

Intervention by Mr. Amit Narang, Counsellor, during the 10th session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals [March 31-April 04, 2014]

Intervention during discussions on Cluster 2- gender Equality, Education, Employment and Health

Mr. Co-Chair,

My delegation would like to make a specific proposal for a target under the proposed 'Gender' goal in the SDGs. In the 8th session of the OWG we had highlighted how empowering women using enabling technologies can be a game changer if harnessed and applied to its full potential in developing countries. This is borne out of experience in many developing countries including India. We can significantly expand the ambit of applying such enabling technologies in particular ICT technologies for women in education, access to clean drinking water, healthcare, rural handicrafts and communications and decentralize their uses by transferring the access, control, management and ownership of such technologies to rural women themselves. By doing so, we can bring about structural transformation in the lives of millions of women across the world.

We would therefore propose that we include a specific target on "Using enabling technologies, in particular Information and Communication Technologies for the empowerment of women".

I thank you.

Intervention during discussions on Cluster 5 – Sustainable Cities and human settlements, promoting sustainable consumption and production, and climate

Thank you, Mr.Co-Chair for giving me the floor to share some reflections on the discussions this morning.

Mr. Co-Chair,

At the outset, we do not necessarily subscribe to the combination of these issues under one cluster. We feel that the issue of cities and urbanization cannot necessarily only be linked with climate change and sustainable consumption and production. Climate change itself, perhaps, does not need to be addressed as a standalone goal. Sustainable consumption and production on the other hand, perhaps, does need to be addressed as a standalone goal. So the three in one cluster are an odd mix and therefore this cluster is not very justified.

Mr. Co-Chair,

As with some other delegates in the room, we are also not completely wedded to the idea of a separate urban goal. Nevertheless we have been listening very carefully to those delegations who do feel the need for a separate urban goal and we will continue to follow this conversation carefully. At the same time, we feel that our approach to an urban issue under the SDGs needs to follow a comprehensive, at the same time a differentiated approach. Many issues which are central to the urban challenge in developing countries pertain to the issues like providing functional cities and the provision of basic infrastructure and services, slum improvement, job opportunities etc. On the other hand, targets which will pertain more to developed countries would be in the realm of reducing use of private automobiles, energy efficiency, renovation and retrofitting of infrastructure, increased resource efficiency and so on.

On the issue of sustainable consumption and production, Mr. Co-Chair, we agree with the delegation of Canada when they said that the SCP is at the heart of this agenda. As we have said earlier it is the veritable S of the SDGs. In this sense, it will be a grave mistake to only leave it mainstreamed and not have it included as a separate goal. We do therefore support a standalone goal on sustainable consumption and lifestyles with relevant targets in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Among the various targets which could form a part of this goal we have proposed earlier include a reduction in per capita energy consumption in developed countries and a reduction in per capita food waste at consumer level also in the developed countries. As we have emphasized before, consumer level wastage of food alone in the developed countries according to FAO amounts over 220 million tons and this issue calls for a standalone target to give it better visibility.

On climate change, Mr. Co-Chair, we agree with others that this is a central issue but we also agree with other delegates including AOSIS who have called for an appropriate mainstreaming of climate change and not as a standalone goal. We are also not convinced that we need a standalone goal on climate change. We feel that a better approach to climate change would be appropriate mainstreaming under relevant goals. I would emphasize the word 'appropriate' and 'relevant' here. We feel that climate change is better addressed by addressing the drivers of climate change. So, when we address those drivers of climate change within SDGs, we will be addressing climate change without necessarily calling it so. Therefore, when you have an ambitious and forward looking goal on energy, you are actually addressing climate change. When you are addressing public infrastructure; when you are addressing a goal on sustainable consumption, a goal on food security and on health, they are directly relevant to climate change. At the same time Mr. Co-Chair, development is the best form of adaptation. So when we address issues like poverty eradication, when we promote economic growth, when we promote rural productivity, when we create better infrastructure and affordable housing for the poor, we directly assist them in coping with and adapting to the adverse effects of climate change.

I need hardly emphasize, Mr. Co-chair, that as other delegations have said, we need to be very careful not to complicate the ongoing negotiation process under the FCCC. In addition to the Ad-Hoc Working Group on Durban Platform which is currently underway, the 2 degree goal itself along with commitments under the convention is under review. We therefore need to be very cautious and must avoid an approach which might interfere with that process.

Lastly, Mr. Co-Chair, any deliverable on climate change whether as a standalone goal or mainstreamed as part of other SDGs will have to fully comply with Convention principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities.

Thank you Mr. Co-chair.

Intervention during Cluster 7 – Means of Implementation / Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Mr. Co-Chair,

Thank you very much for giving the floor. It is actually quite beneficial to be coming at the end of such a high caliber discussion on means of implementation this morning. Some very concrete suggestions were made to you regarding means of implementation which, we are sure, will help you immensely in populating the placeholders on means of implementation under each of the goals as also under focus area 18.

Mr. Co-Chair,

We particularly commend the proposals made by the African Group in the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Tanzania. We feel that the African Group proposal provides an excellent template to craft the standalone global partnership / means of implementation goal. The statements made by AOSIS, PSIDS and LDCs have also included some very useful suggestions for our consideration. We are of course supportive of the suggestions made by Brazil, China, Egypt and others.

Mr. Co-Chair,

We recall that for a long time now we have maintained that there is an ‘ambition mismatch’ in our consideration of the SDGs where our high level of ambition for the substance is matched usually by a very low level of ambition for providing means of implementation. We feel that an expanded agenda that we are crafting under the SDGs will require an expanded and strengthened global partnership and enhanced means of implementation. The means of implementation which can be crafted based on the template of MDG 8 should include commitments which will have to be measurable, monitorable and have the same level of accountability.

Mr. Co-Chair,

We continue to support a standalone goal on means of implementation as well as mainstreaming means of implementation under each goal. We have listened carefully to those who perhaps are skeptical of this view, but we are not really convinced why this should be so. We expect that the placeholders on means of implementation that you have provided under each of the focus areas will now be populated as we go forward based on the concrete suggestions that you would have heard over the past week. In case in some areas you may not have heard specific ideas, we expect that you will maintain the placeholders and give the member states a little more time to engage in discussions like these and come up with concrete targets in the coming days.

Mr. Co-Chair,

In terms of specific targets, we see value in having specific deliverables on issues such as the urgent implementation of enhanced ODA by the developed countries; enhanced market access for developing countries in particular the LDCs; a development-oriented multilateral trade regime which is consistent with the SDGs; capacity building; debt sustainability;

better regulation of international financial system; reform of the IPR regime to make it consistent with the SDGs; reform of global economic governance to give developing countries real voice and participation; affordable access to environmental-friendly technology for developing countries and in this regard the early operationalisation of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism under the UN.

Mr. Co-Chair,

Two additional points in terms of specific deliverables. We have heard calls for a data revolution and the need for disaggregated data and this was alluded to by the Ambassador of United States as well. We feel that this issue, i.e. data revolution and disaggregated data as an issue of capacity building under means of implementation. Secondly, we have also heard a lot of calls from many delegations regarding the role of the private sector and we expect that those who feel that the private sector will play an important role or a larger role will come forward with concrete commitments or targets, spelling out how to mobilize adequate and predictable financing from the private sector.

Some delegations have talked of a simple division between the North and South. Mr. Co-Chair, the distinction between the North and South is neither simple nor a division. It is a reality. It will be unfair on our part to gloss over this reality and we must craft an approach on SDGs which is based on the principle of differentiation under the Rio principles. This should first and foremost entail no additional burden on the developing countries under means of implementation. The delegation of Brazil earlier spoke of a 'double distortion' in the present context where the developing countries are not only supposed to commit to a much expanded agenda but are also expected to find the means to do this by themselves. In this context, Mr. Co-Chair, South-South Cooperation must be seen purely as complementary to the North-South aid.

Finally, Mr. Co-Chair and to digress slightly from the means of implementation, we are very happy that several developed countries today have acknowledged that the principle of CBDR will apply to the environmental dimension of the SDGs. We welcome this acknowledgement and we look forward to hearing from them concrete proposals on how this principle will be operationalized in the areas that they think it applies to.

I thank you, Mr.Co-Chair.

Intervention during discussions on Cluster 8 – Peaceful and non-violent societies, rule of law and capable institutions

....

Thank you Mr. Co-Chair for giving me the floor,

Mr. Co-Chair,

For anyone observing this debate this evening, two facts would be quite evident; one - that there is no consensus in this Group on how to deal with the issues under this Focus Area and second the fact that peaceful societies and capable institutions have important links to development is not something that anybody disagrees with. The question therefore is how to and indeed whether to address this cluster of issues in this Open Working Group.

We feel Mr. Co-Chair that our work is very clearly framed by the mandate of Rio+20. We support the internationally agreed definition of sustainable development based on the three dimensions of economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. We, therefore, do not support any presumptive fourth pillar.

Mr. Co-Chair,

The relationship between peace and development is self evident. However, we feel that in this group we would do well to focus on the developmental links of peace rather than the other way round. We should focus on how development leads to peace and not how peace can link to development, which may be too ambitious for this Group. There can be no durable peace without economic growth and development and this group can and will make a lasting contribution to the creation of peace, if we are able to create conditions for rapid sustained and inclusive economic growth and put the world on a more sustainable pathway. For this reason, we are not fully convinced with the need to have a separate goal on peace and security.

Mr. Co-Chair,

I must add that we are fully supportive of recognizing the special circumstances and concerns of those States that are emerging from situations of conflict, but we feel that their concerns could be addressed without having a separate goal on these issues.

The other group of issues within this cluster pertains to rule of law, capable institutions and governance. We acknowledge the importance of many of the important issues contained in this group, but we feel that these are better incorporated under other goals and indeed, as means of implementation. Some of the issues such as birth registration and legal identity etc which were mentioned by a few delegations could be seen as effective means for developing countries to attain poverty eradication and sustainable development.

We also feel, Mr. Co-Chair, that rule of law and capable institutions need to be equally, if not more importantly, seen in their international context. We find it is ironical that many members are so passionate about promoting rule of law and democratic governance within countries even as we persist with such abiding levels of democratic deficit in institutions of global governance including here at the UN.

To conclude, Mr. Co-Chair, we cannot support standalone goals and peace, security, rule of law and governance even as we remain perfectly ready to constructively engage in discussions on how to address many of these important issues as part of other goals.

Thank you.
