadly correspond to a range of economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights. In fact, the entire development agenda is likely to correspond to the provisions of right to development that provides a comprehensive framework to pursue a human-centred and participatory development processes, social justice and equity. Development should lead to greater enjoyment of human rights. Problem may arise if we want to do it the other way and take human rights regime as a means to achieve development. There is no instance of success in such approach in the contemporary world. This is not also practicable. For example, one has to be extremely innovative to find linkage between freedom of speech, association and media to social economic and environmental development. All these are important for a free and democratic society. A number of legally binding conventions exist in these areas, which oblige countries to account for their action or inactions. Let's not mix up these binding obligations with the aspirational goals. We insist that the sustainable development goals should be development oriented, development focused and development enabled.

Mr. Co-Chair,

This is a very compact document. If we unpack action points, we will see almost all conceivable issues have been incorporated under various focus areas. Though it may make us all complacent to see most of our concerns reflected, in practical terms, we are aware, it may not be possible to

retain all these action elements in a possible target area. We agree with those who said that existing 19 focus areas may be too many to convert into goals given the expressed intention to have a limited number only. We have to make difficult choices and prioritize among many proposals of possible goals and targets. At the end of the day, it is not the number but the quality of goals and targets that can bring in transformative change as has been envisaged in the Rio Declaration. The selection should be objective, need based, not on the basis of subjective assessment of pressure or persuasion. We have to prioritize from among those which are essential for achieving a life of dignity to millions marginalized people, a peaceful and prosperous society, a greener and safer planet. All along, Rio should continue to act as our reference point.

In Rio, we decided that the SDGs should be universal in nature, while taking into account the different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. SDGs must contribute to economic prosperity, social cohesion and environmental protection. Equity and fairness should be at the heart of crafting SDGs. We look forward to making further progress in our deliberations on designing a set of goals and targets in the coming days.

I thank you.