

11th Session of the OWG on SDGs
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Statement delivered by Amit Narang, Counsellor,
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General Comments on the Working Document and Focus Areas 1 and 2

Mr. Co-Chair,

Let me at the outset commend you on your excellent leadership of this process so far. The hard work that you and your team have put in to enable us to reach this crucial final stage of discussions in the Open Working Group (OWG) deserves to be supported by all member states.

But in order for us to strongly support your own efforts in crafting an ambitious, meaningful and balanced outcome to the deliberations of the OWG, it is important that we share our assessments and concerns with you frankly.

It is in this spirit, Mr. Co-Chair, that I seek your indulgence in conveying some of our serious concerns with the latest version of the working document that you have provided.

While we were happy with the progress of discussions in the OWG so far, we feel that there are several elements in the current version of the working document that will not be helpful in moving this process forward.

In fact, the current version of the working document will need to undergo substantial modifications before it reaches a stage of broad acceptability.

Mr. Co-Chair,

While we will share our specific and concrete comments and suggestions for each of the Focus Areas in the coming days, we would like to elaborate our overall impressions and concerns with the Working Document at this stage.

Mr. Co-Chair,

To be broadly acceptable, the outcome of this OWG would need to clear three crucial tests; the test of **differentiation**, the test of **universality** and the test of **multilateralism**. Unfortunately, the current document falls short in all three criteria.

We are seriously concerned that the notion of differentiation, both in name and in practice, has been completely removed from the current document.

Not only is the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) not reflected even in the context of climate change, but the very notion of differentiation, which speaks to the asymmetry between the developed and developing countries, has been eroded.

This cannot be an acceptable basis going forward.

Mr. Co-Chair,

In our view, the notion of **universality** is synonymous with the concept of differentiation, and not in opposition to it. The principle of universality demands an agenda which is equally relevant as well as applicable to both developing and developed countries.

Such an agenda would need to go beyond mere policy prescriptions for developing countries and must include concrete commitments for the developed countries as well, particularly in addressing the sustainability question.

Unfortunately, the current document is by and large only focused on actions by developing countries. This balance needs to change.

The third key criterion is that of **multilateralism**. As we have said before, we need to create an agenda that can enable genuine multilateral cooperation, and forge an international compact in order to meaningfully address our collective challenges.

In the current draft, however, the focus is mostly on national actions to the detriment of international factors and multilateral cooperation.

In this regard, we strongly echo the call made by the Group-77 to substantially strengthen the goal on Global Partnership and also to integrate relevant means of implementation with every proposed goal.

Mr. Co-Chair,

It is equally important to preserve a **balance** between the three dimensions of sustainable development, both across goals as well as within them. In the current document, there seems to be an over application of environmental lens especially at target level within the proposed goals, which is inappropriate.

At the same time, the economic pillar seems to have been considerably weakened. We were surprised to see the focus areas of 'Infrastructure' and 'Employment' being deleted and merged with other goals. This was not in response to any call by member states in the last session. These two focus areas need to be reinstated as standalone goals.

In contrast, a proposed standalone goal on climate change has been maintained, even though there was a unanimous call for it to be mainstreamed across relevant goals.

Mr. Co-Chair,

It is only fair to expect the intense discussions we are having in this Group to be faithfully reflected and to be the basis of our work going forward.

Given the very limited time available to us to conclude our work by July, we are of the view that a zero draft should now be made available at the end of this session and for informal sessions to be convened among member states immediately.

Mr. Co-Chair,

We hope and expect that our detailed comments and concrete suggestions for each of the focus areas will be duly reflected in the Working Document going forward.

Mr. Co-Chair,

To briefly reflect on the question that you raised just now, we found the suggestion made by Israel - to leave the global targets undefined as x% or y% and leave the exact numbers to be defined by countries later - very interesting. This idea deserves careful consideration. We have in the past spoken to the other idea that you raised of having the numerical targets at the global aggregate level and to leave the national level targets to be determined by countries themselves. This would in our view require an ex-ante clarification in the document that we will adopt.

Mr. Co-Chair,

Please allow me now specifically address focuses areas 1 and 2.

To start with focus area 1 on 'Poverty Eradication' we feel that the target (a) on extreme poverty will need to be defined. In addition, we feel that the need to pursue sustained and inclusive economic growth as a key enabler for achieving poverty eradication needs to be addressed explicitly under this goal.

We feel the target (d) on disasters, could be usefully moved to focus area 10 and we also feel that to prescribe specific percentages in terms of deaths and losses due to disasters might be over prescriptive.

On (f) we propose deleting the words "including secure rights to own land, property and productive assets" and replace them with "including productive resources".

We also feel that in (c) the words "most marginalized" should be replaced with the term "poor and most vulnerable". This should be done, in fact, across the document.

Mr. Co-Chair,

We would also like to propose some specific means of implementation to be included under this focus area.

First, the fulfillment of the commitments by the developed countries to provide 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) as ODA to developing countries as well as target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNI as ODA to the LDCs by 2020 and increase ODA commitment to 1% of GNI by 2030.

Second, ensure that global trade and investment rules are designed and implemented with the objective of addressing pro-actively the specific constraints faced by developing countries, including the effective operationalization of the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries.

Third, ensure predictable and adequate international financing for developing countries requiring assistance to implement poverty reduction policies and programmes.

Fourth, ensure adequate policy space is given to developing countries by the international organizations and rules to enable developing countries to establish and implement their policies for poverty eradication

Mr. Co-Chair,

On focus area 2 "food security and agriculture" we feel that the title of this goal could be usefully modified to "End hunger and improve nutrition for all".

We feel that some additional targets could be included in this focus area such as increasing agricultural productivity by x%, including through adequate irrigation, seeds and fertilizers. There could be a specific target to address excessive food price volatility, a target on enhancing productive capacity of small farmers in developing countries through proper functioning of markets, storage, rural infrastructure, research, post-harvest practices; and a target on x% market access for agricultural products from developing countries by 2030.

The proposed target (c) should be deleted at this stage.

On target (e) on global food loss and waste, as we have said for many sessions now, food loss and food waste are not the same thing. They speak two different problems and they call for different approaches. They cannot be put in the same target. We need to have a differentiated approach on this. We feel that the target could be split into two; one talking about food loss which is predominantly in developing countries and the result of inadequate capacities and a separate target for curbing food waste particularly at the consumption level in developed countries.

We also feel that the target (f) which mostly pertains to action on national domain at this stage could be deleted.

On (g) we support others who have called for a deletion of the phrase "climate smart agriculture" as this is not an accepted terminology.

Finally, Mr. Co-Chair, I would like, with your indulgence, to propose some specific means of implementation for this focus area.

First, eliminate by 20xx all export subsidies in developed countries in line with WTO Hong Kong Declaration 2005;

Second, substantially and effectively phase out trade distorting subsidies in developed countries by x% by 20xx;

Third, increase the flow, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound agricultural technologies to developing countries by 2020;

Fourth, support developing countries, especially LDCs, in implementing capacity building programmes in support of the national plans for agriculture;

Fifth, provide developing countries adequate policy space, including in conditions for loans and aid, to support their agriculture sector and their farmers through various measures; and

Sixth, avoid rules that create barriers to small farmers' access and use of seeds and other agricultural inputs.

I thank you, Mr. Co-Chair.
