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при
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Permanent Mission
of the Russian Federation
to the United Nations

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STATEMENT

by H.E. Mr. Alexander V. YAKOVENKO,
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation,
at the High-level Segment of the 2008 Substantive Session of ECOSOC on
“Implementation of the internationally agreed goals and commitments in the field of
Sustainable Development”
(New York, 1 July 2008)

Mr. President,

The issue of sustainable development has been consistently asserting itself among the global priorities of the international community. A key role in this process justifiably belongs to the UN as a universal mechanism for the elaboration of agreed decisions and a most important source of environmental law.

Over the past few years, certain progress has been achieved within the UN system in implementing the sustainable development goals. However, it is obvious that there is a need to further bolster political will and collective result-oriented efforts by all members of the international community to ensure a timely and full implementation of the Johannesburg Plan.

Furthermore, recent months have clearly shown that on the way to the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, there can be serious difficulties and obstacles, resulting, among other things, from insufficient regard for or considerable underestimation of complex interrelations of the economic, social and environmental components of sustainable development.

The unfolding food crisis and the ongoing financial instability not only threaten to slow down mankind's progress towards the intended goals but can also result in major setbacks.

To neutralize those trends, as the Secretary-General rightly observes in his report, there is a need to take measures to protect natural resources, to ensure their more efficient use, to implement a transition toward a less resource-intensive way of life as well as to increase agricultural productivity, especially in developing countries.

Mr. President,

In our view, in addressing this common task, a particular contribution is to be made by the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, the main high-level organ of the UN system designed to ensure the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, which in 2009 is to elaborate and adopt important political

recommendations on a range of ever-important issues of agriculture, rural areas development, land resources, drought and desertification.

We hope that by making joint efforts the international community will succeed in coming up with relevant responses to the challenges it faces in the area of sustainable development, in particular, in food security.

For our part, we are ready to assist it in every possible way. Russia has been taking active steps to comprehensively develop its agricultural production and to increase food exports. As early as last year, when only the first signs of the global food crisis were visible, Russia exported a record of 17 billion tons of grain, thus for the first time in many years becoming a major world supplier of agricultural products.

In the context of the food crisis, it is impossible to neglect an acute and sensitive problem of producing biofuels from agricultural resources. In our view, this problem can only be resolved on the basis of observing the principles of sustainable development.

This implies a transition to 'second generation' technologies which in the production of biofuels uses non-food products, first of all, cellulose, animal farm and solid domestic waste.

We approach the issue of biofuels use from a broader perspective – in the context of renewable energy resources – in the light of an urgent need to ensure a qualitative change in the field of energy efficiency and efficient use of resources. We are convinced that only this approach will ensure the attainment of the development goals, including those regarding global climate change.

Russia's commitment to this policy has been confirmed by President Medvedev's recent decision to reduce by 2020 Russia's GDP energy intensity by at least 40% as compared to 2007.

This must be advanced through the implementation of a package of measures designed to enhance energy and environmental efficiency of the electric energy sector, construction, housing and public utilities and transportation sectors. These include economic mechanisms for stimulating a transition to energy efficient and environmentally friendly technologies, an increased liability for violation of environmental regulations as well as direct budget financing of projects making use of renewable energy resources and environmentally friendly technologies.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I would like to note that in general we positively view the Secretary-General's report on the issues before the High-level Segment. We support the recommendations it makes and hope that together with conclusions made during round table discussions in the framework of the High-level Segment, they will advance cooperation in this area to a qualitatively new phase.

Thank you.