

# **Remarks by Ambassador Guillermo Rishchynski, Canada Permanent Representative to the United Nations, for the US/Canada/Israel Team, 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the SDG Open Working Group, on Sustainable Consumption and Production**

**Guillermo Rishchynski**

*Canada Permanent Representative to the United Nations*

New York, NY

January 8, 2014

---

AS DELIVERED

I am pleased to be delivering this statement on behalf of our team—Canada, Israel and the United States.

We would like to thank our distinguished panelists as well as the technical support team for their valuable contributions to our discussion today.

We agree with many of the speakers that have preceded us that achieving sustainable patterns of consumption and production is a central challenge and a key consideration to any discussion about sustainable development.

Like others, all of our team members are strong supporters of the SCP initiatives that began at Rio over twenty years ago, were further advanced in Johannesburg, and culminated in the 10 year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production at Rio+20. We consider the 10 YFP to be an important instrument in our ongoing efforts to promote sustainable development and we encourage all stakeholders to continue to contribute to its success. We can't emphasize this strongly enough.

However, the Open Working Group's task is slightly different in scope and, thankfully, the 10-Year framework is already operational and progressing apace. For the purposes of the task at hand for this group we see "sustainable consumption and production" as another way of describing what we're trying to address in the working group as a whole. Thus, it's important that this working group distinguish "SCP" – in capital letters – from the broader efforts required to achieve sustainable patterns of consumption and production. Or put more simply, to achieve sustainability. This is why we are all here. To address issues of poverty eradication, inclusive growth, and equality, in a way that can be sustained over time and strengthen the foundations of a more just and prosperous world for all. We must all become more sustainable by seeking out ways, as the TST paper posits, to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation or inefficient use of resources.

Rather than speaking about overarching challenges like SCP or sustainability in the abstract, we think it is likely that we will be best served by addressing specific sustainability opportunities in relation to relevant, specific topics that could be the focus of our sustainable development goals and targets.

Take energy for example. Our work in this group has already acknowledged the critical link between energy and poverty eradication, as well as a range of other thematic issues such as food, water and health. If the OWG decides to pursue goals or targets in the area of energy, such goals/targets should be informed by a robust consideration of how to encourage the transition to more sustainable energy pathways through, inter alia, efficient energy usage, renewable energy sources, reducing waste and increasing the use of environmental technologies. All while ensuring greater access to energy across the full spectrum of stakeholders. The SCP question we need to be asking ourselves in this context is – how can the next generation of goals best encourage sustainable patterns of energy consumption and production, alongside tackling the crucial challenge associated with energy access?

Water and sanitation is another thematic area that has already been addressed by this group for which sustainability is a critical consideration. If we decide that our SDG proposal should include goals or targets related to water and sanitation, we may want to consider whether different goals/targets encourage, inter alia, efficient water usage, reduction in water pollution, effective water treatment, recycling and re-use, as well as the sustainable management of watersheds, wetlands and other water-related ecosystems.

The sustainability of our food and agricultural systems is another critical issue. As the High Level Panel asserted in their report “food security is not just about getting everyone enough nutritious food. It is also about access, ending waste, moving toward sustainable, efficient production and consumption.” Food loss and waste, sustainable intensification, land degradation, sustainable fisheries management, and resource use efficiency were also raised by this group when we discussed these matters back in May. The SDGs could provide an opportunity to identify sustainability priorities for food security and agriculture.

We also cannot speak about sustainable consumption and production without returning to the cross-cutting issue of science, technology and innovation. STI is essential to promoting sustainability and more sustainable tools and practices, such as life cycle assessment. The private sector has a critical role to play, as do the scientific and research communities, civil society and others, which further underscores the need for multi-stakeholder approaches as we move forward. As our team has already stated, we believe that breakthroughs in science and technology can spur quantum leaps in global

sustainable development, encouraging novel and scalable ways to reduce poverty, enhance sustainability and galvanize partnerships across the post-2015 agenda.

This is only a small sampling of the themes through which the broader aims of sustainability can be woven, as we work toward crafting a proposal for sustainable development goals. Our team, like many others, is yet to be convinced that a stand-alone goal on sustainable consumption and production is the best way to address this complex issue. From our perspective, only through grappling with the multiple dimensions of specific themes will we begin to grasp the challenges associated with sustainability, as well as to tackle the question of how such challenges can be best incorporated into an integrated goal framework.

Before we conclude, our team would like to return quickly to the open working group's discussion on sustainable transport earlier this week. We would like to echo the concern raised by many participants regarding the negative impacts of air pollution on health, particularly for urban populations. We would like to note for the record that we agree that air quality is an important element to consider in the context of the SDGs, particularly given that outdoor air pollution now ranks among the top global health risks and soon will become the world's top environmental cause of premature mortality.

Thank you.

###