11th Session of the OWG on SDGs

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Statement on Focus Areas 9 and 10 by Amit Narang, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of India to the UN

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Mr. Co-Chair,

I was listening very carefully to your interaction with colleagues from Egypt and Pakistan earlier in the afternoon, and I would like to congratulate you for taking the first steps in moving this Group towards genuine interaction.

This is the spirit in which comments by several delegations in the last two days were made. This process needs to move from a 'statement-mode' to 'interaction-mode'. For more than one year now, we have all made lengthy monologues looking at these giant screens. It is no surprise therefore that much of what delegations have said has ended up in the cold storage – the document you called Encyclopedia Groupitica !

We need to urgently move this process from monologues to a dialogue. And we hope your comments today are a step in that direction.

In the same spirit of interactivity, Mr. Co-Chair, I would like to briefly respond to your question regarding clustering and number of goals.

I think you may have missed the forenoon session today, where the distinguished Ambassador from Brazil addressed this issue in detail. We fully support his views on this issue.

He was basically cautioning against sacrificing content for the sake of form. We fully agree and feel that we need not be fixated too much on the number of goals. This is a much larger agenda as compared to the MDGs and inevitably will have much larger number of goals. Our mandate is to be 'concise', but 'concise' is not a number.

Mr. Co-Chair,

I would now like to offer some concrete comments and suggestions on Focus Areas 9 and 10.

Focus area 9

Industrialization and promoting Equality among Nations

Mr.Co-Chair,

First of all, we note with concern that while inequality among nations has been added notionally to the title of this proposed Goal, substantially this issue has not been treated at all.

We understand the view that industrialization itself will take care of inequality among nations. However, there are a host of international factors that have been proposed by several member states to address this important issue.

Many of these ideas deserve to be brought out of the cold storage of the Encyclopedia Groupitica and included in the active Working Document.

Saying which, I might add that we are not convinced with the notion of clustering the issue of Equality within and among countries in two separate goals and agree with several others in the room who have called for the standalone focus area on Inequality be restored.

Mr. Co-Chair,

We propose to add the following targets in focus area 9:

1. "Developing countries to climb to the next stage of economic development by 2030"

2. "Increase economic diversification in developing countries including by adding value to raw materials and commodities through domestic processing and manufacturing"

3. Regarding industrialization, we propose to add "Achieve sustained industrial development in developing countries especially low income countries by raising the share of manufacturing in GDP and upgrading industrial technology and capability"

4. Another target we propose is "Ensuring favourable market access for industrial products and processed commodities of developing countries".

To purposefully address the issue of inequality among countries, we propose to add a target "Establish measures at global level to reduce inequality among countries."

Mr. Co-Chair,

Under 9(a), the words "and a conducive policy environment" should be replaced by 'for'. The modified target would then read as "Ensure adequate policy space for industrial development, including encouragement of industrial entrepreneurship and enterprise formation with inclusion of SMEs". We do support the proposal by CARICOM this morning to include Micro-enterprises as well along with SMEs.

Target (e) should be deleted. As currently formulated, it cannot apply equally to all countries uniformly.

The target (f) must also be deleted. This target also militates against the notion of differentiation. In addition, there is no multilaterally agreed definition of 'environmentally sustainable products and services'. This may also go against the WTO non-discrimination rules on similar products.

In target (g), the words 'in developing countries' need to be added after 'industrial sectors'. The words 'including plans to' could be deleted. We could also usefully refer to 'cleaner fossil fuel technologies' at the end of this target.

Target (h) as currently formulated must be deleted as it seems to apply uniformly to every country. This is not only unfair, it is also impractical. To be acceptable, it must be rephrased to add the following words at the end "with developed countries taking the lead and adequate support to be provided to developing countries to do so".

Mr.Co-Chair,

We would propose the following as means of implementation for this focus area:

- Ensure that international trade rules and regulations are consistent with the objectives of industrial development and technological progress in developing countries in order to ensure equality of economic opportunities for all

- Strengthen international cooperation, including the provision of financial resources, capacity-building and technology transfer to developing countries in support of their industrial development objectives
- Developing countries to be provided with international financing, technology and capacity building to enable them to develop their infrastructure

Focus area 10- Cities

Mr. Co-Chair,

As currently formulated, this proposed goal is focused almost exclusively on cities. We feel that a broader approach is needed to address all human settlements including rural areas, where a large proportion of people in developing countries live.

Under target (b) a mention needs to be made of the need to expand public transport, something that has remained under-emphasized in the current document.

In line with our statements earlier, we feel that the relevant targets on Disaster Risk Reduction from Focus Areas 1 and 6, need to be moved under this focus area.

Target (c) should focus on enhancing capacities 'in developing countries'. This important imperative seems to have slipped out.

Under target (e) the over balance towards 'cities' can be addressed by replacing the word 'cities' with "rural and urban areas" with a view to give importance to rural areas also.

Mr.Co-Chair,

We call for the deletion of target (d). There is no agreed definition of the concept of 'ecological footprint' nor any agreed matrix for its measurement.

In addition, this target is another example of the same 'one-size-fits-all' approach which has been the problem with several targets proposed under different focus areas.

I pointed out three such targets under Focus Area 9 just now.

Such an approach ignores differentiation and sets uniform objectives for all countries, disregarding their different starting points, resource endowments, capacities, and challenges. This approach is clearly impractical and bound to be unsuccessful. We once again caution against such an approach.

Mr.Co-Chair,

As means of implementation, the following could be added:-

- Provide developing countries with enhanced international financing to enable them to promote sustainable human settlements
- Assist developing countries in enhancing their capacities and ensure affordable access to related know-how, science, technologies and innovations.

Thank you, Mr. Co-Chair.