

22 January 2013

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,
President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Adoption of Agenda item 20(a): Establishing the Open Working
Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals**

Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In a few moments, the Member States will adopt a decision establishing the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals.

Its formation has been long overdue, and I truly welcome this development. I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to our facilitator, the Permanent Representative of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Her Excellency Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, for her hard work and dedicated efforts in getting us to this point.

Months of consultations were required, often producing deadlocked positions.

As a result, we have fallen behind schedule, which is hardly encouraging.

Excellencies,

The task that is now before us is of fundamental importance. This body was given the responsibility by world leaders last June in Rio to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals.

I believe this is a strategic issue of the first order one that may frame much of the UN's work for decades to come.

Our duty is to narrow the gap between the have-s and the have not-s. We should aim to transform failing states, and empower those who long for peace and reconciliation. We ought to band together to defeat the extremists, and embolden those who are ready to forsake vengeance. We should strive to re-energize the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes, and eliminate the scourge of human trafficking. We have to go on the offensive against organized crime, and take on the root causes of terrorism. We must endeavor to strengthen the rule of law, and champion international solidarity.

It is hard to imagine the fulfilment of such aspirations without clearly defined development benchmarks. In the time ahead, the Open Working Group needs to establish goals to eradicate poverty and hunger; encourage scientific and technological innovation; raise healthcare and education

standards; set renewable and clean energy targets; decide on ways to protect and manage our finite natural resources amongst many others.

To do what's right for the world, this has to be taken up with genuine passion.

Excellencies,

During the resumed part of the 67th Session, I will closely engage with the Member States to ensure that the SDG process becomes a top priority putting the work of this Group at the very center of our attention.

I am also ready to help the appointed facilitators for the intergovernmental process to propose options for an effective financing for development strategy, as well as those tasked with preparing the High-Level Forum during the 68th Session.

We will need to enhance coordination between the General Assembly, the Secretariat, and ECOSOC even further. We must continue to reinforce and complement each other's efforts, so that a single, fully coherent post-2015 agenda results from this process.

Excellencies,

In conclusion, I believe it is of critical importance that the Open Working Group begins its substantive deliberations as soon as possible.

I will therefore schedule the Group's inaugural meeting for early February. In the meanwhile, my Office will take active interest in consultations on the procedural matters that need to be sorted out before the Group can begin its work in earnest.

As President of the General Assembly, I am ready to give the Group my full attention, so that by the end of the 67th Session, it may be well on its way to fulfilling the task of formulating the Sustainable Development Goals.

This is a moment for us to imagine the future, and to decide on new ways to address global challenges to truly define the 'world we want,' and the UN we need to make such a vision a reality.

With energetic leadership and the full institutional support of the United Nations system, we should seize the generational opportunity, and craft a global framework to ensure that our children inherit a planet where no nation is left behind.

Thank you for your attention.