

## **Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the SDGs**

**31<sup>st</sup> October to 5<sup>th</sup> November**

### **Statement by the United Nations Environment Programme**

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*Ato Adamsu Nebebe, Director of UN Agencies and Regional Economic Cooperation Directorate at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*

*Dear Dr Mohamed Khalil Timamy, Head of Environment and Natural Resources Division at the AUC*

*Dear Colleagues of the UN System*

*Dear Representatives from African countries*

*Dear Development partners*

*Representatives of Major Groups and Civil Society organizations*

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

*The Rio+20 Conference was an important stocktaking of the world's progress towards sustainable development. One key Rio +20 outcome was the call for an intergovernmental working group to develop sustainable development goals (SDGs) with the technical support of the UN system. An important message was that this new set of goals should carefully consider and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development. Many and diverse stakeholders have since then proposed different types of SDGs.*

*Although some countries are making commendable records in meeting the Millennium Development Goals, Africa's performance varies across and within*

*countries and its aggregate performance masks wide economic, social and spatial inequalities as well as governance challenges. Today, unemployment remains high particularly among the youth, access to health, education, water services and adequate energy continue to be a cause of concern in many countries.*

*Africa's population is expected to constitute about 23% of the global population by 2050. This growing population already includes two hundred and thirty nine million persons classified as malnourished. This places huge demands on governments to provide opportunities for food security.*

*Adverse effects of climate change combined with the political instability together with governance challenges here and there are anticipated to further constrain the achievement of the MDGs by African countries. Overall the rhythm of MDG achievement in the continent is too slow to meet the goals by the target date.*

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

*Recently, the Secretary-General issued a report to the 68th GA session, where he emphasized that: "A new post-2015 era demands a new vision and a responsive framework. Sustainable development — enabled by the integration of economic growth, social justice and environmental stewardship — must become our global guiding principle and operational standard ....*

*Concretely that means they must be:*

- *Bold in ambition but simple in design.*
- *Universal in nature yet responsive to the complexities, needs and capacities of individual countries and regions;*
- *Protective of the planet, its biodiversity, water and land;*
- *Rights-based, with particular emphasis on women, young people and marginalized groups;*
- *Eager for new and innovative partnerships; and*
- *Supported by pioneering approaches to data and rigorous accountability mechanisms.*

*A single, balanced and comprehensive set of goals and agenda, universal to all nations, would aim to eradicate all forms of poverty and integrate sustainable development in all its dimensions, balancing the economic, social and environmental dimensions in a way which will be aspirational, transformational, inclusive and universal in nature*

*With the decision of member states on a set of SDGs still at least a year away, the need for a systematic framework for deciding on such a set of integrated goals cannot be overemphasized. This calls for an approach that ensures that environment is embedded in the SDGs. Therefore there should be:*

- *A Strong linkage with developmental goals where environment is strongly linked to social and economic dimensions of sustainable development issues in an integrated manner thereby balancing those three pillars as per the spirit of Rio +20 Outcome Document.*
- *A proper mechanism to track the progress of the SDGs backed up by measurable targets and indicators*
- *A strong scientific basis. Goals and targets should be based on accepted science, and support should be available from the scientific community to implement them*
- *Irreversible changes in the global environment. Priority should be given to goals and targets that help avoid critical “irreversible” changes of the global environment*
- *Coverage of other critical issues of environmental sustainability. The final set of selected goals and targets should cover as many critical environmental sustainability issues (current and emerging) as possible, while adhering to the ambition of Rio+20 to keep the SDGs concise and limited in number*
- *SDGs should take into account current global goals and targets therefore building on the "unfinished business" in respect of MDGs. They can do so by: (i) using current goals and targets as a “ground floor” for new goals and targets; (ii) incorporating a small number of important current goals and targets showing slow progress.*

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

*As we gather here for this regional consultative meeting which is meant to effectively prepare Africa to speak with one strong voice, to articulate and rally international support for SDGs that takes into consideration Africa's development priorities in the one hand and Lay a firm foundation for the ownership, championship, domestication and implementation of activities towards the achievement of the SDGs by all keys partners and stakeholders in the region on the other hand, it is our sincere hope that the above mentioned criteria would be given due consideration as the SDG formulation process reaches its critical phase.*

*UNEP stand ready to provide its full support to this process alongside AUC, UN ECA, AfDB, UNDP, and development partners for the achievement of the "future we want" as stipulated in the Rio+20 outcome document.*

*I wish you fruitful deliberation and I thank you for your attention*

