

Statement by Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri, Acting Permanent Representative, On behalf of the Asia-Pacific troika of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka at the First Meeting of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, at the United Nations General Assembly on March 14, 2013

Mr.Co-Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of our Asia-Pacific troika consisting of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

We associate ourselves with the statement delivered by Fiji on behalf of the G-77. The Group played a key role in engraving the concept of SDGs in the Rio+20 negotiations, and has a great responsibility in completing this task.

At the RIO+20 Summit, we pledged ourselves to strive for a better future for our peoples, a future that would give them hope and succour, ownership and pride. In doing so, we agreed to work on a set of sustainable development goals. We are happy that we have started on that road today, and are hopeful that we would accomplish the task at hand in an inclusive and equitable manner. We assure you of our troika's full support as you take this process forward.

Mr.Co-Chair,

We have taken some time in getting this group up and running, but in the process we have ensured that all voices have been heard, patiently and intently. Inclusivity has its own time-line and we must respect it.

As we get down to frame our sustainable development goals, we must bear in mind that sustainable development and its long held principles belong to one symbiotic whole. At Rio+20, the international community unequivocally reaffirmed its commitment to the RIO principles, in particular the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities in pursuing global action on sustainable development. We must respect this reaffirmation in letter and spirit. These goals, universal in nature, can only be meaningful if differentiation is appropriately embedded in them.

It is unreasonable to craft sustainable development goals without paying due regard to the responsibility of those who rushed towards development without much regard for the needs of the global environment.

Of equal significance is the need to address unsustainable consumption and production patterns and lifestyles of people in developed countries, and answers to these persisting challenges remain seminal to crafting a truly universal sustainable development agenda.

Universality of the SDGs mean that developed countries must also have a meaningful and comprehensive set of action points as part of these goals.

Mr.Co-Chair,

Our sustainability agenda must ensure economic prosperity, social cohesion and environmental protection in an integrated manner and in a manner that we place equal emphasis on each of the three pillars of sustainable development.

In line with such an understanding, we would propose that we work first on a set of stand-alone economic, social and environmental goals as part of the SDG menu, before we delve into their inter-linkages.

As stated in para 247 of the RIO+20 outcome document, we must work to fashion a limited number of goals that are aspirational in nature, simple to comprehend, concise and easy to implement and precise to communicate.

At the centre of our efforts and objectives must be the overriding priority of poverty eradication, recognized as the greatest global challenge at RIO+20. These goals must enhance the option of livelihoods and inclusive growth. Meeting our water, food and energy needs, imparting access to health and education to those still lagging behind, strengthening gender equality, youth empowerment, creating opportunities for the burgeoning youth population, and protecting our habitat and ecology are certain issues that appear to us being central.

Our pressing sustainable development challenges remain closely interlinked and intertwined. Food security, for example, cannot be solved only by addressing the fragilities in agricultural practices, it is much more dependent on macro-economic issues of agricultural subsidies, rules of multilateral trade and capacities of countries to absorb external shocks. We have to be mindful how to address these inter-linkages in a coherent manner.

Mr.Co-Chair,

Means of Implementation remains key to our efforts. Each SDG must be accompanied by dedicated means of implementation. They cannot be targets that countries would have to meet through their own resources.

Mobilization of international resources including ODA, transfer of technology and capacity building support is critical to the success of our work.

We agree that ODA alone may not be sufficient to meet our objectives. It is therefore critical that we put in place a global economic environment, including restructuring of the global financial infrastructure that is conducive to development, one that provides adequate policy space for developing countries to combine the benefits of economic growth, social equity and environmental opportunity.

In this regard, ensuring financial stability, meaningful and effective market access for developing countries, early conclusion of the DOHA Round, agreement on a debt settlement mechanism and greater say for developing countries in global governance structures remain fundamental and critical.

All these issues must be made an integral part of the global partnership supporting the SDGs. The global financial institutions must reflect increased flexibility towards developing countries.

South-South cooperation must also contribute, in keeping with its values and principles, but it cannot be a substitute for North-South Cooperation.

Mr.Co-Chair,

Behind all this is the need to coordinate the work of this Open Working Group and other parallel global efforts on the post-2015 development agenda. Our wish is to collectively fast track all these activities through effective institutional reforms in the UN system. Some of the agreed reforms must be absolutely creative if we are serious on our expectations.

Equity and fairness lies at the heart of crafting a set of sustainable development goals for the benefit of our peoples. The future we want must be a future for all. The principles underpinning the SDGs should receive our highest priority and attention as we start our work ahead.

I thank you.

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