



AUSTRALIA



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UN Economic and Social Council 2012 Development Cooperation Forum

Sustainable development: our shared future

**Keynote Address by Senator the Hon Bob Carr
Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs**

(Check against delivery)

Mr President
Mr Secretary-General
Excellencies
Distinguished delegates

In December 2004, we saw how a single tremor sent shock waves across an ocean, obliterating hard won development gains in just minutes. Over 225,000 people from Indonesia to Sri Lanka lost their lives. The world came together in what was an unprecedented global recovery effort.

Australia provided 68 million dollars in immediate aid and a further one billion dollars to Indonesia's long term reconstruction efforts.

Then last year when one of Australia's own cities, Brisbane, was besieged by once-in-a-century floods, our Indonesian friends were generous in their assistance.

Here in New York, we must take that spirit of cooperation further. Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals has been good, but not good enough.

And the time we have to achieve the MDGs is short.

The proportion of people in our world going hungry sits stubbornly at over 15 per cent. To achieve our MDG target, we need to get that figure down to 10 per cent by 2015 – and then go lower.

Working against us is the reality that our planet is growing weary of sustaining us.

One billion people in developing countries depend on fish for their primary source of protein, but 85 per cent of our ocean fisheries are fully exploited, over-exploited or depleted. And dead zones – zones where most marine life cannot survive – are spreading across our oceans. Like so many things we share, oceans can only be maintained through effective global cooperation – no country can do it alone.

Business as usual will not suffice.

This Forum is well placed to find new ways to make good old fashioned cooperation *work better*.

Mr President,

I would like to suggest a few ideas on how we can make that happen.

First, sustained and predictable finance is key

For many least developed countries, aid is a significant part of their national budget. If aid flows cannot be predicted beyond this year, many may struggle to chart a sustainable course for the future.

Despite a tight fiscal environment, Australia is one of very few countries to have found a way to continue expanding our aid program: by 300 million dollars this financial year, and over 60 per cent in the next five.

This puts us on track to become the sixth largest donor by 2017. And with Australia's aid budget now providing firm multi-year funding commitments, our development partners can plan with much greater certainty.

Second, we must heed lessons learned

Take my earlier example of natural disasters: we have seen time and again that the only effective response is a joint one – a combination of diplomatic, humanitarian and civil society action, and using military assets when requested.

We have learned much from responses to the Haiti earthquakes, the Indian Ocean tsunami and the humanitarian crisis in the Sahel.

We have learned what works and what does not.

Yet, our cooperation on disaster risk reduction still has room to improve.

Today, I am pleased to announce that Australia will provide 100 million dollars over the next five years to strengthen partnerships. This will help developing countries increase their resilience to disasters by bolstering early warning systems, and protecting schools, hospitals and other critical infrastructure.

This will reduce the costs, both human and economic, when a disaster strikes again. As it inevitably will.

Third, sustainable development can only work if we innovate with partnerships

Mr President,

To make sustainable development a reality, it is not just one form of cooperation we need, but many.

The world is changing and development cooperation needs to respond in an innovative way.

This year's United Nations International Year of Cooperatives reminds us that we need to put people at the centre of this change – to empower them to make development happen.

Through our 2.2 million dollar contribution to the Women's World Banking initiative, Australia is supporting one of the best known women's financial cooperatives, the Self-Employed Women's Association Bank in India.

Support for cooperatives is important because it creates new markets and new business opportunities where they have been destroyed by famine or conflict.

Australia is also a keen supporter of partnerships that combine different sources of expertise, including south-south cooperation. Just over ten years ago, Australia still provided bilateral development assistance to Malaysia.

Now we work together as partners to help others.

Australia has supported Malaysia to train over 150 Afghan master teacher trainers who are now returning home to train the next generation of teachers in Afghanistan.

Australia is also working with city councils in Zimbabwe and South Africa to apply African expertise to strengthen sewage systems. This project has improved sanitation conditions for at least 450,000 local residents in Zimbabwe, repaired 1,200 leaks and cleared 250 kilometres of sewage pipes.

Parents are now more confident in allowing their children to play on the streets without risk of disease.

Mr President

These were some of the themes of the third High-Level Symposium of the Development Cooperation Forum, '*Shaping a Sustainable Future – Partners in Development Cooperation*'.

Australia was proud to host this Symposium in May this year, and to see its messages reflected at the Rio+20 Conference two weeks ago. In Rio, we committed to build a sustainable future – the future we all want for this world.

Rio gave us a platform, now we need to act. And we need to do so together.

This forum is the place to make that happen.

In this room, all partners in development have a voice.

It has been a long time coming, but finally we have all the right people around the table to build the future we want.

Thank you