

VIII OWG-SDGs

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota Deputy Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations on behalf of Brazil and Nicaragua

"Oceans and seas, forests, biodiversity" February 4, 2014

Mr Co-Chair,

Brazil and Nicaragua associate themselves with the statement made by Bolivia on behalf of the G-77 and China.

Oceans and seas were a much celebrated outcome of the Rio+20 Conference. We were pleased that the document "The Future We Want" recognized international law and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources.

States in Rio recognized the seas and coastal areas as an essential component of the Earth's ecosystem. Their conservation and sustainable use of should be one of the pillars of sustainable development, considering their implications to poverty eradication, economic growth, social progress, the protection of biodiversity and marine environment, and for climate change.

In the form of a dedicated goal or as a set of targets, we believe that oceans and seas should be a central element in the definition of our post-2015 agenda goals, in line with the importance granted to the topic in the Rio+20 document.

According to the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, 71% of the surface of the Earth is covered by the oceans and more than 40% of the world's population live within 100 kilometers of the coast. To coastal states, and specially to the Small Island Developing States, oceans and coastal areas are invaluable assets, which have helped shape these countries in their economic, environmental, social and cultural dimensions throughout history.

Mr Co-Chair,

Regarding forests, we would appreciate to see this issue appropriately addressed and reflected in the SDGs. In Rio, we highlighted the importance of sustainable management of forests with a view to achieving social, economic and environmental benefits for the people who depend on these ecosystems. This would slow and reverse the pace of deforestation and forest degradation, as well as tighten controls on illegally harvested forest products. These commitments should define the centrality of forests in the post-2015 goals.

In this exercise, we should be cautious not to employ concepts that are not deeply anchored in the Rio+20 commitments on forests. For example, the broad and ill-defined "landscape approach" or the concept of "renewable natural resources" should be avoided to favor a more focused and strengthened stand-alone goal for forests. This topic has its own mandates and multilateral processes of negotiation, and should not be addressed in the context of a common basket of "natural resources".

Any decisions on forests should be aligned with the ongoing review of the United Nations Forum on Forests. In order not to prejudge the results of the review process, this Working Group must coordinate with the UNFF.

We are concerned that forests have been depleted in many parts of the world and some continue to disappear every day. The Brazilian and Nicaraguan governments prioritize sustainable forest management. Despite being threatened by climate change and degradation, we continue to be one lung in South America and an other in Central America.

Mr Co-Chair,

The topic of biodiversity is also very important for both Brazil and Nicaragua. Brazil is home to 13% of the world's biodiversity - the highest percentage in the world - and 20% of the total number of species on Earth can be found in our ecosystems.

In Nicaragua 17% of the territory is under the National System of Protected Areas, which play a vital role in protecting the flora and fauna of the country, and protects degraded ecosystems elsewhere in the country.

UNESCO has awarded 3 large biosphere reserves to Nicaragua a) BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve, the largest forest reserve in Central America and the third largest worldwide b) Biosphere Reserve of Rio San Juan, and c) The Ometepe Biosphere Reserve.

We firmly believe that the Working Group should give biodiversity the same importance and emphasis found in the Rio+20 outcome document. We recall the uniqueness and the complexity of the multilateral processes on biodiversity - notably the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Nagoya Protocol - in order to evaluate the need for addressing this topic in a more specific way during the negotiating phase of the Working Group.

Finally, Mr, Chairman, let me say that we are pleased to address these three topics in the same segment of this session, given their close interrelation. Let us not forget, in this regard, the issues of financing, transfer of technology and capacity-building to provide developing countries with means of implementing our commitments taking into account the principle of CBDR. This debate must remain central in the context of forests, biodiversity and oceans.

In devising SDGs we must also fully implement the CBD provisions on Prior Informed Consent and Access and Benefit Sharing in respect of genetic resources and associated traditional and indigenous knowledge.

All our people should aspire to a life of well-being within the framework of sustainable development in harmony with the common good of Mother Earth and Humanity.

Thank you.