

11h Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals
"Energy" and "Economic Growth, employment and infrastructure"

Statement by Brazil and Nicaragua

5/6/2014

Mr. Co-chair,

Focus areas 7 and 8 deal with issues that are central for a transformative sustainable development agenda in both developed and developing countries.

In new focus area 8, three areas of particular relevance have been clustered: Economic growth, employment and infrastructure. This is a radical departure from the previous version of the document that finds no parallel in any other segment of the text under the consideration of the OWG, with the exception of other two goals, high on the social development priority list, namely the Eradication of Poverty and the Promotion of Equality, which Brazil and Nicaragua would also like to see reverted back to separate stand alone goals.

In fact, if reducing the number of goals has become a goal in itself -- a view we do not share -- we would then recommend starting with the elimination of Focus Area 16 which is marginal to sustainable development and extraneous to the Rio+20 mandate.

A universal agenda that deals with the three dimensions of sustainable development will necessarily have a larger number of goals than the MDGs. We should not sacrifice content for the sake of form.

The clustering of less-controversial focus areas belonging to the social and economic development arenas is not a movement we support. Quite to the contrary, we believe that the most notable legacy of the Rio consensus was putting poverty eradication and social inclusion at the center of sustainable development, and this needs to be clearly and fully reflected in the list of SDGs, content wise and numerically.

At this stage, Mr. Co-Chair, I think the OWG must be ever more careful to proceed on the basis of majority views expressed by Troikas during formal sessions, avoiding succumbing to any other criteria external to our conversations, even views that may seem appealing from some illuminated "scientific" or "academic" point of view we have not been privy to in the course of our discussions.

The fact that the last version of the working document has been perceived to move away from positions espoused by a majority of members, and this is the opinion of the G77 and China, signals we have entered a phase of diminishing returns in the Group's current modality of work.

In this regard, allow me again to make a call for informal intercessional consultations as the next evolutionary step in the OWG method of work that will take us to completing our mandated task by the agreed deadline.

At this juncture, we know the universe of issues on the table, with a relatively disaggregated set of suggested targets. We have heard the positions of Troikas, more than once. Delegations have instructions on the working document before us, and their previous versions.

Therefore, I am sure we could greatly benefit from a round of intercessional open-ended text-based discussion in New York among experts from the Missions. We could work on the current working document, which would undergo yet another revision by Co-Chairs on the basis of majority views expressed during this session.

Such a round of informal intercessional discussion among members would not preclude a second more structured round of intergovernmental discussions within the context of the next formal OWG working session, with greater participation of representatives from capital.

Mr. Co-chair,

Please allow me to proceed with specific comments on area 7.

Brazil and Nicaragua would like to request the deletion of the word "modern" in the subtitle of area 7, which should read: "ensure access to affordable, sustainable and reliable energy for all".

In line with the social inclusion dimension of Rio, developing countries are striving to ensure universal access to sustainable energy. It is therefore neither reasonable nor necessary to impose upon them yet another technological conditionality in the guise of technology that is "modern". Environmental concerns in respect of energy access are already addressed by the term "sustainable".

We noted that targets under focus area 7 mostly reflect the objectives of the Sustainable Energy for All initiative. While acknowledging its importance, we believe numeric targets should be defined at the national level, taking into account national circumstances and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

With a reference in item c) to "global rate of efficiency", we see no added value in specifying some sectors such as buildings, industry, agriculture and transport. The "global rate of efficiency" encompasses all sectors.

In item d), we would request replacing "biomass" with "bioenergy", which is the more adequate and comprehensive term. There is no reason for a narrow focus on biomass, as what we are really aiming for is to increase the share of clean energy technologies as a whole.

Item e) should reflect the priority of providing energy access for the poor and most vulnerable people. In this regard, it should be rephrased as follows: "by 2030 phase-out fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption, while being mindful of the need to support energy access to the poorest."

The production of solar panels and solar energy equipment receive substantial public subsidies in developed countries, possibly inconsistent with WTO Agreements, as they relate to "local content" or "export performance" requirements. This practice tilts the level playing field against developing countries in their capacity to devise their own environmentally sound energy technologies. Therefore, we need a target to ensure "policy space" for developing countries in this area. Such target could be introduced under means of implementation, specific to Focus Area 7.

Still regarding means of implementation, I would like to present the following proposals:

- Increase public and private sector investment in relevant and needed cleaner energy technologies;
- Introduce exceptions, or "carve outs" in WTO rules to provide flexibilities for developing countries in relation to the adoption of policies aimed at the development of environmentally sound energy technologies;
- Strengthen international cooperation, including the provision of financial resources, capacity building and technology transfer to developing countries to support their efforts towards universal energy access;
- Enable greater access by developing countries to affordable access to clean energy technology, and in this regard, operationalize the UN Global Technology Facilitation Mechanism by 2017.

[Focus area 8 - Economic Growth, employment and infrastructure]

Mr. Co-chairs,

The limitation of infrastructure to one single target does not reflect its priority for developing countries as competitiveness and economic growth are frequently constrained by infrastructure bottlenecks. Furthermore, the word "infrastructure" is not even mentioned in the subtitle of focus area 8, which also conveys the impression that the seriousness of this matter has been overlooked.

So as not to unduly multiply focus areas, I would like to propose moving the theme of infrastructure to the focus area on industrialization and expanding its scope. Furthermore, the focus area on Promotion of equality should revert back to a separate goal, which also should also address the inequality at the international level.

Still in relation to infrastructure, I would suggest "unbundling" item g), since it combines two different challenges: on the one hand, it deals with sustainable infrastructure as a whole, in particular for countries in special situations; on the other hand, it presents a target on the access of rural populations to basic infrastructure and services.

We would also suggest strengthening the language on the first element of item g). The first target should read: "Improve by 2030 basic infrastructure for sustainable development in developing countries, in particular countries in special situations".

Mr. Co-chair,

In relation to other items under focus area 8, I believe that full and productive employment and decent work and economic growth should revert back to two different focus areas.

With regards to specific items, Nicaragua and Brazil have the following comments:

Item a) should be moved to the area on promotion of equality, since it deals with reduction of inequality.

Item b), on full and productive employment and decent work, has our support as it reflects the "Decent Employment Agenda", retains the essence of target "B" of MDG-1 and is based on Rio+20 Outcome Document.

In this regard, allow me to request the same expression to be reflected in the title: "full and productive employment and decent work". The formulation "decent job" is limited in scope, not including people - usually most vulnerable ones - that work but not necessarily have a "job".

Item c) is also supported by our delegations. In our view, it complements item e) of focus area 4, which deals with professional education. Both targets should be preserved.

Regarding migrant workers, we would like to request item e), in focus area 16, to be moved to focus area 8. It could be placed right after the item h), since issues related to migration policies should be considered within the context of the Decent Work Agenda.

By placing issues related to migrants and migration policy under focus area 16, the document conveys the misconception that migration could be considered a threat to peaceful societies, alongside organized crime, human trafficking and discriminatory laws.

We welcome the inclusion of item i) and we would like to expand its scope to include other forms of forced work. In this regard, our proposal reads: "Eradicate forced labor and child labor in all its forms by 2030"

As means of implementation under focus area 8, I would like to suggest the following items:

- Increase economic diversification in developing countries including by adding value to raw materials and commodities through domestic processing and manufacturing.
- Promote open, rules-based, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading and financial systems, including complying with the development mandate of the WTO Doha Round.