

PLEASE, CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY



Remarks

On behalf of

H.E Ambassador John Ashe

President of the 68th Session of the United Nations General

Assembly

At the

20th session of the Commission on Sustainable

Development

New York

20 September 2013

President of the CSD, H.E. Mr. Bektas Mukhamejanov,
Distinguished Members of the Bureau of the CSD,
Former Chairpersons of the CSD,
Under-Secretary General Wu Hongbo,
Distinguished Colleagues and Representatives of Major Groups, the UN System and
the Multilateral Environmental Agreements,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for this opportunity to address you today. On behalf of the President of the UN General Assembly H. E John W. Ashe, who unfortunately cannot be here this morning, I'd like to present the following statement:

Addressing the relationship between human beings and our planetary home has been a fundamental task for the United Nations throughout its 68-year history. This 20th and final Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development provides an opportunity to mark an important milestone in this relationship. We are here to celebrate the many achievements of the CSD, to take stock of past approaches, and to move forward with lessons learned.

In closing the Commission today, we may want to first look back on how it came to be. In 1983, UN Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuellar, along with other leaders of the time, faced overwhelming evidence that the quest for industrialization at all costs, and the resulting patterns of consumption and production, compromised the integrity and long-term viability of both the environment and economic development. The response was to establish a World Commission on Environment and Development, which is now known as the Brundtland Commission. The Commission's seminal work both gave us a working definition of sustainable development and inspired the very first international conference to address both the environment and economic development simultaneously, the Rio Earth Summit, which as you all know was based on the blueprint provided by the Brundtland Report. The Rio Earth Summit, in turn, led to the creation of the CSD.

Glancing through the Report of the Brundtland Commission and the 27 principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, I realize how pertinent and valid they still are in the face of today's challenges, even as we advance toward establishing the Post 2015 Development Agenda. With the constantly evolving institutions and instruments in the multilateral system, as with life in general, we must expect change and do our utmost to adapt to and use those changes to develop new organs and bodies in support of the greater good. This applies to both the Commission on Environment and Development and the CSD, as well as others, but we should not mourn their loss, precisely because we can learn from their lessons and legacy.

Excellencies,
Colleagues,

The Commission on Sustainable Development was founded by the UN General Assembly as a follow-up to the Earth Summit in 1992, with the task of ensuring that the people-planet relationship remained healthy and functional.

Arguably, its most important achievement was that it provided a distinct home for the sustainable development agenda, where it was kept under active review. Within its mandate, the Commission has helped to develop policies, institutions and agreements in a number of areas central to development, such as energy, oceans, sustainable consumption and production, and forests. It has given the world's many small island developing states, and other countries in special circumstances, a voice in this all-important conversation.

The Commission has provided a successful model for multi-stakeholder participation and dialogue. This has been widely replicated in other intergovernmental fora. Following the Johannesburg Summit in 2002, the Commission also helped facilitate the establishment of voluntary, multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development. Within the CSD, the sustainable development agenda was viewed through a holistic lens, with a balanced integration of social development, economic

development and environmental protection aimed at meeting the needs of both present and future generations.

Today we recognize these many contributions, while also looking at why the Commission was not able to fully integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development in its work and outcomes, nor adequately adapt to new and emerging challenges, technologies and financial mechanisms. Most importantly, we will need to apply our findings to the new architecture, which is being set up in order to ensure that the elements of weakness and dysfunction inherent in the structure and operation of the CSD are not replicated.

As we launch the work of the High-level Political Forum next week, let us rekindle the aspirations left unfulfilled by the CSD. One distinct benefit of the new forum is that it is designed to attract participation from representatives of all three dimensions of sustainable development, rather than chiefly from members of the environmental community. This is critical to ensuring that sustainability is a central modality to development and that it is mainstreamed into policy, planning and living. The Forum's guidance must be strategic and visionary; its work must be attuned to emerging challenges; and its impact must be real and game-changing. Moreover it must be responsive to the needs of states and their citizens and must have multidisciplinary cross-sectoral reach.

In achieving the primary goals of overcoming poverty and ensuring sustainable development, the High-level Political Forum will help renew partnerships and enhance multilateral engagement. Its role will be paramount in ensuring implementation of the Rio+20 commitments and the post-2015 development agenda, which will include the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Colleagues,

The next year and a half will be critical for the United Nations, the international community devoted to development issues and the countless people who are depending upon us. With the post-2015 development agenda, we embark upon one of the most broad-based and ambitious endeavors ever attempted by this organization.

This new agenda – a universal, shared agenda, with common but differentiated responsibilities – must address new and emerging challenges, and also reflect the aspirations of our societies.

The magnitude of the task ahead, and the fact that this agenda will ultimately serve as the foundation for development architecture, is why I have selected “the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage!” as the theme for the 68th session of the General Assembly, over which I will preside.

At the inaugural HLPF meeting and at my special event on the Millennium Development Goals on 25 September, we will chart the course for implementing the Rio+20 outcomes, accelerating progress on the MDGs and defining this new development agenda, with an emphasis on sustainable environmental practices.

Distinguished Colleagues,

As a former President of one of the sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, it has been a pleasure to work with you on its mandate and I look forward to our continued collaboration at a more enhanced and productive level as we strive for mechanisms and measures that improve the lives of the people we serve.

The Commission on Sustainable Development was born at a time of great optimism. I am equally hopeful today, as we bring the Commission to a close and initiate a new program of action - one that is capable of ensuring that the earth remains a thriving source of life and prosperity for generations to come. Given the urgency and complexity of today’s sustainable development challenges and the level of attention

needed to address them, let us now close this chapter of development history and look toward the future.

Thank you.