

**Statement by His Excellency Dr. Palitha T. B. Kohona,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations
Third Meeting of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals
(on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Troika of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka)**

22nd May 2013

Mr. Co-Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of our troika consisting of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by Fiji on behalf of the G-77 & China. We are also appreciative of the contribution made by the Panelists who introduced the theme.

As we make our inputs today, our aim must be to achieve practical outcomes rather than engage in a theoretical debate. It is important to underline that while our Troika has defined views on these themes, we are also keen to learn from these OWG discussion.

We have repeatedly recognized, at World Summits and other Conferences, including Rio+20, that our key task under the sessional theme is to eradicate hunger and ensure food security and nutrition. Given that poverty is multi-dimensional, this objective is associated with all the pillars of sustainable development. The right to food is a fundamental human right. So is the right to development. As we define the goals of food security and nutrition, we must maintain a strong link with poverty alleviation.

It is, accordingly, incumbent on us to build upon the results of the MDGs. Quantitative assessments of global and regional food requirements made by the FAO and WFP are helpful tools in this regard, but we have to keep in mind the population dynamics, including variations within countries. Moreover, the increasing demand for food crops and other organic materials in biofuel production should also be addressed substantively.

Mr. Co-Chair,

We would like to highlight the following points in developing an SDG on these issues:

First, poverty alleviation remains the key challenge while promoting sustainable agriculture as well as food security and nutrition security. In this regard, promoting and accelerating rural development in developing countries must be a priority. Countries which emphasized rural development have recorded notable successes in poverty eradication.

Secondly, the two themes are linked closely and we must give serious thought to developing an overall cumulative target under these themes. More specifically, in crafting

the basis for targets/goals, we would need to weave these elements together instead of treating them as separate or independent goals. Notwithstanding, we do believe that an overall goal facilitating rural development, food and nutritional security could have a set of nationally driven and determined indicators such as (a) social protection; (b) infrastructure development and linkages to urban centers (c) enhancement of resource endowment, including through access to credit markets of the poor and small-scale farmers (d) national policies and other incentives to encourage private sector investment; and (e) adaptation to the adverse impacts of climate change on agriculture.

It is important in our view to recognize the varying circumstances and capacities of the countries in pursuing these goals consistent with the principle of the common but differentiated responsibilities, an element, which has been firmly reiterated in the Rio+20 outcome.

Mr. Co-Chair,

We note that global nutrition levels have improved in general. Yet, malnutrition, especially among children, remains a problem in developing countries. Over 860 million remain undernourished.

Malnutrition has been the key reason for MDGs on Infant Mortality and Maternal Mortality lagging behind the rest. We have to aim at higher benchmarks to sustain our efforts. Even in countries which have reached satisfactory average nutrition levels, pockets of malnutrition remain. A funded programme must be developed to address nutrition.

Fisheries and all forms of aquaculture products must be given a prominent place in our dialogue not only as a part of issues associated with agriculture but also in addressing malnutrition - aqua products being one of the best source of nutrients, including micronutrients. However, it is important to keep in mind the parlous state of global fisheries, mainly due to over exploitation. Overexploitation has been the result, mainly, of the activities of the fleets from industrialized countries. At the moment, over 70% of the global fish stock has reached a critical state. We need to develop policies to ensure employment, nutrition and better management of stocks.

When considering the economic aspects of food production, we must focus on affordable access to inputs, including land, water and fertilizer. Access to markets is an integral element. The agriculture sector is a key area of employment generation, especially in developing countries. Over 85% of agricultural land is held by small scale farmers. Therefore, we must also focus on creating jobs with greater value addition and environmental sustainability. Considering food as a human need, our efforts must aim at a balanced demand-driven approach because a solely supply-driven approach has not led to the desired results.

Mr. Co-Chair,

Increasing the availability of land, maximizing the productivity of cultivable lands and increased application of eco-friendly technologies, such as production methodologies that consume low amounts of water, energy, chemicals and land as well as those resulting in low quantities of waste must be taken into account while designing the goals. The restoration of degraded land is essential. This also entails a balance between agriculture, deforestation, and the need to generate employment and food. The solution may lie in the access to eco-friendly modern technologies, which are available but are costly. Targeted investment levels in agriculture in developing countries is a possible option.

One third of all food production world-wide is lost or wasted in production, transportation and consumption, amounting to 1.3 billion tonnes per year. This happens in the developed world because of lifestyle patterns and in the developing world due to lack of adequate infrastructure. The “Think-Eat-Save” campaign of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) should reach a wider global audience. Attitudinal change encouraged by massive awareness campaigns in the developed world will help save huge amounts of food that is wasted.

Mr. Co-chair,

To build on the successes of the green revolution, it is also important to establish mechanisms to effectively accommodate indigenous knowledge on agriculture and food processing. It is with better technology and adequate funding that agriculture can be made sustainable and a burgeoning world population fed. Developing countries must be given technological and financial support to meet their development aspirations. On the other hand, such technologies must be also effectively applicable in the national contexts.

Current patenting rules need to be examined. Modification of indigenous knowledge and patenting these become an issue for developing countries.

An important aspect of food security and livelihood in developing countries is the impact of massive subsidies given by developed countries to their farmers. These subsidies, amounting to billions of dollars annually, have had a regressive impact on agriculture in developing countries and have retarded progress on MDGs. The issues of subsidies, trade and market access must be addressed comprehensively while dealing with food security in the context of the SDG menu. The dumping of subsidized agriculture has had a crippling effect on some developing countries.

Mr. Co-Chair,

Desertification, land degradation and drought are essentially closely linked. Irreversible damage to land is often caused either by human activity, or at times, by natural phenomena. Over one billion people are affected by desertification. Tangible goals or sub goals must be set under the current effort to help reduce desertification. Here we do not need to reinvent the wheel. We have agreed goals on these areas in the various intergovernmental instruments and we must now focus on implementing them. The efforts under the Convention to Combat Desertification must be intensified.

Mr. Co-Chair,

In conclusion, we should not duplicate work already undertaken under the existing mechanisms. We should benefit from the success that the international community has achieved and build further on these. Similarly, it is critical to think holistically, taking into account cross-sectoral factors. Our bottom line should be to make our world a better place for future generations.

Our three countries of our troika would be happy to share our experiences and achievements in all these fields.

I thank you Mr. Co-chair.