STATEMENT BY

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC
OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON

THE OCCASION OF THE GENERAL DEBATE
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Mr Chairman,
South Africa aligns itself with the statements delivered earlier by Fiji on behalf of G77 and China and Ethiopia on behalf of the African Group, respectively.

As the debate on Sustainable Development Goals and the broader post-2015 debate continue to gain momentum we must recognize the commitments made by our leaders who gathered in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992 and as well as the critical decisions made to advance Sustainable Development. The Rio Conference of 1992 was indeed a milestone in the broader UN development agenda as it confirmed the applicability of Agenda 21 and the 27 Rio principles, in striking a balance between economic development, social protection and environmental protection.

In 2002 South Africa hosted the WSSD, building on the 1992 Rio Conference and laying the foundation for the Rio+20 Conference to take place 10 years later. The WSSD allowed world leaders to adopt the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), a clear framework to advance sustainable development. The JPOI called for the strengthening of the institutional framework for Sustainable Development as this was considered key to the implementation of Agenda 21, the follow-up to the outcomes of the WSSD and new as well as emerging sustainable development challenges.

The JPOI also recognized that eradicating poverty was and still remains the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable
requirement for sustainable development, particularly for developing countries.

Building on this foundation the Rio+20 Conference of June 2012 recognizes that sustainable development is only attainable through the full and balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. The Rio+20 outcomes document, The Future we want, also recognizes that poverty eradication, changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are the overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development. In this regard Mr Chairman sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, the creation of greater opportunities for all and reducing inequalities, can only be attained through the promotion and integration of sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems that supports, economic, social and human development while facilitating ecosystem conservation, regeneration and restoration and resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges.

South Africa is pleased to observe progress on the strengthening of the United Nations institutional framework for Sustainable Development. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has been strengthened and upgraded into a body with universal membership and the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF-SD) was established by the General Assembly earlier in the year. We are closely monitoring efforts by the United Nations to reform Economic and Social Council
(ECOSOC) and the positioning of the General Assembly as the highest deliberative body of the UN.

We equally welcome the implementation of the Rio plus 20 outcomes in relation to the formulation of the proposed Sustainable Development goals (SDGs). South Africa supports the transparent and open manner in which the work of the Open Working Group on the SDGs is unfolding, affording all member states and other stakeholders an opportunity to contribute to the process. We regard the work of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development goals (OWG-SDGs) as an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda and concur with the proposed timelines that will lead to the adoption of the report of the OWG-SDGs during the 68th Session of the General Assembly.

Mr Chairman,
We wish to use this opportunity to stress the importance of further mainstreaming sustainable development at all levels while acknowledging that developing countries still require policy space to pursue their development aspirations.

The impacts of Climate Change continues to pose serious challenges for the development of all countries but more specifically so, for developing countries. Climate Change poses a real threat and could reverse the development gains made in the recent times. For this reason we call on the major greenhouse gas emitters to commit to emissions reduction to ensure the target of 2 degrees temperature rise is realized. In addition we call on the major emitters to contribute to the Green Climate Fund to ensure
adequate resources to meet adaptation needs particularly in developing countries.

In this regard we call on the implementation of the agreements reached during the 17th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC and the Durban Platform to ensure that a legally binding framework is agreed to by 2015 and to come into effect by 2020. In this way we can ensure that the planet Earth remains habitable and continues to provide the much needed ecosystem services to the current and future generations.

My delegation has noted the release of Fifth Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report and hopes that its recommendations will add value to the on-going debate on Climate Change.

Mr Chairman,

The mobilization of financial resources remains critically important for the realization of Sustainable Development. Recognizing the importance of this, South Africa saw it fit to make available an expert to serve on the Experts Committee dealing with Financing for Sustainable Development as agreed by the Rio+20 Conference and established by the United Nations General Assembly in June this year.

We welcome the outcomes of the high level debate on the Financing for Development last month. The Financing for Development meeting was significant for the developing countries as it reminded us of the need to mobilize financial resources to enable the development countries to realize their development aspirations.
South Africa maintains that partnerships remain critical for the realization of development aspirations in the developing world. We maintain that the development partners should deliver on MDG 8 on global partnership to ensure realization of the MDGs before their target date of 2015. We argue that any new global partnership in the envisaged development architecture post-2015 should build on the existing arrangements such as the Monterrey consensus and Doha outcomes and other historic outcomes.

Mr Chairman,

Trade remains a key development enabler for the developing countries. In this context we call for the fair trade rules to ensure that developing countries have a fair share in global markets and are positioned to compete on an equal footing with the rest of other global players. We call for flexible intellectual property rights to ensure that the global South has access to the much-needed technologies to meet their development needs. It cannot be correct that Africa has only three per cent share of the global trade while it is a major source of raw materials. In many African countries conditions exist for foreign direct investment and trade and in this context we call on the investment decision-makers to make use of these opportunities to assist Africa to evolve to the much-needed development trajectory.

Working together as world countries we can achieve Sustainable Development in the 21st Century.

I thank you.