General Debate of the Second Committee  
68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly  
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Towards a Prosperous and Sustainable Future  

Statement by Senator Chris Back  
Parliament of Australia  

(Check against delivery)  

Thank you, Mr Chairman, for the opportunity to address this Committee.  

This session of the Second Committee convenes at an important juncture. We are just two years away from the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and launching the post-2015 development agenda. We are two years away from the deadline for concluding a new global agreement on climate change. And five years after the global financial crisis, the world’s economy remains weak.  

What we do now, and how we deal with these challenges, will set the tone for the decades to come.  

Mr Chairman,  

The post-2015 development agenda should be built on the foundation of a strong and sustainable global economy and an open multilateral trading system.  

As Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said in the General Assembly last month, economic growth, development and trade are the key drivers of national and international prosperity, and a vital support for global security.  

We must not underestimate the global development gains that could be unlocked through trade.  

Efforts in the World Trade Organization must be re-energised to achieve a credible package of outcomes for the WTO Ministerial Conference in December.
Priority should be afforded to breaking down barriers to the participation of developing country producers in international agricultural trade – especially through the removal of agricultural subsidies.

As Chair of the Cairns Group, Australia will continue to champion this cause in the Second Committee. And as incoming Chair of the G20 in 2014, we will further promote economic growth and development through initiatives on infrastructure and mobilising financial resources.

Mr Chairman,

We all recognise that more needs to be done to finish the job on the Millennium Development Goals.

Beyond 2015, we should build on this vision and focus on poverty eradication through sustainable development.

The new global development framework must prioritise sustainable economic growth.

We should promote a thriving private sector and job creation. It will also be important to facilitate better access to trade and markets, promote infrastructure investment, and support the growth of educated and productive labour forces.

The post-2015 framework should provide the opportunity for all people to lead healthy and productive lives – leaving no-one behind.

Ensuring that all children have access to a quality education will be an essential part of this.

So too, will promoting women’s leadership and economic empowerment.

Development has to benefit those most in need and most vulnerable, including persons with disabilities.

And the global development agenda should preserve the environmental basis for our future prosperity.

In a region where 22 of Australia’s 24 closest neighbours are developing countries, we must reflect on the specific challenges of the Indo-Pacific region. In this vein, Australia looks forward to the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Samoa, which will focus attention on the sustainable development priorities of some of the most vulnerable countries in the world.

At the same time, we also look forward to the conclusion in 2015 of a new global agreement on climate change 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,

This time last year, the Second Committee was focussed on follow-up to the major outcomes of Rio+20.

Thanks to the dedication of many colleagues in this room, 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 of these bodies, Australia looks forward to working constructively on the development of the new framework and means to achieve our shared vision.

The newly established High-Level Political Forum will also help translate our shared vision into action.

Mr Chairman,

2015 looms large on the horizon. We have a heavy responsibility upon us.

But with this responsibility comes one of the greatest opportunities of our time – the opportunity to end poverty, deliver strong international economic growth, and achieve sustainable development for all.

Thank you Mr Chairman and I look forward to a productive session.