



Delegation of the European Union



Permanent Mission of Spain

Statement on behalf of the European Union

By

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Mister Chairman, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the EU.

The following countries align themselves with this EU Statement: the Candidate Countries Croatia, Turkey, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Due to the time constraints of this session, I will keep my statement within seven minutes. The full version of my statement will be distributed in the room shortly.

CSD18 is an excellent opportunity to re-visit the core messages on sustainable development, in the light of the recent Report of the Secretary General. I agree that development is the "midwife of sustainability, just as much as sustainability is the life support system for development".

And this clearly points to the importance of an integrated approach when dealing with the key global challenges of poverty, hunger, environmental degradation and the misuse of natural resources.

With this in mind, allow me to highlight some key points based on experience and on the interesting discussions from last week:

On transport, taking into account the sustainable mobility challenges, we must focus on how to use the long-term potential of transport for improving the standards of living worldwide and, at the same time, solving the associated environmental and health problems, especially air pollution and sector specific GHG emissions;

On waste, it is in the interest of all countries to promote first of all the so-called waste hierarchy, the prevention of waste before reuse, followed by recycling, recovery of energy embedded in waste, and with disposal as the last resort; Moreover, we all need to ensure the safe and environmentally sound management of waste in line with high technical standards.

On mining, social and environmental concerns related to the sector have to be addressed, while finding new solutions to do more with less, to increase the wealth and welfare of people and to reduce the pressure on eco-systems. Improving governance and transparency of the income stemming from mining will contribute to a sustainable development of this sector.

As access to raw materials will become more limited in the future, we will have to continue to reduce waste generated, to increase recycling and the re-use of water and other resources, and to minimize the energy used to produce raw materials and products.

On chemicals, the main message I took from last week's expert level discussions is that even though chemicals are a core part of our everyday life, if they are not managed soundly over their whole life-cycle, they can negatively influence both our environment and human health.

¹ * Croatia and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

The new EU chemicals system REACH is an example of good governance in a regional chemical managing system: REACH moves primary responsibility to manufacturers, importers and downstream users, to make sure that the substances they develop, place on the market or use, do not harm human health or the environment throughout their life cycle.

I also recognize the importance of the implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals and recommend adopting a global system of recognizing and communicating risks and hazards.

I believe that the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management constitutes an important global framework for improving our chemicals management and narrowing the 'capacity gap' between the developing and the developed world. Countries should use the SAICM process actively to ensure that the 2020 goal of ensuring that chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimise adverse effects on the environment and human health is achieved.

I would also like to recall the successful outcome of the ex-COPS meeting in Bali earlier this year, the results of which contribute to more efficient and effective implementation of the global chemical and waste conventions at the national level. However, there remains a need to avoid further fragmentation of international instruments for chemicals not already covered by Multilateral Environmental Agreements and we think this CSD cycle could usefully discuss this issue.

Last, but not least, on sustainable consumption and production, the EU would like to highlight again its full commitment to moving the SCP agenda forward, both regionally and globally.

I strongly believe that SCP measures can help us make our economy greener and less vulnerable.

Improving the environmental performance of products throughout their life cycle, and using greener, resource-efficient technologies and policies can deliver not only environmental but also important social and economic benefits. By doing more and better with less, and making significant changes in our lifestyles, we can improve a lot throughout our countries, our regions and our communities.

Our experience both inside the EU, for example through our Sustainable Consumption and Production - Sustainable Industrial Policy Action Plan, as well as globally, for example through the SWITCH ASIA programme or the Marrakech process, has shown that SCP can do so much more than 'only' protect our health and the environment. There are real benefits to changing emphasis and practices.

This is reflected in our strategic thinking and in our published aims. In the EU, as a response to the current economic crisis and a need to plan for an improved future, the recently adopted 10-year economic strategy called Europe 2020. In particular, resource efficiency has been included as one of the seven flagship initiatives proposed to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe.

Therefore, in our view, a well structured process with a clear and accepted mandate should be set up and begin its work right after CSD18, to develop in a transparent manner a proposal for a 10-Year Framework of Programs on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP on SCP), taking into account, inter alia, the experience and results of the Marrakech process on SCP.

Mister Chairman, now allow me to elaborate a little more on resource efficiency:

The "Resource-efficient Europe" initiative aims to “decouple economic growth from the use of resources, support the shift towards a low carbon economy, increase the use of renewable energy sources, modernize our transport sector and promote energy efficiency.” It aims at ensuring continued economic growth whilst managing our resources sustainably.

Resource efficiency also means a greater reliance on eco-innovation across the whole economy and the introduction of environmental technologies, including in service sectors and households. This should provide the technologies, business processes, and management techniques to decrease the environmental impacts of our actions while contributing to green growth, innovation and jobs. Already around 3.4 million people are directly employed in the EU eco-industry, which is around 1,5% of all Europeans in employment.

These are strong figures. However, the continuing challenge remains how to convince all stakeholders that resource efficiency is the cornerstone of sustainability.

Mister Chairman,

International cooperation will have to play an important role in the realisation of all those objectives. But this kind of cooperation will only succeed if we first secure cast-iron political commitment and political will by all the relevant partners. The EU, as the world's biggest donor providing 60 percent of overall Official Development Assistance, will make its contribution as a commitment to our shared goal of eradicating poverty in the context of sustainable development.

And finally, let us not forget: all of these aims and discussions will have failed if they do not elaborate concrete policy recommendations that will have to be taken at CSD 19 next year, notably on further international action on SCP and in particular the setting up of a 10-year framework of programs on SCP. These policy recommendations will be the basis of a renewed commitment to action 'on the ground' and will also help us to accomplish the important task set for UNCSO 2012 of greening our economy in the context of sustainable development.

Thank you for your attention.