



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON THE OCCASION OF THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA - OPENING STATEMENT AND DECLARATION (New York, 20 July 2015)

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The Group has taken note of the Outcome document of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. We will comment on this outcome during our discussions later this week when we address the Means of Implementation for a post-2015 development agenda.

Co-facilitators,

A month ago, member states had an opportunity to reflect on the zero-draft of the outcome document. Members of the Group welcomed that draft as a credible starting point on which we could base our intergovernmental negotiations. During the sixth session of our intergovernmental negotiating process, we made extensive comments on all aspects of the draft.

Turning now to the "final draft of the outcome document", which you circulated on 8 July 2015, I wish to inform you that the Group also welcomes this draft as a further step in bringing us closer to a final agreement, which we can place before our Heads of State in September for adoption. We thank you for your efforts in bringing us closer to an agreement.

We have noted that the draft has taken on board many of the concerns and suggestions made by all member states at the last session, and we hope that in the next two weeks, we will be able to further refine the text.

Co-facilitators,

Cognisant of all of the work that has been done, it will nevertheless be important to acknowledge the context in terms of which our work is, and has been, taking place. This Agenda is not being agreed to in a vacuum. It is a continuation of the work that has been so successfully undertaken under the framework of the MDGs and it addresses unfinished business. The negotiations of this Agenda are also taking place against the backdrop of the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, the recently concluded Financing for Development (FfD) Conference and the still-ongoing UNFCCC climate change negotiations. While the Agenda will stand on its own, it will draw on the support of the FfD and UNFCCC outcomes, as well as the outcomes of other multilateral meetings (both now and in the future) to achieve its objectives

Co-facilitators,

The Group of 77 and China recognizes that we have limited time to finalise the outcome document before the Summit. It is therefore our intention to make practical proposals during this session to further improve the text.

Against this backdrop, allow me to use this opportunity to provide the Group's general comments on the declaration, as well as some specific proposals that relate to the text of the document. It

should be noted that the Group has several more comments and proposals, but in the interests of time, we will only comment on a few of these and forward the remainder of our comments to you in writing.

- The Agenda that we are considering is based on the three dimensions of sustainable development - social development; economic development and environmental protection. In this context, the amended proposed preamble in the final draft of the post-2015 development agenda is an improvement as it seeks to incorporate all three of the dimensions of sustainable development. However, the preamble requires further improvement. In our view, the preamble, which is a communication tool, must be fully reflective of the Declaration itself and not inconsistent with it. One of the issues that we are not to clear on is the relationship between the preamble and SDGs, and we would seek further clarification in this regard.

- The Group is of the view that it would be useful to reflect the inter-linkages between the three dimensions of sustainable development under each of the Ps in order to avoid placing the issues in silos. The Group also calls for the inclusion of language in the Preamble that contextualizes the Agenda and which reflects the fact that the Agenda is intended to build on the achievements of the MDGs and at the same time seeks to address unfinished business. This can easily be achieved by introducing language into the first sentence of the second paragraph of the Preamble, in order that the sentence would now read: "The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets that we are announcing demonstrate the scale and ambition of the Agenda, which seeks to build upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and which also seeks to address unfinished business." For the same reasons, this same cross reference to the MDGs and the unfinished business should also be included into the text of a revised paragraph 3 of the "Introduction".

- On the paragraph on "People", it would be important to stress the need to ensure equal access to natural resources for all people as an indispensable tool for social and economic development.

- Regarding the paragraph on "Planet", the Group believes that it would be important to highlight that the sound management of natural resources underpin economic and human development.

- While noting the language on "Prosperity" in the Preamble, we would propose to substitute the phrase "sustainable lifestyles" with the phrase "the promotion of sustainable patterns of consumption and production", which is in line with the SDGs and Rio+20. The sentence together with the relevant substitute language would consequently now read: We want to ensure sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth; promote decent work and employment for all; foster shared prosperity and the promotion of sustainable patterns of consumption and production worldwide; promote sustainable industrialization, agriculture and infrastructure; and ensure access to affordable modern energy services.

- In view of the ambitious and far-reaching nature of the Agenda, and of our goal to leave nobody behind, the Group believes that it will be important to draft paragraph 1 in such a way to be inclusive of all Members and Observers of the United Nations.

- The Group is pleased to see reference in paragraph 3 of the document to poverty eradication as the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. We reiterate that poverty eradication is the overarching priority and a central imperative of the post-2015 development agenda. We once again emphasize the need to address poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon, and therefore in accordance with Goal 1, we believe that the declaration should be consistent in stating that poverty should be eradicated "in all its forms and dimensions" in order to truly leave no one behind.

- We note the references to the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities; national policy space; condemnation of foreign occupation and the right to development. However, the Group is of the view that in accordance with several UN Resolutions, the outcome document should explicitly indicate that every State has, and shall freely exercise, full permanent sovereignty over all its wealth natural resources and economic activity.

- The Declaration should also emphasize the importance of regional cooperation and inter-connectivity.

- Regarding paragraph 27 on the issue of climate change, the Group would like to reiterate that the language in the declaration should not prejudge the Paris outcome. As Goal 13 makes clear, "the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change".

Therefore, it is important to avoid language in the Declaration implying the legal nature and scope of commitments, which is a matter that should be agreed to in the UNFCCC negotiations. As developing countries, we insist on the need for a form of differentiation that will allow for universal participation and on balanced treatment for the other pillars of the Convention (these include support for developing countries; adaptation, etc.).

- We welcome the references to culture made in paragraph 31. We note that the zero-draft also contained an acknowledgement of culture as an enabler for sustainable development, which is an important element that has been dropped from the current text. We consequently propose that in the current paragraph 31, the second sentences should be amended to read: "We acknowledge the natural and cultural diversity of the world and recognize that all cultures and civilizations can contribute, and are enablers, to sustainable development."

- We propose to delete the mention of "shared responsibility" in paragraph 31 which dilutes the differences between the developing and the developed countries and contradicts the essence of the principle of CBDR.

- While paragraph 34 of the declaration recognizes the importance of Official Development Assistance (ODA), it would be necessary to also recognize the commitments that have previously been made by developed countries in this regard. We therefore propose that the paragraph should read: "Official Development Assistance remains the main means in supporting the sustainable development needs of countries and regions, in particular African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing states and in many Middle-Income countries. Developed countries commit to implement fully their official development assistance commitments".

- The revised reference to "migrants" in paragraph 37 is welcome, especially the recognition of the "relevance for the development of countries of origin, transit and destination, and that coherent and comprehensive responses are required". The language could furthermore be strengthened by including the phrase "regardless of their migration status" after the word "migrants" into the last sentence of the paragraph. The sentence would thus read "We will cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants regardless of their migration status, refugees and displaced persons."

- The Group remains concerned at the omission of language in the declaration which addresses the issue of 'unilateral coercive measures' and the impact that these have on the full achievement of economic and social development. Agreed consensus language drawn from paragraph 26 of the

"Future We Want" should be utilized to address this issue. The language from Rio+20 reads as follows: "States are strongly urged to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries."

- Finally, the Group knows that we always strive for perfection in language, but there are times when we have to reluctantly return to UN language to more correctly reflect our intentions and actions. In this regard, the Group would propose some small technical corrections in paragraph 1 to use "agreed" instead of "decided"; "adopted" instead of "made" in paragraph 2 and the use of "post-conflict countries" in paragraph 30 instead of "countries emerging from conflict".

Co-facilitators,

Before we conclude, allow me to touch on an issue that was discussed at length at the last session of this intergovernmental negotiation. That is the issue on the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR), which the Group of 77 and China insists on being reflected in the outcome document.

The Group does not see any merit on debating the relevance of the principle of CBDR to the post-2015 development agenda. For the Group, an unequivocal reaffirmation of this principle as an overarching principle applicable to the whole agenda is a non-negotiable.

CBDR is an internationally accepted principle reiterated in numerous internationally accepted outcomes agreed upon by all of us at the highest political levels, most recently at the Rio+20 Conference, which laid the mandate for our current collective endeavor and was reaffirmed by our leaders as a principle applicable to the post-2015 development agenda in the outcome document of the Special Events on MDGs. It is also a principle that was agreed in the report of the OWG-SDGs, which is the basis for (and has been incorporated into) our current work. It was also reaffirmed by Ministers in the meeting of the High Level Political Forum last year.

The argument that there is a contradiction between universality and CBDR is a disingenuous argument. In fact CBDR is an acceptance that all Member States have responsibilities for global sustainable development, no matter whether you are one of those States with extensive means or whether you are a State with the least. CBDR reinforces universality and does not detract from that principle. However, universality does not mean uniformity in obligations.

Co-facilitators,

Those that challenge the validity of this concept must recognise that the inequalities that exist in the world today, including in global economic governance institutions, have a historical foundation where some benefitted to the detriment of others. Poverty is not a choice made by the people who live in those circumstances. It is a consequence of a variety of factors, including the facts of history, over which they had no choice or control. It is therefore essential that as we finally work towards addressing the developmental inequalities that exist, that we no longer avoid a recognition that it is not only necessary but essential that we will have to contribute in accordance with the differentiated responsibilities and capabilities between developed and developing countries that are unfortunately a fact and a reality of the world that confronts us today.

Co-facilitators,

These brief comments constitute the Group of 77 and China's preliminary comments on the

declaration. The Group will be making separate interventions on each of the other issues on our agenda this week. For ease of reference, we also intend to forward our specific written comments to you for consideration.

I thank you.

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