

20 October 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the Briefing to the Member States on the Report of
the High-level Panel on Global Sustainability**

Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland,
His Excellency, Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa,
His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I welcome this opportunity to discuss the ongoing work of the Global Sustainability Panel, particularly given that the 1 November deadline for submissions to the Rio+20 process is almost upon us.

I welcome the co-chairs of the Panel, President Halonen of Finland, who is with us today, and President Zuma of South Africa, who is joining us by video link. I would also like to acknowledge the two panel members joining us today - His Excellency Mr. Kevin Rudd, Foreign Minister of Australia, who is joining us by video link, and Her Excellency Mrs. Luisa Diogo, former Prime Minister of Mozambique, who is with us today.

Dramatic changes are occurring across the globe. Food and energy price volatility threaten millions of people with still deeper poverty. Extreme weather and other impacts of climate change continue to jeopardize development gains.

Taken in combination, these factors affect our well-being and feed anxiety about the future – our own, and that of our children.

We need to connect the dots between issues, and make policies that are coherent, effective and beneficial for all across a wide range of issues.

That is why the High-level Panel on Global Sustainability is so relevant. It is examining the drivers of change that are reshaping our world - issues like environmental and resource constraints, market volatility, and demographic trends. There are also powerful forces for positive change: expanded democratization, people's empowerment, and gender equality.

Indeed, sustainable development is all the more important today in our globalized society.

That is why I welcome the Panel's work. We need fresh thinking on these complex issues – food, energy, water, oceans, land use, governance, and equity. These are issues of common concern to all countries.

As we prepare for the historic 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - Rio+20 - in June, I am confident that the Panel's report will provide important inputs. I urge you to review the Panel's report and consider its recommendations when it is released in January next year.

It is our collective responsibility to ensure that the outcome of Rio+20 is innovative and at the same time practical in its approach to tackling issues of sustainable development and poverty eradication. To realize its potential, Rio+20 must bring together all sectors of government. We need to build bridges between ministries, and between business, government, and civil society.

On this note, I welcome today's briefing.

Given the interactive nature of this dialogue, I would encourage Member States to make brief interventions so we can use the limited time available to us in the most effective, collaborative manner possible.

Thank you.