

# **Remarks by Ambassador Guillermo Rishchynski, Canada Permanent Representative to the United Nations, for the US/Canada/Israel Team, 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the SDG Open Working Group, on Water and Sanitation**

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Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. Allow me to make a short intervention on behalf of our team with three comments that we have and a personal comment at the end regarding some of the points that have been raised.

I think the issues of interlinkages have come out loud and clear in this session that water and sanitation are linked to the entire gamut of issues that we are considering under sustainable development goals. And it's important that we seek holistic strategies, as has been said on many occasions, and that we learn about the important causal relationships between issues such as water and sanitation and the overall thematic issues that we will be considering and how these issues can be best addressed from the point of view of a narrative in which goals are either imbedded or standalone. I think, as our Colombian colleague has indicated, this deserves further consideration by all of us as we go forward.

With respect specifically to water and sanitation, what comes across very, very clearly from our discussions is the complexity and diversity of these issues covering everything from access to safe drinking water to integrated water resources management, wastewater treatment, recycling and the like. And we need to think about all of these issues in an integrated way, but we're going to have to prioritize wherever possible as we go forward because we obviously cannot put every little detail into the goals that ultimately are articulated. And we need to focus, I believe, and I think it is our group's view, that we need to look at issues where the greatest positive developmental impacts lie and ensure that in designing our goals we're informed very much on how these issues interrelate.

A key point that came out in yesterday's discussion that hasn't been mentioned very much today is the issue of metrics and as the May 3<sup>rd</sup> event that Hungary and Turkey co-hosted ...we have a huge gap in data with respect to how we measure the quality and quantity of

water resources and we think that this is something important that needs to be underlined as we go forward.

And finally, when we look at the issues of partnership we need to take on board, in the judgment of our group, issues associated with local and regional dimensions and how they relate to this cluster of issues because they cannot be overlooked. Mechanisms that influence and spur action and encourage behavioral change amongst different stakeholders are going to be absolutely critical in terms of coming up with realistic goals that can be achieved. And we believe that that will be important going forward.

Finally, let me add a personal observation. I know that at the United Nations we operate on the premise that the lengthier the statement the better, but I think today and the comments made by our Dutch colleague and Colombian colleagues have underlined this. We need to really sharpen this and I think we look to you, Co-Chair, and your colleague to bring greater discipline to this process. After two sets of these meetings, where two-thirds of our time has been spent on reading long statements versus one-third of our time in actual productive interactive dialogue, I would go so far as to suggest that you need to flip that ratio around and perhaps as Chairs be more forceful from the point of view of ensuring that we maximize the time with experts, identifying where gaps are, what practices have worked, what national experiences can be brought to bear here that can have solid input into the crafting of goals as we go forward and this should be what guides us I hope in the course of our next five discussions because to simply have national statements or group statements read on an ongoing basis over every issue that we address between now and next winter I think would be nonproductive and would defeat the purposes of the open working group.

And finally, with respect to the summaries, just to reiterate what has been said, those summaries in our judgment are your summaries as Co-Chairs and should be left as so. Thank you very much.

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