

New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations



Te Māngai o Aotearoa

600 THIRD AVENUE 14TH FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10016-1901, USA
TELEPHONE (212) 826 1960 FACSIMILE (212) 758 0827 HOMEPAGE: <http://www.nzembassy.com/newyork>

FIRST MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Intervention by Juliet Hay, Counsellor

15 March 2013

We are pleased that the work of this working group has begun. We congratulate the co-chairs on your appointment –your leadership will be crucial in the months ahead.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak at this meeting since New Zealand is not a member of the Working Group. It is important that this is an open inclusive process. We are therefore pleased to see that the Group's working methods contemplate that there will be other opportunities in coming months. While the members have the primary responsibility, non-member states and other stakeholders –major groups in particular– also have perspectives to offer. The work done in this Group has the potential to be a game-changer –to play a significant role in shaping the development agenda for decades to come. But the goals will be durable only if they have broad support.

Others have mentioned the need for coherence with other work-streams contributing to the post-2015 development agenda. Perhaps the discussions in September at the MDG special event and (hopefully) the first meeting of the High Level Political Forum will provide opportunities for comment about how that is done. It will therefore be important for this Group to have a progress report ready by then.

There is a need to build on the successes of the MDGs. Of course, we are not there yet. Efforts to reduce poverty will need to continue, with revised goals in such areas as education, gender, and health. But there are also lessons to be learnt from the MDGs. There were a number of gaps, for instance in relation to aspects of natural resource management and the achievement of inclusive economic growth.

In devising the SDGs there should be a holistic approach that integrates the three dimensions of sustainable development from the outset. Many areas are being proposed for potential SDGs. Our focus now should be on areas that are priorities for

global action at this time. For New Zealand, these would include sustainable energy, oceans, and agriculture. With each of these it is easy to identify economic, social and environmental dimensions. Focusing on a small number of priority areas now does not mean that there cannot be more SDGs added in the future. As others have mentioned yesterday there may also be some topics that are not amenable to be formulated as goals but still need to be part of the post-2015 agenda.

Turning to the format, the MDGs were framed in simple terms and became a powerful communication tool. The SDGs should use a broadly similar format with the goals being simple and focused enough to become a global rallying point. Perhaps our aim should be for something short enough to be “tweet-able”, rather than a concept that is buried in a dense UN paragraph. We should also not forget that the goals are aspirational –we should aim for the “highest common ambition” not the lowest common denominator.

The goals need to be supplemented by practical measurable targets and indicators that ensure effective measurement of progress. This is where the detail will be. Before these are formulated there will be a need for expert input including from the scientific community or bodies like the Statistical Commission. It should also be possible to add targets and indicators over time –to future proof the goals.

Many have mentioned means of implementation. We agree this is important. Since the MDGs were formulated there have been many changes to the international development architecture, and many new actors have appeared, with partnerships that go beyond the traditional ones. The Pacific Energy Summit to be held in New Zealand later this month provides an example. It will bring together Pacific Island leaders, international development agencies, multilateral banks, and the private sector all of whom are working to provide efficient, clean, and affordable energy solutions for the Pacific region. All actors will be needed going forward if an ambitious post-2015 agenda is to be achievable. It is important to establish the second Rio working group as soon as possible as its task is to propose options for an effective sustainable development financing strategy that can mobilise resources. Its work should proceed in tandem with this Group’s.

As the Group moves from process to substance there will be many complex discussions ahead. We encourage flexibility and lateral and innovative thinking. It is a daunting task but there is too much at stake not to succeed.