

16 March 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss,
President of the 65th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Interactive Dialogue with the Secretary-General's High-level
Panel on Global Sustainability**

Madam Deputy Secretary-General,
Distinguished President Halonen,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the Interactive Dialogue with the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability. I especially welcome the two Co-Chairs of the Panel, Her Excellency, President Tarja Halonen of Finland, and His Excellency, President Jacob Zuma of South Africa, who has joined us today by video.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the Panel on Global Sustainability last August to "reflect on and formulate a new vision for sustainable growth and prosperity, along with mechanisms for achieving it". This is an important and timely initiative, for which I would like to thank the Secretary-General.

The Panel is tasked with creating a blueprint for sustainable future, exploring approaches to effectively address hunger, poverty, inequality, as well as the deterioration of the natural environment and climate change and thus building a low-carbon, green and resilient economy that can ensure a dignified life for all on this planet. The work of the Panel is tremendously important. Consisting of renowned world figures and competently chaired by President Halonen and President Zuma, I am confident that the Panel will succeed in its challenging endeavor.

We all aspire to reach better living conditions. Yet, this will not be possible by following the current growth model. We urgently need a new development paradigm. Our current consumption and production patterns impact too heavily on natural resources. Biodiversity is being lost rapidly. Climate change is a significant concern in particular for developing countries which are disproportionately affected.

These environmental challenges are compounded by continuous population growth, urbanization and industrialization. We are reaching the limits of our planet's "carrying capacity". Vital resources, such as freshwater, are becoming increasingly scarce, leading some academics to predict a resource war years down the road. Food and energy prices continue to soar, making poverty eradication and economic growth prospects uncertain for many countries. The recent surge in oil prices is a powerful reminder of the need to shift to less carbon intensive economic structures, to save energy, to improve energy efficiency and promote the development of clean energy sources. The catastrophe that now hits

Japan and which affects its nuclear plants is another tragic reminder of the fragility of energy provision and of the urgent need to become less energy dependent. I will organize a thematic debate on the concept of green economy at the General Assembly in June.

All these challenges make sustainable development difficult to achieve in its three pillars – its environmental, economic and social pillars. When the natural resource base is being destroyed, ensuring social equity and economic development becomes ever more difficult.

Will we be able to adopt a new development paradigm? Will humanity be able to behave differently and stop being self-destructive? Firm political commitment and resolute action are needed in order to effectively tackle the interlinked challenges of climate change and poverty eradication and to ensure adequate financing, capacity-building, technology transfer and multi-stakeholder partnership. This is one of the key messages that has emerged in the context of the General Assembly, during the high-level meetings on biodiversity, small island developing States and the MDGs last September. During the launch of the International Year of Forests and the Thematic Debate on Disaster Risk Reduction last month, participants invariably noted the importance of political will and awareness in motivating concrete actions for environmental protection, and for social equity and economic development. Our resolve to act must be reinvigorated by this clear message.

It is most welcome that the Global Sustainability Panel demonstrates the political commitment at the highest level to change the current unsustainable and environmentally costly patterns of growth. I am confident that the work of the Panel will provide a valuable step toward creating a new development paradigm that will reduce the impact of human activities, strengthen economies and help achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. We eagerly await the report of the Panel.

Today, we will hear the views of the Panel on its work. This will be an opportunity for Member States and other stakeholders to interact and share comments and suggestions with its distinguished members. Together, we can pave the way for a constructive report of the Global Sustainability Panel, one that reflects the diverse views of the UN membership.

Without further ado, I would like to now give the floor to Her Excellency, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro.

I thank you for your statement.