

SDGs – divergences over CBDR principle and listing of priorities continue

Rio de Janeiro, 16 June (Meena Raman) – Divergences between developed and developing countries over the principles to guide the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and whether there should be a listing of priorities for the goals continued in the final hours of the prepcom meeting in Rio de Janeiro.

At a meeting late night on Friday 15 June, the splinter group on SDGs had a meeting to advance further work in relation to paragraphs not related to the process to launch the SDGs (which was dealt with on the first day of the informal negotiations on June 13).

Barbados asked parties at the meeting on Friday to consider the paragraph in SDG 2 that he had proposed following the consultations held in New York. The proposal reads:

“We recognize that the development of goals could also be useful for pursuing focused and coherent action on sustainable development. We further recognize the importance and utility of a set of sustainable development goals, which are based on Agenda 21 and JPOI, fully respect the Rio Principles, in particular common but differentiated responsibilities, build upon commitments already made, respect international law and contribute to the full implementation of the outcomes of all major Summits in economic, social and environmental fields, taking into account that these goals should ensure a holistic coherence with the goals set out in Agenda 21. These goals should address and incorporate in a balanced way all three dimensions of sustainable development and their inter-linkages. These goals should be incorporated and integrated in the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015, thus contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and serving as a driver for implementation and

mainstreaming of sustainable development in the United Nations system as a whole. The development of these goals should not divert focus or effort from the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.”

The developed countries questioned the reference to the specific reference to the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR)” and wanted its deletion. This included the EU, Norway, Japan, US and Switzerland.

The **EU** said that references to all the Rio principles was alright. However, instead of the CBDR principle, it wanted to the following words to be inserted to replace it which was as follows– “...respect the Rio principles, taking into account international realities, capacities and development “. It also stressed that the SDGs were not a subset of MDGs . It proposed that the SDGs should contribute to and be integrated with the overarching post 2015 framework that encompasses the three dimensions of sustainable development in a coherent way.

The **G77 and China** said that there was need to take a step back in history as regards this paragraph (SDG2). It said that the G77 had wanted a list of principles that should guide the SDGs. The facilitator’s proposal was based on conversations in New York. It was concerned that there continued to be reluctance to agree on the principles of the SDGs. It supported the facilitator’s proposal and was not convinced that the CBDR principle was ill-placed. For the Group, CBDR is a crucial issue. It also did not support the proposals by the EU. It also stressed that the SDG process must not undermine the MDGs, which should be maintained and be effectively implemented. The G77 said that the red lines should be respected.

Nigeria also underscored the importance of the MDGs. It said that the SDGs should flow the review of the MDGs and there was need to link the two processes. It said that those who say that the SDGs will build on the MDGs means the MDGs will be replaced. Guyana also stressed the importance of the CBDR principle in the SDG process.

Switzerland was also concerned about the CBDR principle. It there was going to be a repeat of the Rio principles then there is need to also put in Principles 3,4, 6 and 8.

The **US** also was concerned about the CBDR principle and was not sure it applied given the need to take into account the different national realities.

On the issue of whether to list the priority areas for the SDGs, differences continued between developed and developing countries.

EU maintained the need to list the priority areas referred to in SDG 5 bis (energy, water, food security, oceans and sustainable consumption and production , as well as cross-cutting issues like equity and social inclusion, decent work, rule of law and good governance, gender equality and women's

empowerment). Switzerland also supported an indicative list.

The **G77 and China** re-emphasised that it did not want the identification of thematic areas. Identifying some areas risked not looking at issues that may be relevant for the SDG framework in future. The process that is being launched should be a robust process that should be given the chance to look at what the needs would be. We would be putting the cart before the horse when the process has not unfolded, said G77. Identifying areas now is premature.

The **US** called for the deletion of reference to the SDGs being "...universally applicable to all countries" but to be "voluntary based on national circumstances." The goal is aspirational and not applicable in the normal sense, it said.

Venezuela stressed that the SDGs should not undermine the poverty eradication agenda. It asked how parties were going to build an ambitious agenda when developed countries say that there will be no new and additional resources for the agenda.