

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session for 2008
15th meeting, July 1, 2008, General debate for the high-level segment
Statement by Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad,
Permanent Representative of the United States of America

Thank you, Mr. President. In recent years, the international community has grappled with some of the most pressing sustainable development issues of our time: food security, climate change, reducing poverty and hunger, improving health and education, and combating major diseases.

There is no doubt that UN development activities are important, but they must be strengthened to increase effectiveness on the ground and to improve the lives of the world's neediest people.

Too often, international efforts do not go beyond the requirements of humanitarian assistance. Too often they fall short in terms of real economic development. Too often, the approach is project-based programs whose results do not add up to coherent systems for education, health, or other services or which do not even address the mobilization of promising economic sectors such as agriculture, light industry, or others.

This is a tragic loss because the ability to redirect the energies of a society to productive purposes is vital.

The pursuit of sustainable development poses significant technical, policy and institutional challenges the international community must be committed to addressing -- from increasing the availability and efficiency of irrigation and fertilizers for farmers, to finding new ways to create local firms to meet real demands for goods; gaining access to export markets; improving distribution and supply chain networks; managing land in a sustainable manner; investing in scientific research; and improving access to financing for agriculture, health, and infrastructure investments.

Today I would like to focus on three development challenges.

First, rising international food prices over the past several years highlight both the challenges, and opportunities, confronting the sustainable development agenda.

For some, rising food costs can mean the difference between a daily meal and not eating at all. The U.S. is leading international efforts to address food insecurity among the most vulnerable countries and populations. Since January 2008, the U.S. Government has announced nearly \$1 billion in additional support for measures to address the immediate affects of high food prices on the most vulnerable, as well as to address the underlying cause of the crisis.

These short-term efforts provide a bridge toward achieving medium- and long-term food security: for example, \$150 million will be earmarked for funding critical agricultural

research and expanding agricultural development programs in targeted countries in an effort to double the production of key food staples and enhance markets.

These funds bring projected U.S. spending to fight global hunger to a total of \$5 billion for 2008 and 2009. President Bush has also called on Congress to support a proposal to purchase some food assistance directly from farmers in the developing world, in order to help build up local agriculture, reduce shipping costs, and get food to those in need as quickly as possible.

An important component of improving the functioning of global agricultural markets will be reaching a successful outcome to the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations. Successful conclusion of the Doha Round will reduce the volatility of agricultural markets by reducing tariffs and other barriers to agricultural trade, eliminating agricultural export subsidies, and reducing the distortions to agricultural production from domestic subsidies that prevent a prompt response to price signals.

The second development challenge is achieving sustainable economic growth.

We believe that through broad-based economic growth, countries will be able to reduce and eventually eliminate extreme poverty. Growth provides the only sustainable means for countries to generate the resources they need to increase literacy, to improve health, and to address other development challenges, that will allow them to emerge from dependence on foreign aid.

Progress in these areas is essential to building the human capacity of the poor and helping them gain access to more productive, better-paying jobs. When children and adults are healthy, they can go to school, learn, and lead more productive lives. The U.S. is the largest investor in improving health and fighting major diseases. Since 2003, our Congress has committed approximately \$20 billion to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and other diseases. The U.S. has quadrupled its funding for the fight against these diseases since 2000.

Education also has enormous potential to help break the cycle of poverty, by giving people the basic skills they need to work more productively and to gain access to jobs. We also need to create enabling environments that empower local decision makers and promote the access of farmers, women, youth, land managers, small business owners, and other entrepreneurs to the formal economy. And we need to engage them in sustainable development partnerships that address the issues before us. Countries need to meet ongoing commitments to education, gender equity, and good governance that support local institutions and communities.

The problem is partly that we are organized to deliver services or programs to the people — but not to strengthen the indigenous capability to do so. We talk the talk of “capacity building,” but we walk the walk of creating “parallel structures” to the indigenous state. We do not focus enough attention on how to ensure sustainability in local hands. In short, we need to develop the capacity for people to help themselves through efficient

delivery of information and tools to people in ways that allow them to adapt science and market knowledge to the specific circumstances in which they live.

Economic growth also depends on enabling people to earn livelihoods by meeting the needs of the market. We need to stimulate local production, by ensuring the availability of small-scale credit, needed production inputs, and access to national markets. Here, for example, think of providing farm credit, fertilizers, seeds, and so forth to rural areas, as well as creating market roads and mechanisms to enable farmers to sell their products. Our capability in this area is uneven and weak; we typically do not systematically provide these things across the full extent of a country.

The key task of the UN member states, and ECOSOC, is to identify successful examples of how nations develop in sustainable ways; to share these experiences so others can adapt successful approaches to their own situations; and finally to scale up and broadly replicate the most promising opportunities.

The third development challenge is how to build and strengthen partnerships to address climate change. A global solution to confronting climate change will require that we all collaborate on scientific and technological research, partner with industry on innovative energy efficiency and clean energy projects, and cooperate to finance mitigation and adaptation measures.

In order to be both environmentally effective and economically sustainable, a future approach must include meaningful participation from all major economies. Even if all developed countries cut emissions to zero, we would not be able to meet the challenge of climate change unless developing countries joined in cutting emissions.

The Bali Roadmap also underscored the key principle of common but differentiated approaches, which we endorse. In other words, we all have a common responsibility, but the actual content of what we must do will differ, contingent on our respective capacities and capabilities.

The Bali Action Plan also recognized that economic and social development and poverty eradication are global priorities. We must develop our economies and societies while protecting the environment – this is the core meaning of sustainable development. The United States is partnering with other countries to promote development of advanced energy technologies that will help protect the global environment while enabling economic growth to occur.

Through the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, for instance we are expanding investment and trade in cleaner energy technologies in countries representing about half of global population, economic output, greenhouse gas emissions, and energy consumption.

The United States commends the UN for its vision of building partnerships across the world to tackle the challenge posed by a changing climate. We are committed to do our part to contribute to a global effort.

In conclusion, Mr. President, the international community must work together to achieve a better balance between humanitarian and development assistance. The UN development agenda, with ECOSOC at its core, remains important and vibrant and the U.S. supports the important role that ECOSOC can play in addressing today's development challenges.

Thank you, Mr. President.