

Statement by India at the OWG on SDGs- Session on Poverty Eradication,
18-19 April 2013

Mr. Co-chair,

The Open Working Group on SDGs is an important process, and I am delighted to be contributing to its deliberations.

India associates itself with the statement delivered by the G-77.

In the decades after RIO '92 when we embarked on the path of sustainable development, we have created more wealth than in the entire human history preceding it put together. And yet, in spite of the progress made through the MDG commitment, the world continues to have more than 1.3 billion people living on less than 1.25 dollar a day. Of these, the region where I come from, South Asia is home to the largest number of global poor.

1 out of every 6 people in this planet, a decade into the 21st century, continue to live a life of extreme poverty, hunger and desperation.

The story of poverty and the imperative for growth cannot be more compelling!

It was to capture this sense of urgency that the RIO +20 Summit identified poverty eradication to be greatest global challenge. Such categorical recognition by our leaders, perhaps for the first time in the sustainable development discourse, and in a manner way stronger than the pronouncements in the First and Second UN Decades for Eradication of Poverty, rightfully deserves our highest attention.

As we sit down to frame the Sustainable Development Goals, let there be no doubt in our minds, and in our efforts, that poverty eradication constitutes the biggest challenge to our sustainability agenda.

We take much satisfaction in the fact that the RIO understanding on poverty has been fully recognized and the UN development system called upon to give the highest priority to achieving poverty eradication in the

recently adopted QCPR (Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review) resolution. And it must now guide us in our work on the SDGs.

Mr. Co-chair,

We recognize that addressing poverty eradication is a multi-dimensional effort. However, the priority must be income generation and employment for the poor.

We also fully appreciate the need for sustainability. Our approach in this endeavour needs to address unsustainable consumption and production patterns in the developed countries and bring to bear responsibility on them to lead responsible lifestyles.

Mr. Co-chair,

We in India have followed a multi-pronged strategy to combat poverty based on faster and inclusive growth. Our average growth rate of 7.9 % in the last five years coupled with targeted poverty alleviation programmes have allowed us to pull millions out of poverty. As per our estimates, from a figure of 48% in 1990, we would be bringing extreme poverty levels down to 26 % by the end of 2015.

Economic growth is fundamental to pursue inclusive policies to eradicate poverty, and we must clearly recognize this imperative. Growth allows greater access to income and employment opportunities by the poor and boosts domestic revenues to undertake targeted interventions. There can be no development without growth and the Post-2015 development agenda should recognize this fundamental premise if it has to succeed.

On poverty eradication, certainly there is no one-size-fits-all approach. But global development experience, and own experience, reveal that with majority of the poor people in developing countries living in rural areas, we would perhaps do well to stress on agriculture development as an effective poverty reduction tool. Another area of primacy must be to promote small and medium enterprises which generate job-rich growth.

Mr. Co-chair,

Our key proposals on how to deal with poverty in the context of SDGs, both as goals and in the narrative, are as follows:

1. Our overarching objective must be to end poverty. We have to be more ambitious than the MDGs which talked of just extreme poverty. Our initial target may be on extreme poverty, with the question of larger poverty being addressed through strong cross-cutting action on meeting basic needs.
2. We should have a stand-alone goal on poverty as in the MDGs, and at the same time address multi-dimensional nature of poverty through cross-cutting themes.
3. Action on Poverty must not be contextualized or linked with other challenges. It must receive undiluted attention and focus. Its synergies with other issues should be captured in the cross-cutting themes.
4. While talking of strategies on poverty eradication, primacy must be given to faster and inclusive growth, access to income and employment opportunities, skill development, capacity building, targeted interventions and investment in physical and social infrastructure. There must be specific focus on investment and growth in agriculture and rural development sectors.
5. There is a strong co-relation between energy access and poverty, and we must clearly bring out the primacy to address lack of energy access through all sources of energy.
6. There is symbiotic relationship between the twin challenges of inequality and poverty. Without raising the standards of poor people and meeting their basic needs, we can hardly deal with inequality in an effective manner.
7. We must provide enough flexibility in our framework for countries to tailor their needs and priorities according to their circumstances.
8. Finally Mr. Co-Chair, we are firmly of the view that the SDGs should be universally applicable. It is therefore appropriate, even necessary, that when we talk of poverty issues as an SDG which applies primarily to developing countries, we need to balance it out through

another SDG which would apply to the developed countries and contribute directly to addressing the overall objective of poverty eradication, i.e. changing the unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.

I thank you.