



MALDIVES

Statement by:

H.E Mr Ahmed Sareer, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations
Ninth Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals
New York, 3 March 2014

Distinguished Co-Chair,

Maldives aligns itself with the statement made by Bolivia on behalf of G77 and China and the statement delivered by Nauru on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

I wish to commend you on the efficiency and innovation that characterizes the deliberations of the Open Working Group and on your leadership in this process. We appreciate the expertise offered by the UN Secretariat in compiling the Progress Report and the Focus Area document.

The Progress Report presents a valuable summary of the past sessions and will be a vital contribution to our future work. In moving forward with the next stage of global development, my delegation believes that we must ensure that our efforts towards Sustainable Development Goals are guided by necessary principles. The international agreement reflected in the Rio+20 outcome document and its principles form the foundation of these goals. Their elaboration heeds the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals and avoids isolated sectorial approaches. Every potential SDG is interdependent, cohesive and aspirational in its nature.

Co-Chair,

The Focus Area document clearly reflects the consensus underlying the discussions of the Open Working Group, especially following the Report by the Secretary General's High Level Panel of Eminent Persons. Eradication of poverty represents the cornerstone of any conceivable SDG framework. Almost all other focus areas will either directly or indirectly contribute towards this objective, while delivering other desirable development gains. Foremost among these areas are food security, nutrition, health, sanitation, water, energy, education and employment. Highlighted by the President of the General Assembly, it is clear that these focus areas are highly interlinked and have mutually reinforcing outcomes.

Sustainable Development must be equitable, including towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Equal opportunities in education and employment for women and girls directly contribute to the eradication of poverty. However, despite these synergies, gender equality is not an inherent process of sustainable development, it must be actively pursued. We therefore believe that equity, equality and empowerment of women can only be achieved through a stand-alone goal on gender parity.

For the Maldives, desirable outcomes on areas mentioned earlier are directly linked to marine resources, oceans and the sea, and therefore, we are pleased that this focus area is well reflected in the document. At this point we would like to re-iterate our call for an Ocean SDG, because it is integral to progress in poverty eradication, positioning decent jobs and employment, contributing to food and water security, and its high potential for avenues for renewable energy. Furthermore, the importance of protection of ecosystems and

biodiversity of the oceans cannot be stressed enough, as there is no other single resource which affects the world more.

My delegation believes that in reaching the targets that we all agree on, we as a community of states need to focus on the areas where sustained economic and social progress can be reached while taking the environmental pillar of sustainability fully into account. We should avoid environmentally or socially unsustainable short-term gains. Economic growth is a great tool to achieve our common aspirations. But it becomes useful only when it is based on sustainable consumption and production, rather than on the deterioration of natural capital and ecosystem services. Industrialization can be a great enabling factor, when it happens within the planetary boundaries and does not push us beyond the safe operating space of mankind. We live in an interconnected world, where trans-boundary pollution affects neighbouring countries, and where unsustainable practices are used as an excuse and a precedent for further environmental degradation. These goals are based on the ideal of sustainable global development, and every goal must aspire to meet the burden of this ideal.

Co-Chair,

Climate Change is the most vivid, direct and threatening spawn of unsustainable production and consumption. Adaptation to climate change, including existing models, needs to be mainstreamed through every SDG, as it directly impacts the ability to develop, not only SIDS but for the world community at large. This is an issue, which is clearly interdependent and cross-cutting. The arguments formed around Climate Change are cohesive and undeniable. And any argument that it must be separated from the global development framework for the next few decades is misguided and mistaken. Every goal must be aspirational, and the cross-cutting theme of climate change must be present if these goals are to be taken seriously. For my delegation, our culture, heritage, identity and nation will exist at the mercy of this issue. Without addressing climate change, there will be no sustainable development for the Maldives.

Co-Chair,

At the end of the day, we acknowledge that this is a global compact. As such, we should learn our lessons from the execution of the MDGs. The means of implementation for SDGs should not be neglected, nor should its goal of renewed partnerships. Different targets will require different approaches, but our aim should be to make sure that all countries have the means, including capacity and technology, to enable them to effectively implement and monitor their progress towards our mutually agreed targets. The needs of SIDS and other countries in special situations should be taken into account explicitly, to make sure no country gets left behind.

My delegation concurs with the belief that rule of law, good governance, capable institutions and inclusive decision-making are critical in enabling sustainable development, as well as in preventing conflicts. Not only does this apply to the national level, but also the international community. A renewed global partnership, a more action-orientated update of MDG8 is an imperative. The elaboration of the SDGs is a unique opportunity to place a clear signal for a more dependable, consistent, integrated, and ambitious approach towards sustainable development in the international community.

Arriving at a consensus on all these areas will require a monumental effort, broadening of horizons, and great flexibility. My delegation believes that together we can all rise to the occasion.

Thank you, Co-Chair.