

Statement by Statement  
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at the Sixth Meeting of the Sustainable Development Goals Open Working Group on

Needs of Countries in Special Situations – African Countries, Least Developed Countries,  
Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States,  
as well as the specific challenges facing Middle-Income Countries

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Distinguished Co-Chairs,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of China, Indonesia and Kazakhstan.

Countries in special situations, namely the African countries, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Middle-Income Countries (MICs), still face significant challenges that must be overcome in order to achieve inclusive, equitable and sustainable development for all. While these countries face similar challenges, each category also faces unique circumstances and concerns that the SDGs should address.

Many African countries have not reached the MDGs targets in reducing high levels of extreme poverty, youth unemployment, underdeveloped health care, and preventable maternal mortality. Furthermore, they encounter environmental threats related to climate change, water scarcity, biodiversity and loss of ecosystems, deforestation, land degradation, desertification, drought, coastal erosion and low resilience to natural disasters. In addition, the inadequate infrastructure development in Africa is a key obstacle to sustainable development in the region. The existing problems are further aggravated by insufficient energy, difficulties in developing and transfer of technology, and weak institutional capacity. Non-inclusive economic growth, accompanied by rapid population growth due to the absence of reproductive health services, contribute to high levels of migration, urbanization, and food insecurity.

These can be counteracted by innovative financing, trade, aid and development effectiveness, investment, technology and capacity development, regional integration and international cooperation. All of these call for a greater commitment to Africa, keeping the pledges and even heightening the ODA to address the ever increasing challenges.

The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) face challenges particularly in the economic development which are lagged behind compared to the rest of the world. Furthermore, they also confront other issues including food security and rural development, trade, human and social development, education and training, population and primary health care, youth development, water and sanitation, gender equality and empowerment of women, and social protection.

In order to achieve significant progress on those matters, it is important to ensure the effective and speedy implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA), as was supported by Rio+20. The Istanbul PoA, with its clear implementation of adequate funding ODA and investment; international trade and access to and transfer of technology, should gain priority.

The international community should pay due attention to and remain committed to meet the financial needs of LDCs, in particular in the areas of construction of infrastructural facilities and industrial capital goods.

It is thus most imperative that the eradication of poverty should have an underpinning in all the SDGs so that economic growth is inclusive and just in order to achieve structural transformation and creation of productive jobs.

The Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) have some insurmountable factors to overcome with regard to the lack of access to the sea, long distances from major international markets, cumbersome transit procedures and inadequate transport infrastructure. These issues escalate further the high costs of trade for LLDCs and their continued marginalization from world trade. The vulnerabilities of LLDCs are heightened because of very restricted productive capacities and resilience for the emerging challenges and external shocks emanating from the global economic crises, food insecurity, impacts of climate change, desertification, land degradation and drought. Thus development prospects are severely impaired.

The geographical, structural and economic challenges faced by LLDCs impact their development prospects, including economic growth, poverty reduction and overall sustainable development. In view of this, the concerns and special needs of LLDCs deserve special attention and should be adequately integrated into the SDGs. Key priorities of the LLDCs include social development; infrastructure development; enhancing trade and trade facilitation; regional integration; and addressing environmental challenges and building resilience to shocks. Sustainable development should provide inclusiveness for all the stakeholders. Currently almost all global trade is done by sea – 80% of trade flows go through 40 main sea ports. In order to ensure inclusiveness of those countries in the sustainable development process, they should be interconnected between themselves by land transport (leading to regional economic integration) and to the global markets.

Transportation systems play a key role in boosting productivity and competitiveness in various regions of the world. One critical issue which should be advanced to achieve more sustainable economic development is to promote regional integration of the national economies. For example, inter-regional trade among countries in Central Asia and South America comprises less than 20% of the total trade (in Europe, for example, this figure exceeds to 80%). Such low intra-regional participation happens despite the geographic proximity of the countries. It is obvious that only land transport can interconnect these economies and provide additional stimulus for regional and international trade.

The SDGs should also embed the need to achieve structural transformation in LLDCs with an emphasis on industrialization, value-addition, diversification, technological innovation, and capacity building. These special needs of LLDCs should be integrated into the SDGs, with the

overall view of increasing LLDCs' connectedness with global markets and promoting holistic or more balanced development in all the three dimensions of sustainable development in LLDCs.

The next group, the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), face the environmental problems and challenges of coastal zones, concentrated in a limited land area. Their small size, limited resources, geographic dispersion and isolation from markets place them at an economic disadvantage, including challenges to develop economies of scale. SIDS are on the frontlines in terms of experiencing the impacts of climate change and natural disasters. SIDS lack the capacity to address these challenges themselves and rely on the support of and partnership with the international community to realize their sustainable development objectives. With regard to MDGs, over the past decade, SIDS have made less progress than most other groupings, or even regressed in economic terms, especially in terms of poverty reduction and debt sustainability, as a result of low economic growth.

The international community should create sound environment for SIDS to develop, helping SIDS in its capacity building by strengthening and deepening partnerships.

Middle income countries (MICs) are varied in character facing challenges of poverty, inequality, and vulnerability to external factors. They are home to around 70 per cent of the world's poor or even more, with income distribution more unequal than in low- and high-income countries, and who lack access to basic needs and services, health care and sanitation, and have high child and maternal mortality. Hence, the social imbalances need to be reduced greatly. These countries also lack capacity to upgrade their manufacturing sectors. Many MICs are among the world's most carbon-intensive economies. Energy losses account for almost one third of their total domestic energy use. The challenges of moving towards sustainable production and consumption patterns without exacerbating social tensions, while still enjoying the benefits of economic growth, remain a challenge for this group of countries. The economies of MICs are not diversified and so are vulnerable to external shocks. In the world scale, the production costs in MICs exceed those of the low-income countries, while their lack of technological competitiveness hinders their capacity to produce higher-value products. It is particularly important that the agenda recognize the vulnerability of many MICs to returning to low-income country status or being stuck in the so-called 'middle-income trap'.

In order to solve the issues faced by MIC, several measures are needed to be taken. These include accelerating infrastructure development, improving the industrialization, boosting private investment, ensuring human resources development and employment opportunities, as well as strengthening governance. To promote their economic development, MICs should integrate more closely with the global economy and take part in global value chain.

World Bank and other multilateral development institutions should shift their focus from "poor countries only" to "poor countries and poor people", and provide necessary support in terms of mechanism and resources to all developing countries including MICs. MICs and LDCs should enhance their knowledge exchange and experience sharing, and promote triangular cooperation with multilateral development institutions.

Development issues should be considered in a comprehensive and balanced manner. SDGs should be development-centered and people oriented with poverty eradication as the overarching objective. We should promote the realization of people's right to development through

implementing development agenda, and avoid over emphasizing human rights or coupling multilateral and bilateral development assistance with human rights indicators, democracy and good governance.

Therefore, irrespective of the economic scale, the needs of all categories of countries, must be considered in designing the SDGs with a view to eradicating poverty, minimizing economic and social inequalities as well as preserving the environment. Efforts need to be made in promoting sustainable energy through financial resources, technology development and transfer and capacity building, the establishment of right policy frameworks, with the greater commitment to the UNFCCC processes to address the climate change adaptation needs, including the provision of adequate, sustainable and predictable financial resources. Environmental protection and resource management are crucial for stronger disaster management strategies, enhanced climate change adaptation, and developing ecological and social resilience.

Thank you.