

Intervention by UNEP Director and Regional Representative for Africa, Mr. Mounkaila Goumandakoye during the Ministerial segment of the consultation on SDGs (November 4, 2013)

Key highlights:

- He referred to the Environment as it relates to the economic and social dimensions. The continent is encouraged by the high economic growth but challenges in terms of persistent high poverty rate, unemployment and food insecurity remained. We need then to maintain the economic growth robust and inclusive but understand that it will require continuous use of natural resources. It is however important to ensure that the economic growth gets faster than the use of natural resources. To achieve that, we have resolutely to promote sustainable patterns of consumption and production. While we like to stress the wealth of natural resources of the continent, we should not forget some realities: a focus is on agriculture but the population of 1 billion now will grow to 2 billion by 2050. Africa is the second driest continent on earth. We represent 15% of the population of the earth with 9% of freshwater. By 2050 the proportion of population will be 23% of the world with still the same amount of water. On average, in a large part of the region, the availability of land per person will reduce from around 9 ha (1950) to 0.6 ha (2050). Business as usual is no longer acceptable and we need to engage in the sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

- Necessity to build on the experience of the MDGs, which were stand alone and in some case the achievement of one particular goal can have negative impact on another. Therefore SDGs should be integrated to embed the three dimensions of sustainability.

- Need to improve the way we work as one. Different reports are produced: population (UNFPA), economic (ECA/AfDB), environment (UNEP) etc. We need to take stock of the of these reports and look at the convergence of the findings and analysis with regard to sustainability. We might think of an African Sustainable Development Report to be produced regularly through collective effort.

- UNEP praised the leadership role of UNECA working with AUC and AfDB in the SDGs consultative process in Africa and confirmed UNEP readiness to actively collaborate with them in the next steps of the process.

- Pay tribute to the leadership of women at the forefront of sustainable development efforts of the continent. Reference to the tremendous work done by Late Wangari Maathai and to the laudable effort of Honourable Mrs. Angélique Ngoma of Gabon, MP and former Minister for Health and Defense who is actively involved in sustainable development initiatives in Africa. Her suggestion of considering the possibility of blending Human Development Index with Ecological Footprint has great merit.