



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MINISTER CLAUDIO ROSSELL, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PLURINATIONAL STATE OF BOLIVIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE EIGHTH SESSION OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: OCEANS AND SEAS, FORESTS, BIODIVERSITY (New York, 3 February 2014)

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

At the outset, I wish to thank you for the excellent work that you have been doing in the previous seven sessions of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, as well as reiterate our trust in your ability and wisdom for conducting us, in a seamless manner, to the next phase of this work.

Co-Chairs,

Regarding the issues that we have in front of us in this first day of the eighth session, the Group of 77 and China wants to stress that we recognize that oceans, seas and coastal areas form an integrated and essential component of the Earth's ecosystem and are critical to sustaining it, and that international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources. We also stress the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas and of their resources for sustainable development, including through their contributions to poverty eradication, sustained economic growth, food security and creation of sustainable livelihoods and decent work, while at the same time protecting biodiversity and the marine environment and addressing the impacts of climate change. Therefore we count on the commitment of all Member States to protect, and restore, the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems, to maintain their biodiversity, enabling their conservation and sustainable use for present and future generations.

Regarding sustainable use, one of the major elements, the Group strongly believes that access, and the exclusive exploitation by a few, to genetic resources of sea-bed and ocean floor, and the subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of the national jurisdiction, as well as its resources, which are the common heritage of mankind have serious global economic and social implications. We would like to stress once again that this manner of exploitation is inconsistent with the principle that the Area and its resources are to be explored and exploited for the benefit of mankind as a whole.

The health of oceans and marine biodiversity are negatively affected by marine pollution, including marine debris, from a number of marine and land-based sources. In Rio de Janeiro we committed to take action to reduce the incidence and impacts of such pollution on marine ecosystems, including through the effective implementation of relevant conventions adopted in the framework of the International Maritime Organization, and the follow-up of relevant initiatives such as the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, as well as the adoption of coordinated strategies to this end. We also have committed to take action to, by 2025 achieve significant reductions in marine debris to prevent harm to the coastal and marine environment.

It is a matter of serious concern for the Group that sea-level rise and coastal erosion are serious

threats for many coastal regions and islands, particularly in developing countries, and in this regard in Rio we called upon the international community to enhance its efforts to address these challenges.

We call for support to initiatives that address ocean acidification and the impacts of climate change on marine and coastal ecosystems and resources. In this regard, we reiterate the need to work collectively to prevent further ocean acidification, as well as to enhance the resilience of marine ecosystems and of the communities whose livelihoods depend on them. The Group calls for implementation of paragraph 166 of the Rio+20 outcome document entitled 'The future we want' and relevant paragraphs of the Oceans and Law of the Sea Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly.

Given the importance of area-based conservation measures, including marine protected areas, consistent with international law and based on best available scientific information, as a tool for conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components, we recall decision X/2 of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Nagoya, Japan, that, by 2020, 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are to be conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.

Co-Chairs,

For the Group of 77 and China it is crucial to raise global awareness of the importance of forests in order to mobilize support for sustainable forest management (SFM) and its contribution to socio-economic development and environmental sustainability. We recall that the outcome of Rio+20 also underscores the contribution of SFM to sustainable development across all its pillars, including respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and rural communities that live and survive on the forest, and invited the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to continue its support to the Forum and encourage stakeholders to remain actively engaged in the work of the Forum.

The Group understands that the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) process should contribute towards enhancing inter-sectorial coordination to integrate forests into the UN system's work on sustainable development. Also, The Group of 77 and China reiterates its call for the establishment of a new Global Forest Fund in line with the principles of sustainable development. We consider this necessary in order to concentrate on the financing needs of developing countries to sustainably manage their forests, as well as to comply with their commitments under the UN Non-Legally Binding Instrument on all Types of Forests (NLBI). The establishment of the Global Forest Fund in the framework of the United Nations to address financing gaps in SFM takes on greater urgency in the follow-up to the Rio+20 Summit. We recognize and reiterate the significance of the NLBI, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007 in Resolution 62/98, which is the guide for all regions and countries when addressing conservation, protection and sustainable management of forests.

We believe that capacity development through technical assistance and the transfer of technology remain a serious challenge for many developing countries, and efforts should be made to address those challenges through international cooperation. The Group urges all developed countries and international agencies to ensure that private commercial interests must be in line with the development agenda of developing countries.

Co-Chairs,

The Group of 77 and China reaffirms the intrinsic value of biological diversity, as well as the ecological, genetic, social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, recreational and aesthetic values of biological diversity and its critical role in maintaining ecosystems that provide essential services, which are critical foundations for sustainable development and human well being.

Given that the severity of the global loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems undermine global development, affecting food security and nutrition, the provision of and access to water and the health of the rural poor and of people worldwide, including present and future generations, we want to highlight the importance of the conservation of biodiversity, enhancing habitat connectivity and building ecosystem resilience. We also recall that indigenous peoples and local communities are often the most directly dependent on biodiversity and ecosystems and thus are often the most immediately affected by their loss and degradation. In this regard, we reiterate our commitment to the achievement of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and call for urgent actions that effectively reduce the rate of, halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity. Therefore, we reaffirm the importance of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the active involvement of all stakeholders in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, as well as access to and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources, with the vision of living in harmony with nature.

The Group recognizes the inter-relationship between climate change, loss of biodiversity and desertification and the need to intensify efforts to combat desertification and promote sustainable land management, and stress the need for enhanced cooperation and coordination among the Secretariats of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, UNFCCC and the Convention on Biological Diversity, while respecting their individual mandates. We reiterate our call on all Parties to fully support the implementation of these Conventions in all their aspects, including the promotion of the exchange of knowledge on best practices and lessons learned from global and regional cooperation.

The Group of 77 and China supports mainstreaming the consideration of the socioeconomic impacts and benefits of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and its components, as well as ecosystems that provide essential services, into relevant programmes and policies at all levels, in accordance with national legislation, circumstances and priorities. Investments, through appropriate incentives and policies, which support the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and restoration of degraded ecosystems, consistent and in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity and other relevant international obligations should be encouraged.

The Group strongly urges the urgent implementation of the commitment made by Parties to the CBD at the 11th Conference of Parties in Hyderabad, India for doubling total biodiversity-related international financial resource flows to developing countries, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States, as well as countries with economies in transition, by 2015 and at least maintaining this level until 2020.

I thank you, Co-chairs.