

9th Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG)

Joint Statement of the Cyprus – Singapore – United Arab Emirates Troika

Thank you Mr. Co-Chairs.

The United Arab Emirates is pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of the Cyprus – Singapore – United Arab Emirates Troika.

We would like to begin by expressing our gratitude to the Co-Chairs for your leadership to date in leading us through the important stock taking process over the last 11 months. We would like to also thank you for the excellent progress report as well as the paper on focus areas as we begin the important and yet challenging work of identifying sustainable development goals (SDGs). We understand that the focus areas identified in the document are not exhaustive and do not prevent inclusion of other issues discussed within the context of the thematic clusters. Before we start integrating the focus areas into concrete goals and targets, we need to reflect the overall range of issues discussed during our deliberations in the last months.

The Troika would like to make two general comments on an overarching principle before delving into discussions of focus areas. First of all, like many countries, we would like to emphasize that poverty eradication should be central to the post-2015 development agenda and reiterate our earlier position that poverty eradication and sustainable development are the two overarching objectives of SDGs; they are fundamentally interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

Secondly, SDGs, like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), should be accompanied by a suite of targets and indicators to help facilitate systematic change and to measure progress over time. The number of goals should be limited to be effective and be valid for a specific time period.

Mr. Co-Chairs,

We would like to stress that SDGs are meant to set important, broad goals for the international community as a whole. SDGs should help Member States to clarify common, priority economic, environmental and social issues in order to strengthen collective efforts in achieving sustainable development. They should not be interpreted as binding or dictating country-specific goals and targets. Further, it should be made clear that SDGs should be interpreted in light of the existing obligations of each state.

The Troika believes that goals and targets should be aspirational rather than prescriptive. Member States should be free to pursue goals and targets in ways that suit their own policy environment, as well as their national priorities and particularities. We believe this will ensure their successful achievement. Therefore, the focus of our discussion should be on defining goals and targets that can help catalyze change, but not on policy measures and instruments for meeting those goals and targets.

All goals and targets should be global in nature and universally applicable to all Member States, although their relevance and the speed in which they are met may differ according to different national priorities and circumstances and levels of development. Thus, SDGs should be developed keeping in mind such differences, including various historical, cultural, legal and religious traditions, as well as the need to facilitate reporting at the global, regional and national levels. In this respect, the Troika is of the view that while time is rather limited, we should aim towards a holistic package including the whole suite of goals, targets and indicators.

We also would like to note that MDGs should continue where needed and serve as the basis of relevant SDGs. This will enable us to focus on completing unfinished business in demonstrating progress against key development indicators in the period ahead and to build on measurement and reporting systems Member States have put in place. The MDG set should be analysed and revised, to better reflect current and expected key sustainable development challenges. Consequently, MDG goals, targets and indicators may be modified, merged or deleted. SDGs should seek ways in which to better capture interlinkages between key dimensions of sustainable development balancing its economic, social and environmental aspects and to ensure their measurement and reporting of progress, especially in fragile states and low-income countries.

We have only but a few months to finalize the SDGs list. As such, we need to concentrate on identifying priority, common global issues, keeping in mind of the importance of balancing all three pillars of sustainable development. There are a few common focus areas that we believe are of critical global importance, including energy, water and sanitation, women's empowerment, sustainable agriculture, sustainable cities, desertification, land degradation and drought, health and education. In addition to these focus areas, we believe interlinkages and integration between areas, through for example a nexus approach to issues such as energy, water and food, should be further discussed and elaborated. We acknowledge that good governance, rule of law and respect for human rights create an enabling environment for the achievement of SDGs. We also would like to echo views expressed in yesterday's discussions that climate change is a cross-cutting issue and that OWG discussions need to take into account the outcome of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change process. We look forward to continue hearing views from other members of the OWG.

Mr. Co-Chairs,

We would like to conclude our remarks by requesting the Co-Chairs propose a concrete process by the end of this session of the OWG on how it may organize its work in developing SDG proposals in view of the limited time available to the group between now and the planned final meeting.

Thank you.