

22 May 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Closing of the United Nations General Assembly's Informal
Thematic Debate on "The Road to RIO+20 and Beyond"**

Your Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, United Nations Secretary-General,
Your Excellency Luiz Alberyio Figueiredo Machado, Under Secretary General for the Environment,
Energy and Science and Technology, Ministry of External Relations,
Your Excellency Mr. Kim Sook, Co-Chair of the Bureau for the United Nations Conference on
Sustainable Development,
Excellencies,
Eminent Professors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to this General Assembly thematic debate on "The Road to Rio +20 and Beyond".

Today's debate follows many hours and months of international negotiations in the lead up to the historic United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

We are close – close to a once in-a-generation opportunity to define the future of the 7 - soon to be 9 - billion people living on our planet.

Over the past months, as we all prepared for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio, Member States have recognized the importance of their shared responsibility.

They have displayed a strong willingness to work together towards a successful outcome.

I commend each of you for your great spirit of cooperation.

Thanks to your collective efforts, an international consensus is emerging.

Yet more still needs to be done.

As world leaders said last week at the High-Level Thematic Debate on the State of the World Economy, which I convened in New York, creative solutions are needed to get people back to work.

Growth must resume.

More jobs must be created, particularly for young people.

Only a dynamic economy can cope with the challenges of transitioning to a more sustainable model of development.

Implementation of the existing sustainable development framework is also incomplete.

Many gaps remain, in areas including human health, disaster reduction, land degradation, energy, sustainable consumption and production, as well as migration and the oceans.

There are differing opinions on how best to achieve our goals.

But there is one thing we all agree on:

We agree that now is the time to fulfill our dream – and our obligations – of ensuring a better future for all.

Ladies and gentlemen,

With June just around the corner, this meeting is taking place at a critical time, as we finalise the preparations for Rio+20.

There are still some crucial decisions to be made.

Today's debate is intended to shed further light on two important areas that are emerging in our preparatory discussions for Rio+20:

One, the Sustainable Development Goals;

And two, the institutional framework for sustainable development.

On the issue of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), many countries and stakeholders are looking to Rio for a concrete outcome, including priority areas.

Others believe that it is important to give a vision and mandate for the process.

They prefer to incorporate lessons-learned from the review of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the post-2015 development process.

If we want to have positive impact on the development agenda post-2015, the Rio outcome should be framed around the three dimensions of sustainable development, the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibility.

Rio+20 can make a significant contribution to the UN development Agenda - post-2015, without distracting us from our efforts to achieve the MDGs.

The Rio +20 Conference offers a timely opportunity to tackle comprehensively all the interlinked crises and considerations.

Poverty reduction and progress in sustainable development should remain at the heart of a new post-2015 framework.

Turning now to the second important discussion, the institutional framework for sustainable development and governance.

The Rio+20 outcome needs to produce a strong institutional architecture.

This architecture must promote a better integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development - economic, social and environment protection.

It must also address new and emerging issues, review the sustainability of progress achieved, and monitor the implementation of the commitment.

Rio +20 offers the opportunity to renew political commitment to the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development, and translate the IFSD into action.

Sustainable development governance at the local, national and regional levels also need to be reviewed and supported.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have many friends and allies supporting our efforts.

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

And they are making a difference on the ground.

That is why they should be part of the solution at Rio+20 and beyond.

Women are also key to the solution.

Their role will be crucial for our success.

For Rio+20 and beyond, we need to take into account the roles of women, as the ones who sustain the livelihoods and welfare of their families and communities.

So their direct ownership and engagement will help us to transition to a more equitable and sustainable world, where poverty is properly addressed.

I would also highlight that, moving forward, we must focus on finding a balance between ensuring basic development needs and protecting the environment.

Traditional knowledge, and scientific and technologic innovation, can help us to find concrete answers to our sustainable development questions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Next week, delegations from all over the world will gather here again in New York for the last round of informal negotiations, before going to Rio+20.

We must look beyond Rio+20, and consider how the outcomes of Rio+20 and its follow-up can best be implemented.

We must explore how the outcomes of Rio+20 can best be fed into the post-2015 development framework.

And we must examine how Rio+20 can best become a living reality for populations worldwide.

I encourage Member States to end the negotiations in a timely manner, in order that Heads of State and Government will come to Rio prepared and ready to sign up to a forward-looking, action-oriented document.

In concluding the negotiations, we must concentrate our efforts on "must haves" as opposed to "nice to have".

We need to talk to each other as much as possible, and to listen to the concerns of our friends and neighbors.

And we need to ensure that the words on the pages of the Rio+20 Outcome document have meaning.

What we agree on must change lives and protect our planet.

Our planet and its peoples are counting on us.

Thank you.