

**Statement for Canada/US/Israel statement on Sustainable Consumption and Production;
Climate Change**

May 8, 2014

As delivered by Ambassador Elizabeth Cousens, US Ambassador to ECOSOC

Thank you, Mr. Co-chair.

I would like to turn first to Focus Area 11 – Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP). First, let me underscore what we have said before, that our team is strongly of the view that sustainable consumption and production is at the heart of this agenda. We must address issues of poverty eradication, inclusive growth, and equality in a manner that can be sustained over time, and the Open Working Group has a responsibility to make a serious and constructive contribution to the larger challenge of decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation and unsustainable resource use. We are also all strong supporters of the 10-year Framework on Sustainable Consumption and Production.

In this area, as elsewhere, we need targets that prioritize outcomes over inputs and that are measurable and actionable. Targets on issues like “raising awareness,” or creating a “culture of sufficiency” are vague, impossible to measure, and are only one instrument or approach that may or may not work toward more specific objectives that – helpfully – we actually *can* quantify – related to reductions in waste; preservation of land, water, and key resources; and significant efficiencies that can be achieved in various sectors.

Our seriousness about SCP is precisely why we support a range of strong, specific targets in areas that could drive major gains in sustainability of consumption and production patterns:

We see scope for a strong target on postharvest and supply-chain food loss and waste.

We support a target on non-biodegradable waste and marine debris, especially plastics.

We also see important scope for addressing hazardous waste and municipal solid waste, as well as for promoting recycling and re-use.

We support a target on air pollution and air quality.

We support targets on water efficiency in agriculture, industry, and urban areas, and recycling or treatment of all municipal and industrial wastewater prior to discharge.

We support strong targets related to the sustainable use of energy which is central to current consumption challenges for reasons we have discussed previously – doubling the rate of improvement in energy efficiency in buildings, industry, agriculture, and transport; increasing diverse sources of renewable energy in the global energy mix; and phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption.

On fossil fuel subsidies, let us underscore: only 8 percent of fossil fuel subsidies support consumption needs of the poor. Clearly, these should be exempted. But that leaves 92 percent,

which if tackled globally would make enormous gains against unsustainable consumption patterns which we have heard recurrently from G77 and other colleagues is among their chief concerns.

We are intrigued by the potential of sustainability information on products and services – but again see this as an input rather than an outcome. We would welcome further discussion of this idea perhaps in the context of larger questions of data, information, and transparency.

Finally, we are not closed to a standalone goal on SCP, but we are not persuaded that that is necessarily the best or only way to be strong about SCP in our agenda. If there is an SCP goal, we think it would be important to include a target on the environmentally sound management of chemicals.

Turning to Focus Area 12 – Climate Change – we can be brief. First, let us restate our strong view that climate change is fundamental to this agenda. We have been very clear in previous sessions on this point. If we – all of us – fail to act on climate change with vigor and commitment, the projected impacts of climate change are likely to disrupt our best efforts to overcome poverty and will erode our development gains.

We have also identified goals and a suite of targets across a range of areas that we believe would drive ambitious action on climate change – both mitigation and adaptation:

An energy goal that addresses efficiency, renewables, and fossil fuel subsidies can support progressive transformation of the energy base of our economies from high to low carbon.

In food security – Focus Area 2 – we support a target on agricultural productivity with a focus on sustainability, smallholders, and access to irrigation. In natural resources – Focus Area 14 – we support a target on deforestation such as “reverse net loss of forest cover worldwide” and on desertification. Under poverty eradication – Focus Area 1 - we support a target on “community resilience and reduction of deaths and the loss of critical infrastructure from disasters by x%,” and we could support further elaborating this in relation to improving the accuracy and lead times of forecasts and warnings – clearly, climate-relevant. We further support promoting water use efficiency to conserve energy; promoting efficiency in buildings, industry, agriculture, and transport; and reduction or reversal of ocean acidification.

Taken together, these targets would drive significant and transformative action on climate change, and a powerful message could be delivered by this combination of targets – arguably more powerful than a weakly formulated standalone goal.

The targets currently in the co-chairs document are, in our view, not especially strong. For example, Target 12B on building resilience is an important concept – there are other resilience and disaster risk reduction targets already in the document, and these could usefully be consolidated into a strong and better-formulated single target that emphasizes the outcome –

reduction of risk and increase in resilience and adaptive capacity to a variety of hazards, not only those that are “climate-induced,” however one might be able to define that.

We are open to the possibility of a standalone goal on climate change, but we are more focused on the quality and strength of climate-related targets. We also share the view expressed by most colleagues here that our framework should not create parallel targets to those that are rightly the focus of intensive effort in the context of the UNFCCC, and we have not heard support in this room for a standalone goal on climate change.

Thank you.