



Statement to the 67th Session of the General Assembly Second Committee

Sustainable Development

"In support of proposals made for transitioning towards a paperless committee, complete copies of this statement will be made available on the websites of the Delegation of the European Union to the UN (<http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/>) and the 2nd Committee, respectively."

Mr Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Acceding Country Croatia^{*}, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia^{*}, Montenegro^{*}, Iceland⁺ and Serbia, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this declaration.

The EU and its Member States are firmly committed to sustainable development and we have taken a very active role during the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development. We are determined to fully contribute to the implementation of the outcome of the Rio +20 conference, which we all endorsed in the General Assembly on July 27.

The follow-up to Rio+20 offers the world a number of very promising opportunities. But, it will require engagement and commitment by all partners. Rio+20 is just one step, not the end of a process. The success of Rio+20 will depend on the decisions we make, the actions we take, and on our readiness to work closely together towards the future we want.

The EU and its Member States will be fully engaged in the various discussions on sustainable development goals, the High Level Political Forum, upgrading UNEP, and the financing mobilization strategy for sustainable development, as well as for the 2014 UN conference on SIDS. We will also be working towards the promotion of an inclusive green economy in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development, and towards strengthening relevant policies and seeking cooperation with international partners. The EU and its Member States are developing follow up initiatives in a range of areas covered by the framework for action as set out in the Rio outcome document.

Mr Chairman,

It is important that we ensure consistency with the post 2015 development agenda. The follow up to Rio+20 and the work on the post-2015 development agenda will set the stage for a major international effort on global governance, poverty eradication, and sustainable development. These agendas should be taken forward in a coherent and coordinated manner.

There still remain obvious unmet needs, such as in the eradication poverty, the improvement of health and education, the creation of employment and decent work, as well as improving gender equality and empowering women. The new framework should also reflect the aspirations of the poorest people and guide the way towards new partnerships in a rapidly changing international context. But we should also consider some of the important issues that have not been fully reflected among the MDG targets, although they were included in the Millennium Declaration.

Mr Chairman,

Without deviating efforts from the achievement of the MDGs, which will remain of the outmost priority up until 2015, we would like to stress the importance of advancing SDGs that should be coherent with, and integrated in, the UN development agenda post 2015. They need to address key global challenges and promote sustainable development for all countries, while fully encompassing the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced and synergistic way, linked to possible concrete targets and indicators. We need to simultaneously respond to the need to have global goals for all countries, and the need for a specific development focus. Hence, SDGs need to be universal and applicable to all countries, but allowing for differentiated approaches among and within countries.

^{*} Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

⁺ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

We will need to collectively strive for improving the current framework, while keeping it simple, with goals limited in number; action-oriented, easy to communicate, and operationalize on the ground.

We also consider very important that the upcoming process leading to the elaboration of the SDGs be an inclusive one, with the full contribution and engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including a robust science-policy interface.

Mr Chairman,

Let me add a few words on the social dimension of sustainable development that is too often understated. As far as employment and social protection are concerned, the EU and its Member States firmly supports the ILO as the key universal standard-setting body in the area of employment and social protection, and its essential role for promoting decent work. We also strongly welcome the outcomes of the G20 on quality employment, which emphasized that jobs with labour rights, social protection, and decent income contribute to more stable growth, enhance social inclusion and reduce poverty.

Mr Chairman,

Climate change is also an important topic in our discussions on sustainable development. All economies are together in the fight against climate change. Our common challenge is to put our economies on the path to low-emission development, and to use climate action as a catalyser for sustainable development.

We welcome the results of the 2011 Durban conference, which marked an important step forward in international efforts to combat climate change, and stress that the package agreed there is to be implemented in its entirety. This year in Doha we must continue to make progress on what was agreed in Cancun and Durban and to pave the way for adopting a single global and comprehensive legally-binding agreement applicable to all parties by 2015. We will also need to pursue our efforts on closing "the ambition gap" to stay on track to limiting the rise in the global temperature to below 2 degrees, notably during the transition phase to the new legally binding agreement.

At the same time we have to address the global loss of biodiversity and ecosystem functions. This dramatic loss puts at risk the livelihood of billions of people and undermines sustainable development.

We therefore welcome the successful outcomes of the recent CBD COP 11 in Hyderabad, India, on issues such as, inter alia, the application of relevant biodiversity safeguards with regard to REDD+; better conservation and more sustainable use of marine biodiversity; and the enhancement of cooperation and synergy within the three Rio Conventions and the biodiversity-related conventions. On the crucial issue of resource mobilisation, we stand behind the commitments we made at COP10 to substantially increase financial, human and technical resources globally from all possible sources, including innovative financial mechanisms for biodiversity; this should be balanced with the effective implementation of the CBD and its Strategic Plan, against an established baseline and an effective reporting framework. In this regard, the European Union and its Member States, together, have committed to doubling total biodiversity-related international financial resource flows from a variety of sources to developing countries by 2015, and at least maintaining this level until 2020.

Desertification and Land degradation are also high on our agenda, and we are looking forward to implementing all together the commitment made in Rio+20 to achieve a land degradation neutral world.

Mr Chairman,

We will also discuss at this session a number of other very important issues under the sustainable development agenda items. Let me just highlight a few:

The EU and its Member States are committed to the promotion and mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation across policies and financial instruments. Our support for partner countries resilience strategies is, and will be, a central objective of our approach to humanitarian aid and development cooperation. This includes the development of a comprehensive approach to integrating research results, such as geospatial information, risk- and hazard-mapping, and to address the structural issues that underlie vulnerability.

Our common commitment to the sustainable development of SIDS is well known. We are looking forward to negotiating the modalities of the UN conference on SIDS that we have agreed last June in Rio. We will look for a focussed, efficient and effective preparatory process that will ensure a successful conference in 2014, one that would make a difference for SIDS and effectively address their particular vulnerabilities, while strengthening the coordination and efficiency of the UN efforts in this regard.

The same approach will be pursued in the negotiations of the Habitat III modalities: we need to agree on a well-designed preparatory process, which can allow us to effectively address the challenges of the urban environment and promote economically prosperous, safe and socially inclusive as well as environmentally sustainable cities, stressing the importance of sustainable transport, energy, water and waste management.

Mr. Chairman,

Before closing I would like to briefly touch upon the issue of the methods of work of the committee. Indeed, the sustainable development agenda item of the GA has seen in recent years a significant increase in the number of new initiatives and resolutions, which make it difficult for all of us, but especially for the small missions, to follow and contribute to so many parallel negotiations on such important issues. We hope that we can, all together, work towards the biennialisation, triennialisation, clustering and, where appropriate, elimination of items and sub-items. The issue of streamlining the agenda and improving the working methods of the committee would make an important contribution towards policy coherence, and allow for a more active participation of all delegations in the negotiations.

As noted on previous occasions and in order to move towards a paperless committee, we will not distribute paper copies of this statement, which will be available on both the website of the EU delegation to the UN and of the 2nd committee itself.