



STATEMENT BY MR. RAHUL GANDHI, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER
OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 53: SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT AT THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE 61ST SESSION OF THE UN
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 25, 2006

Madam Chairperson,

We thank the Secretary-General for the reports under agenda item 53 on Sustainable Development. We associate ourselves with the statement made by the distinguished representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77.

Madam Chairperson,

India has actively participated in shaping international agreements to tackle major global environmental issues. In 1972, at the United Nations International Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi emphasised that environmental concerns cannot be viewed in isolation from developmental imperatives. Twenty years later, the Rio Conference affirmed the importance of sustainable development. Agenda 21, adopted by that Conference, provides a blueprint of how to make development economically and socially sustainable. The Rio Conference and the Johannesburg Summit established a global partnership committed to protecting the environment while addressing development needs. India contributed to that global partnership and is committed to it.

The Government of India's National Environmental Policy 2006 recognises that human beings are at the centre of sustainable development. It emphasises that the right to development must equitably meet the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations. Its dominant theme is that while we must conserve environmental resources to secure livelihoods, the most effective way of doing this is to ensure that people benefit more from conservation than from resource degradation. The Policy is intended to mainstream environmental concerns in all development activities. India is

privileged to host the eighteenth meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol and substances that deplete the ozone layer.

Madam Chairperson,

The Secretary-General's report notes that many Governments have taken the lead in implementing sustainable development. This implementation takes place within countries. Thus, each country is responsible for its own sustainable development. However, if developing countries are to attain the goals and targets of Agenda 21 and JPOI, the international community must make the means of implementation available and create an international environment supportive of development.

As a result of globalisation, external factors contribute to the success or failure of developing countries to a greater extent than before. Developing countries are caught between intellectual property rights and trade regimes, as well as the conditionalities imposed by the World Bank and IMF, all of which erode their autonomy and flexibility. However, these countries need that autonomy and flexibility to evolve policies and strategies for economic growth and sustainable development, which is so critical to eradicating poverty and achieving Millennium Development Goals. The current impasse in the Doha round of trade negotiations is a cause for concern. When agriculture was brought into multilateral trade negotiations, developing countries had clearly been given to understand that trade distorting agriculture subsidies would be phased out in a definite timeframe. However, gains expected from agricultural reform by developed countries continue to elude developing countries. JPOI recognises that agriculture is inextricably linked to poverty eradication, especially in developing countries. Minimizing the vulnerability of poor farmers must be our collective priority. Reducing agricultural tariffs and subsidies is not enough: there must be exceptions to allow developing countries more space to pursue their pro-development strategies and policies aimed at protecting their poor. Special and differential treatment for developing countries, to enable them to meet food security, livelihood security and rural development needs, remains a categorical imperative.

It is no coincidence that JPOI recognises good governance at the international level as fundamental to achieving sustainable development, and that it emphasises the need to address international finance, trade, technology and investment patterns that impact the development prospects of developing countries. We would suggest that the report of the Secretary-General include a detailed analysis of actions taken at the international level for consideration at future sessions.

Madam Chairperson,

The themes of the current implementation cycle of the multi-year work programme of the Commission on Sustainable Development, namely, energy, climate change and industrial development including air pollution, are particularly relevant.

Energy is critical to development. In developing countries, a rapid increase in energy use per capita is imperative to realizing national development goals and Millennium Development Goals. Developing countries must have the policy space to address their energy needs in light of their individual circumstances. All significant energy sources – whether conventional or advanced fossil fuels based, or renewables, or civilian nuclear power – must remain in policy reckoning to address energy needs for sustainable development. In particular, there needs to be a fresh assessment of nuclear energy, as a clean and safe source of energy.

Many developing countries, including India, still rely on traditional sources of energy for a significant part of their energy needs. However, traditional technologies are inefficient, insufficiently versatile and have major health, gender, and environmental impacts. Modern renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies remain expensive, except in niche applications. There has been insufficient R&D in this area. Institutions in industrialised and developing countries can share technologies resulting from collaborative R&D. We believe that this is an important and promising but unutilized area in partnerships for sustainable development.

Madam Chairperson,

At the Johannesburg Summit, we collectively agreed to significantly reduce the current loss of biological diversity by 2010. India recognises the importance of the conservation, protection and sustainable use of genetic resources. It is particularly significant for developing countries that there be an international regime to protect and safeguard the equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources and traditional knowledge. The report of the Secretary-General has rightly recommended that all efforts be made to conclude the negotiation process for an international regime, within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity, by 2010.

The international community has not lived up to its commitments for technology transfer since Rio. Critical technologies are beyond the reach of developing countries because of prohibitive costs under the existing IPRs regime. IPRs regimes must represent the tradeoffs between innovator incentives and wider human societal imperatives. We need to revisit the IPRs regime to ensure that technologies necessary for pursuing the global imperative of sustainable development are placed in the limited public domain and made accessible to

developing countries. The international community should also explore the possibility of establishing a Clean Technology Acquisition Fund to enable developing countries to access critical technologies. This would encourage the use of clean technologies, and significantly impact the realisation of sustainable development goals.

Madam Chairperson,

The Mauritius Strategy implementation review demonstrates that Small Island Developing States, or SIDS, need long-term attention in the areas of capacity building and resource transfer, to enable them to address the challenges of managing their compelling development priorities. In the spirit of South-South solidarity, India has directed its engagement with SIDS to focus on natural disaster preparedness and mitigation, resilience and capacity building and climate change. India's contribution is intended to supplement the efforts required from the international community. It is essential that the donor community fulfill their commitments.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

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