



# AUSTRALIA



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**General Debate, Second Committee of the  
67<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly  
9 October 2012**

**Statement by Mr Laurie Ferguson MP  
Member of the Parliament of Australia**

(Check against delivery)

Thank you Mr Chairman, and on behalf of Australia, I congratulate you on your election as Chair of the Second Committee. As a member of the Australian Parliament, I am delighted to have the opportunity to address the Second Committee this year.

As Australia's Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard, said in the General Assembly last month, the United Nations articulates humanity's highest ideals, but more, it makes practical progress towards *realising* those ideals.

The role of the Second Committee, as Australia sees it, is to translate our shared ideals into a forward-looking international agenda on issues such as sustainable development, global financial stability, and poverty alleviation.

This year, the Second Committee will be instrumental in taking forward the sustainable development agenda we agreed to in Rio+20.

Mr Chairman,

Australia was particularly pleased with Rio+20 outcomes on sustainable management and conservation of the **oceans**. As a nation with one of the largest coastlines in the world, the health of the oceans is crucial for us.

But we also live in a region where 22 of our 24 closest neighbours are developing countries, most of them Small Island Developing States. So we understand that the health of the oceans is not only essential to the livelihoods and food security of millions, but for many countries, their development depends on it.

For this reason, we are committed to working with Small Island Developing States in the Second Committee towards delivering upon the Barbados Programme of Action, the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation and the Future We Want.

Rio+20 also recognized the need to improve **food security**, and the need for increased investment in agricultural research and development. We must do more in this area for the nearly 870 million people who are living in hunger.

Australia is working through the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and directly with partner Governments in Africa to share our experiences and improve agricultural productivity, including in dryland farming.

Just today, Australia's Foreign Minister Bob Carr was pleased to announce that the Australian International Food Security Centre has established its first office in Africa — in Nairobi, Kenya. The Centre will focus on strengthening food security and providing access to the latest innovations for farmers in several countries in the south-eastern Africa region.

We see these initiatives as complementary to efforts in the WTO to remove obstacles to the participation of developing country producers in international agricultural trade. As Chair of the Cairns Group of agricultural exporting countries, Australia will continue to champion this agenda in the Second Committee.

Mr Chairman,

The Second Committee plays an important role in efforts to achieve the **Millennium Development Goals** by 2015. Through the Committee's deliberations, we assess our progress and we decide where further work is needed.

While the international community has made some significant progress in the last decade, Australia is very conscious that much work remains to be done. About one billion people are still living in extreme poverty, and approximately 61 million children of primary school age are out of school. Many of these people are the hardest to reach - they have been excluded because of ethnicity, gender, disability or conflict.

These are urgent problems. They demand our attention. And they demand our action.

This is why, since the start of the Millennium, Australia's aid program has tripled in size, and it is set to increase by almost fifty per cent in the next four years.

It is why Australia's Prime Minister is personally so committed to the achievement of the MDGs. Prime Minister Gillard now co-chairs, at the invitation of the Secretary-General, the **MDG Advocacy Group** with the President of Rwanda. The Group seeks to galvanise international action to achieve the MDGs. Prime Minister Gillard is also pleased to be a champion of the Secretary General's '**Education First**' initiative.

Looking beyond 2015, the global development agenda must remain focused on poverty eradication. But we must also find a way to better integrate our economic, social and environmental imperatives. Australia looks forward to contributing actively to the development of the **Sustainable Development Goals** and integrating them effectively into the post-2015 development agenda.

We also look forward to engaging constructively with member states on the **Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review** to drive meaningful reforms to the UN System, and enable it to deliver real results for the poor.

Mr Chairman

These are some of the most important and pressing issues of our time. They are at the core of the Second Committee's work. And as we undertake the task of turning our words into action, Australia is firmly committed to doing our part.

Thank you Mr Chairman, and I wish you and the Committee a productive session.