

31 January 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Conference “Towards New Global Governance for the
Environment”**

Mr. Jean-Paul Delevoye, President of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE),
Mrs. Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet, Minister of Ecology, Sustainable Development, Transports and
Housing,
Mr. Edgar Morin, President of the International Institute of Civilization political research,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bonjour.

I am pleased to join you at this Conference “Towards new global governance for the environment”.

In hosting this Conference, the Government of France demonstrates, yet again, its firm commitment to the principles of sustainable development; its determined efforts to strengthen the institutional governance of the environment and sustainable development; and its contribution to preserving and protecting the environment.

Realities on the ground show that sustainable development depends on an effective framework of institutions and decision-making processes at local, national, regional and global levels, working together.

Yet international environmental governance is, at present, in need of more consolidation.

We see many institutions and multilateral instruments with various mandates. It is worth considering innovative mechanisms to ensure those instruments are well-coordinated and efficient.

Calls from Member States, civil society, and even institutions themselves reiterate the same point:

Environmental institutional reform is imperative.

We have before us an opportunity to shift the sands.

To combat global environmental degradation and to rid the world of poverty.

And that opportunity is the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, “Rio plus 20”, in Brazil this June.

Much has been done to prepare for this conference.

I myself have had the pleasure of speaking with many world leaders across the globe about their vision for Rio plus 20.

On 17 and 18 December 2011, I convened a retreat on “Paving the way for a successful Rio plus 20”. This retreat aimed to encourage broader agreement on the Conference’s outcome. The conclusions of this retreat are available on my website.

From our preparations to date, one single message emerges:

The Rio+20 outcome will need to give birth to a strong institutional architecture.

An architecture that promotes a better integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental protection - and addresses new and emerging issues.

Some clear recommendations have already emerged in the zero draft, “The Future we Want”.

These include recommendations on the respective roles of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as well as on upgrading the Commission on Sustainable Development to a Sustainable Development Council.

We also see recommendations on the need to strengthen the United Nations Environment Programme as a specialized agency.

These encouraging recommendations are worth Member States’ consideration. In this regard I commend the constructive role played by France.

It is my intention to support Member States in achieving ambitious reform of the UN’s environmental governance structure.

The upcoming inter-cessional and inter-governmental consultations will bring further clarity and focus on these important issues. Member States may consider agreeing on a validity study to overcome this challenge.

As we prepare for Rio plus 20, we find in civil society actors a great wealth of knowledge, experience and potential partnership.

Civil society and non-State actors such as NGOs, businesses, trade unions, and the private sector and local authorities, are increasingly becoming active players in sustainable development governance.

For Rio plus 20, they are proposing a wide range of recommendations on improving decision-making structures; strengthening coherence and transparency; and increasing citizen engagement.

No matter what the outcome of the June conference, it is evident that the vision and voice of civil society will be crucial.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset of my Presidency, I outlined “sustainable development and global prosperity” as one of my four key areas of priority this session.

I remain committed to adding momentum to all efforts that pave the way for a successful outcome of Rio plus 20. I am encouraged by the leadership shown by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in this regard.

I myself intend to organize in the coming months a General Assembly thematic debate on the preparation of Rio plus 20.

There is no doubt that the success of our efforts will require longer-term vision, as well as the genuine willingness of Members States to preserve our planet for future generations to enjoy in dignity.

Thank you.