

**STATEMENT BY THEMBELA NGCULU, COUNSELLOR FOR SUSTANABLE DEVELOPMENT
DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, 08 NOVEMBER 2012.**

Mr Chairman,

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Representatives,

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset my delegation wishes to state that South Africa aspires to be a sustainable, economically prosperous and self-reliant nation state that safeguards its democracy by meeting the fundamental human needs of its people, by managing its ecological resources responsibly for current and future generations, and by advancing efficient and effective integrated planning and governance through national, regional and global collaboration.

Mr Chairman,

Unbridled resource use could easily lead to economic growth stagnation, persistent social inequity and environmental degradation and less wealth and assets, which all pose a risk to a sustainable future. The Global Economic Outlook – 5 for example states that “ Water scarcity is a significant and increasing threat to the environment, human health, development, energy security and the global food supply.

The Water Resources Group (2009) adds “while water supply over this period (over the last 50 years) has remained relatively constant), demand now exceeds sustainable supply in many places, with serious long –term implications by 2030.”

Fundamental to understanding Sustainable Development is recognising the interdependence of our economic, social and environmental systems. In addition Sustainable Development should be about addressing in a holistic manner, poverty, unemployment and inequality. In this context it is our responsibility to ensure that future generations are able to meet their needs without putting any further strain on natural resources. In this regard resource use efficiency should be regarded as core in interacting with nature.

The world leaders made it clear in the year 2000 in the Millennium Declaration that:

“Prudence must be shown in the management of all living species and natural resources, in accordance with the precepts of sustainable development. Only in this way can the immeasurable riches provided to us by nature be preserved and passed on to our descendants.”

Rio plus 20 outcomes.

Rio+20 afforded world leaders yet another opportunity to meet and renew political commitments in respect of sustainable development and the outcomes of previous summits held in this regard; identify the gaps in the implementation of the international commitments; and address new and emerging challenges. Through the *"The Future We Want"* we all agreed on a framework for enhanced global action, addressing new and emerging challenges while also addressing the gaps in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda.

The agreement that was reached at Rio+20 that we need to start looking at the post 2015 development agenda and more specifically the development of Sustainable Development Goals, also re-emphasised the need for a renewed commitment towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. South Africa wishes to see that these goals continue and be strengthened through the link with the proposed Sustainable Development Goals. We have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the national regional and global level and by applying poverty eradication as the overarching goal in future development agendas, this can be done.

While we acknowledge that all the MDGs carry the same weight, MDG 1 and 7 in particular, best illustrates the link between people and the environment. Prosperity can only become a reality if we succeed to halve by 2015, the proportion of people that continue to suffer from hunger and who are still being denied access to safe drinking-water and sanitation. Although we are left with little more than two years before we have the MDG review process, much can be achieved in this time. If we work together to reach the MDG targets we can make a difference to the lives of those who need it most.

Green economy.

Referring to the Green Economy we believe that Sustainable Development should remain the overarching objective of this model and that this model could be one of the tools towards achieving Sustainable Development.

In our pursuit to develop in a sustainable manner and eradicate poverty we need to use all the possible tools at our disposal to make progress. While we endeavour to do so we need to be cognizant that Green economy policies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, should be underpinned by national priorities, social; economic and environmental development imperatives and the fulfillment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs;

Developing countries need to use natural resources in order to achieve their development needs and therefore sustainable consumption and production will be a critical component of resource efficiency within the context of the green economy. In

this regard developed countries need to take the lead to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns and to transfer the appropriate technology to developing countries in order to allow them to develop in a more sustainable manner.

The equity principle is crucial for South Africa. The framework for the implementation of the Green economy should therefore ensure a fair allocation of efforts, cost and benefit in the context of the need to address disproportionate vulnerabilities; responsibilities; capabilities; disparities and inequality. A differentiated approach to the operationalisation of the green economy is therefore crucial.

Mr Chairman,

IFSD

It was at the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in South Africa in 2002, that we all agreed that the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development (IFSD) should take into consideration the progress made since United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and lead to the achievement of, inter alia, the following objectives: strengthening commitments to sustainable development; the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner; the strengthening of the implementation of Agenda 21, including through the mobilization of financial and technological resources as well as capacity building programmes particularly for developing countries; strengthened coherence, coordination and monitoring; promotion of the rule of law and strengthening of governmental institutions; and increased effectiveness and efficiency by reducing the overlap and duplication of activities of international organizations within and outside the United Nations system, based on their mandates and comparative advantage.

This UNCED further called for measures to strengthen institutional frameworks to be responsive to the needs of all countries, taking into account specific needs of developing countries including the means of implementation.

Last June the Rio plus 20 Conference reaffirmed this position. Therefore we need to agree now on clear timeframes on how to develop and strengthen the institutional arrangements at the international level to implement our commitments to sustainable development.

We therefore add our voice to the calls for the envisaged institutional arrangements to ensure the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner.

Biodiversity.

The continued loss of biodiversity and the impact it has on the ability of especially developing countries to develop in a sustainable manner remains a matter of grave concern to South Africa. As the new Chair of the group of mega biodiverse countries, we are committed to continue all efforts to reverse this trend which is largely caused by habitat loss, desertification and degradation, climate change, overexploitation, alien and invasive species and pollution.

The loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services mostly affect poor people, particularly in developing countries, and therefore it is heartening to note the commitments agreed to at Rio+20 and more recently in COP11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity that took place in Hyderabad, India, to ensure enhanced coordination, alignment and collaboration among the United Nations agencies which will also accelerate the achievement of the goals and targets contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI).

In the same vein my delegation would like to call on all States party to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity to ratify the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing as soon as possible to allow for this instrument to become operational no later than 2014.

South Africa is party to all three the so-called Rio Conventions, and as such is committed to ensuring the successful implementation of these global agreements in a coherent and integrated manner to harness the co-benefits for the attainment of the sustainable development agenda. This perspective is not only informed by our position as a mega-biodiverse country, but it is also based on the country's own development imperatives. South Africa supports the notion that healthy ecosystems are a critical component of the country's economy and the well-being of its people.

Lastly, Sustainable Development should remain high on the list of the United Nations priorities. It should become a way of living which needs to be embraced by all. In the same breath my delegation calls on the General Assembly to consider broadening the item of Sustainable Development under the Second Committee to include the other two dimensions, economic and social development in a truly integrated approach of the three pillars of Sustainable Development.

I thank you.