

20 June 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
(RIO+20)**

Your Excellency Ms. Dilma Rousseff, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil and President of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development,
Your Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Mr. Sha Zukang, Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development,
Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

Muito boa tarde.

As President of the General Assembly, I am deeply honoured to address the opening ceremony of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

At the outset, please allow me, Madam President, to convey to you the gratitude of the United Nations Member States, for hosting the third Earth Summit.

Brazil has spared no effort in providing the support needed to ensure the success of this historic event.

The great efforts of Brazil demonstrate, once again, that Brazil is a country deeply dedicated to the cause of the United Nations, and is a bridge between North and South.

Moreover, it demonstrates that Brazil is dedicated to making an original contribution to the global community, by showcasing how a developing country can at the same time successfully pursue material prosperity, social fairness and environmental wellbeing.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,
This Summit is the opportunity of a generation.

It is our chance to transform ideas and aspirations into bold actions and everyday realities.

It is the moment to take steps to shape the future for generations to come. "The future we want".

To best do this, we first need to take a look back into the past.

We need to understand why we embarked on a development model that is, ultimately, unsustainable.

Many of the root causes are still there.

Although much progress has been made, large parts of the developing world face poverty, disease and abject living conditions.

We cannot put a cap on today's silent emergencies.

But we must strive for solutions that do not jeopardize the future of generations to come.

We must strive for a future where equity, equality and prosperity are the norm, not the exception.

Such a future is possible.

We have testimony that certain policies allow countries to grow and improve living conditions, while protecting the environment.

Major advances in science and technology have opened up new possibilities for countries to grow and develop, while preserving the environment.

We have a lot to learn from each other on what has worked.

Over the past months, as we all prepared for this Conference, Member States have recognized the importance of their shared responsibility.

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

International consensus has emerged.

Negotiators have already reached agreement in important areas of sustainable development.

These agreements can – and must - inform our future actions.

These future actions will, naturally, be driven by national policies and national measures.

Development cooperation must help poor countries put in place policies and institutions that can spur sustainable development.

This requires giving more and better aid. It requires the effective means to support implementation of the Rio+20 objectives and outcome.

It also requires sharing the know-how and technologies that will help developing countries to leap-frog into more sustainable development paths.

We must not let the world financial and economic crisis dampen the commitment to development cooperation.

International development cooperation must continue to play a key role in promoting solutions for our global challenges.

Development cooperation must become wider and deeper.

It must go far beyond development assistance.

Most of all, the international community needs to reach basic consensus on key long-term policies.

That will allow for coordinated and powerful solutions to be pursued.

The United Nations General Assembly is very much seized of the task of helping forge global consensus.

Under my Presidency, we have been intensely discussing the issues of sustainable development and global prosperity.

Our efforts have been largely geared towards supporting this Conference.

Our deliberations have led us to agree, for example, that stable economies, decent jobs and opportunities for all are needed to achieve a more sustainable paradigm of development.

We need to get the economy and the development process back on track. Sustainable development is becoming truly a collective endeavour. And that is increasingly encompasses many other actors, besides our Governments.

Twenty years ago, the first Rio conference marked the entry of civil society to the United Nations.

It spurred an alliance with NGOs, businesses and industries, farmers, women and other major groups.

Such partnerships are now at the core of efforts to support sustainable development in all countries.

It is particularly heartening that young people, yearning for freedom and justice, have become so involved in this Rio conference.

This is the only way. We can only do it together.

Sustainable development also requires re-thinking international institutions.

Our global institutions were not conceived to span across economic, social and environmental areas, or to steer integrated policies. Nor are they always inclusive.

Here in Rio, Member States will decide how to re-shape some of our organizations and intergovernmental bodies to better support sustainable development.

The draft outcome document we have in front of us charts a path for sustainable development for the next 20 years.

It will launch a process for defining sustainable development goals.

It will set the stage as we reflect on the UN development agenda after 2015, the target date for the Millennium Development Goals.

The General Assembly, as the world's most universal, legitimate body, will continue to play a central role.

Some recommendations from this Conference will come to the General Assembly this fall. I am sure that we will all make the best decisions in their implementation.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,
It is a privilege to be with you in Rio, 20 years after the first Rio conference.

In 1992, Rio was the birth-place of, not only Agenda 21, but of the three Rio Conventions: on climate change, biodiversity and desertification.

I would urge Member States to realise their important commitments made in the Agenda and these conventions.

In closing, I cannot help but observe that this beautiful city of Rio de Janeiro is the very symbol of efforts made, and of the progress achieved, by Brazilian society in recent years.

There could hardly be a more suitable setting for our deliberations.

Among the locals, few have been more committed to his people and their environment as the late Maestro Tom Jobim.

Madam President, please allow me then to end by invoking his inspiration.

In one of his master-pieces, Maestro Jobim sings that the waters of March mark the end of the summer, but they are a promise of life to our hearts.

Like the waters of March, Rio+20 is not an end, but a new beginning, a promise of a better life for us, for our children and for future generations.

I thank you for your attention. Muito obrigado.