Australian Statement

Second Committee of the General Assembly
Sustainable Development Debate
5 November 2013

Thank you Mr Chairman

It has now been more than a year since world leaders came together to discuss global sustainable development challenges at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). We have done much to progress the outcomes of Rio+20. But as the global community turns its sights towards the deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and beyond to the post-2015 development agenda, it is important we maintain the momentum and commitment to achieving sustainable development.

Mr Chairman,

We have learned important lessons from the Millennium Development Goals. A global development agenda with agreed goals can be a powerful rallying point for international development efforts. A shared commitment to a concise and compelling set of goals will be needed to focus global efforts on achieving our vision of eradicating poverty through sustainable development.

We have also learned that sustained economic growth, trade and effective governance have a crucial role in driving development and lifting people out of poverty. To achieve this, we need to support countries to promote the rule of law, develop effective civil and political institutions, and foster a strong private sector. And we must lend support to country-led approaches for poverty eradication.

These are critical factors for sustainable development.

Australia believes that trade liberalisation, fair multilateral and bilateral trading arrangements, and investments in infrastructure development, can help unlock the economic potential of developing countries. That is why aid-for-trade will be an increasingly important aspect of Australia’s aid program.

Complementary to this, Australia has consistently advocated for the removal of agricultural subsidies, which pose a barrier to the participation of developing country producers in international agricultural trade. Breaking down these barriers should be part of a multi-dimensional approach to strengthening global food security, which also addresses malnutrition and a lack of infrastructure.

Mr Chairman

The work of the Sustainable Development Goals Open Working Group and the Sustainable Development Financing Committee are both well underway. As a member of both these bodies, Australia is committed to working constructively towards a robust and effective post 2015 development framework.

In doing so, we will take account of the specific challenges facing the Indo-Pacific region. The great majority of Australia’s closest neighbours are developing countries, most of them Small Island Developing States. As some of the most vulnerable countries in the world, it is vital that the future development framework reflects the particular challenges of this region.
In this regard, the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in Samoa next year will be a vital step in ensuring the voices of the most vulnerable are heard. Australia looks forward to working with our partners to ensure that the challenges faced by SIDS are properly addressed.

For many countries in our region, natural disasters also have massive human and economic costs. Such crises reverse hard-won development gains, and present a threat to sustainable development. Australia will therefore continue to highlight the importance of disaster risk reduction for the sustainability of development efforts.

On climate change, Australia looks forward to the conclusion in 2015 of a new global agreement that covers all major emitters. The Second Committee should seek to reinforce the growing political momentum towards a global deal, noting, of course, that the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary intergovernmental mechanism to address this issue.

Mr Chairman

An effective post-2015 development agenda must address the needs of all people - and ensure no one is left behind. In this light, we will look for opportunities to promote women’s leadership and economic empowerment, and ways to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, including persons with disability.

Eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable economic growth can only be achieved through an integrated approach – one that improves economic and social development, but one that simultaneously preserves the environmental foundations of our future prosperity.

I thank you Mr Chairman.