

**Statement to the Second Committee  
by Mr. Jose Antonio Ocampo  
Under Secretary -General for Economic and Social Affairs  
on agenda item 85 Sustainable Development  
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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

A few weeks ago, a decision of importance to progress towards sustainable development was announced: the decision of the Russian cabinet to forward the Kyoto Protocol to the Russian Parliament for ratification. This historic decision will lead to making this major instrument of the Convention on Climate Change fully operational, and undoubtedly represents a major advance of international cooperation.

Soon after, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2004 to Ms. Wangari Maathai for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace. The Committee highlighted her achievement in promoting ecologically viable social, economic and cultural development, noting “She has taken a holistic approach to sustainable development... She thinks globally and acts locally.” This prize also shines a spotlight onto the role of women in advancing sustainable development.

It gives me great pleasure to address the Second Committee on item 85 Sustainable Development against this backdrop. These two decisions suggest that two years after the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, the momentum for implementation remains strong. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/220) submitted under this item, the sharper focus on implementation adopted at the Johannesburg Summit is inspiring Governments and civil society stakeholders to take renewed action to pursue sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman.

In this context, I wish to draw the attention of the Committee to two salient emerging trends that characterize implementation of sustainable development commitments. We are seeing a gradual and incremental process of implementation featuring targeted efforts at achieving specific sustainable development goals.

Efforts such as the protection of a watershed; a partnership to extend piped water connections to a rural township; or the construction of latrines in a district’s elementary schools, are occurring across the globe. Their immediate impact may be local, but they are dramatically changing the quality of life for millions of poor people, for the better. Take South Africa as an example: as a result of the firm commitment of the Government, the last decade has seen 1.5 million houses constructed, with approximately 6 million citizens having received housing since 1994.

Another salient trend in implementation is the integration of sustainable development principles into national and local development strategies. It is worth noting that this is occurring in both developed and developing countries, with approximately 150 Governments in various stages of implementing national sustainable development strategies. This institutional progress will have far reaching consequences for the future well-being of these societies.

The SG report before the Committee also highlights the contributions of non-governmental stakeholders. I wish to draw your attention to voluntary partnerships for sustainable development. As of June 2004, 291 partnerships had been registered with the CSD secretariat. Most of them employ a bottom-up approach, using pilot projects to test their strategies, before replicating their models at national, sub-regional and regional levels. More and more partnerships will be reporting to CSD on progress in implementation in the upcoming reporting cycles. Preliminary estimates suggest that some \$872 million have been committed through these partnerships. With more reporting expected in the coming months, the total volume of commitments is likely to rise.

Co-ordinated implementation by the United Nations has also achieved significant progress this past year. The United Nations System Chief Executives Board (CEB) has taken steps to establish or strengthen inter-agency collaborative arrangements. CEB has confirmed UN-Water as the inter-agency mechanism for implementation of water-related MDGs and Johannesburg targets. CEB has also set up UN-Energy as a new system-wide collaborative mechanism for addressing energy-related issues.

The Regional Commissions have played an active role in bringing together regional stakeholders in a series of regional meetings and ad hoc sessions to address implementation of the commitments in water, sanitation and human settlements in their regions. By providing their perspectives to CSD-12 reviews, the Regional Commissions are making unique contributions to global review and implementation.

On World Day for Water this past March, the Secretary-General announced the establishment of a high-level Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation. Chaired by the former Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Hashimoto, and composed of eminent persons from Government, civil society and the private sector, the Board aims to galvanize global action by all stakeholders to meet the MDGs and Johannesburg targets. The Board will help raise the political visibility of water and sanitation issues, and help mobilize human and financial resources to press forwards the water and sanitation agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

These events are encouraging signs. But overall progress in addressing obstacles and constraints remains inadequate, not least in the area of means of implementation. A common obstacle highlighted at CSD-12 and other fora was the lack of financial resources, technology transfer and capacity in developing countries, often compounded by persistent poverty. The external environment, especially the heavy debt burden, the deficit in ODA and the slow pace of trade liberalization in areas of interest of developing

countries continue to adversely affect the capacity of these countries to further their sustainable development.

In relation to the particular issues raised in CSD-12, the review showed that a considerable number of countries are not on track with regard to the targets of halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015 and improving the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers. In many countries, slums are growing at an alarming pace. The strategic role of sanitation was stressed, with many participants pointing out that sanitation had not received as much attention as water and that neither of them had had much prominence in existing poverty reduction strategy papers. The review indicated that persistence of poverty continues to hinder efforts to achieve progress in providing basic services and the lack of financial resources, technology and capacity remains the major constraints for developing countries. Low levels of community participation and inadequate empowerment of women in resource management and governance have also hampered efforts to mobilize local initiatives.

The Commission also recognized that integrated water resource management provides a holistic framework for water sector reforms, for balancing water use among competing purposes, and for bridging the social and economic demands for water with the sustainability of the ecosystem. However, it was noted with concern the significant delays and the likelihood that many countries would not meet the 2005 deadline for preparing integrated water resource management and water efficiency plans.

There was also general agreement that current levels of financing were far from adequate and that development partners should, in the spirit of mutual accountability, meet the commitments made at Monterrey. Several participants also stressed the need for exploring multiple avenues of financial resource mobilization, including partial loan guarantees, special facilities, revolving funds, micro credit schemes and debt swaps for sustainable development.

Agreeing on policy options and practical measures to overcome such constraints and obstacles in the areas of water, sanitation and human settlements will be at the heart of the CSD-13 Policy Session in the Spring of 2005. These discussions need to be tackled with a sense of urgency if we are to expedite implementation and make real progress on the water, sanitation and human settlements goals and targets agreed to in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Also before the Committee is the Secretary-General's report on the International Year of Freshwater (A/59/167), which takes stock of the activities undertaken during the Year at all levels. The report focuses on partnerships and alliances for the Year's activities and examines the potential for further action beyond 2003 within the framework of the International Decade of Action, "Water for Life".

Mr. Chairman,

What I have stressed in relation to the issues before the CSD is also true of other areas of sustainable development. As the Secretary-General Report on the United Nations Millennium Declaration has stated in relation to MDG 7, even regions that have made significant progress towards achieving many other goals, such as several parts of Asia, tend to have a poorer record on environmental issues. Protected areas have increased in all regions, but there has been a loss of forest cover in most parts of the world, notably those with tropical forests. Energy use and per capita carbon dioxide emissions have increased in developing countries but fell in the economies in transition with the decline in industrial production in the 1990s. An area in which advance have been is, on the contrary, in the elimination of ozone-depleting emissions.

Progress in the implementation of the global conventions has been mixed. The recent Russian decision to ratify the Kyoto Protocol is, of course, the most positive news in relation to UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The UN Convention to Combat Desertification was adopted in 1994 and entered into force in 1996, but a lack of financial resources has limited its implementation. More encouragingly, there has been progress towards the full implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, with the adoption of measurable indicators and specific goals to reduce the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, and with the entry into force of Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in September 2003. On the question of deforestation and forest degradation, nine international processes involving 150 countries that encompass 85 per cent of the world's forests have been made progress in developing criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. In all these cases, positive moves must be strengthened if we are going to reverse the strongly adverse trends of climate change, biodiversity loss and reduction in forest coverage, some of the major environmental issues faced by the world today.

The critical issue of sustainable development in some of the most vulnerable members of the development community, the Small Island Developing States, should be should also be the subject of special reflection. The Mauritius International Meeting to be held in January 2005 should therefore be seized as an opportunity for building on the Johannesburg momentum for implementation and for entering into specific and time-bound commitments to support the sustainable development of SIDS.

Small Island Developing States, faced with particular economic, social and ecological vulnerabilities, have taken initiatives in promoting sustainable development. The report of the Secretary-General on the Caribbean Sea (A/59/173) demonstrates the wide range of activities that are being implemented to promote an integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea area in the context of sustainable development. This approach embraces environmental, social and economic, as well as legal and institutional elements that must be combined in a strategy for the effective management and protection of the marine resources of the Caribbean.

UN-DESA, the Office of High Representatives, the Regional Commissions and other UN entities stand ready to join SIDS and the international community in their quest for sustainable development.