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Agenda item 7 (panellist)

**Keynote IFSD ECE Regional Prepcom**

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Thank you for inviting me to speak at this important meeting. The momentum for Rio+20 is growing and more and more it's starting to look like a summit. Nevertheless, there is a lot of hard work left and the months between January and June will be crucial to an ambitious outcome that many in this room are hoping for.

It is encouraging that over the course of the last few months we have seen steady progress on the theme of IFSD. Only a few months ago IFSD was considered underdeveloped and lagging behind the other themes. What is even more encouraging is that the country submissions reflect an appetite for strong and ambitious IFSD reform.

I believe that the reason for this mounting ambition is the dissatisfaction that countries feel with the current framework. That the current IFSD system is letting us down, it has expanded in a haphazard manner and it simply is not working. It is costly to operate and maintain; it is time-consuming; it poses substantial barriers to developing countries to participate in; and there is a general perception that all efforts that have gone into it over the last 40 years have not met citizens' expectations in mitigating environmental degradation.

There are many dimensions to IFSD, but if we are to have a strong political outcome we need to focus on a few fundamentals reforms. I want to highlight a few key areas that I see as the key areas that would pose a fundamental step towards improving the current arrangements.

Let's start with International Environmental Governance. IEG is an integral part of IFSD. It directly contributes towards achieving sustainable development. IEG is ripe for a decision. Over the past three years, governments have worked out the gaps of the system and determined how it can be improved. What we need is to take that final step and take the decision to improve a system that has needed repair for a long time.

Some are saying that this is not the time for reforms; that, due to the financial crisis, we cannot afford to create new arrangements. Is it not the contrary? In the current financial climate if we cannot spend shouldn't we try and save? The world can no longer afford to pay for the inefficiencies of the current IEG system. One example is the multilateral environmental agreements. There are nearly 50 MEAs with more than 100 signatories. All are administrated separately. Administration of only 12 of the major MEAs is costing governments nearly 90 million dollars a year. It would cost 4 times less if they were administrated together and in a more centralized way.

We must also not forget that apart from the financial crisis we also face an ecological crisis. The reason we are in this ecological crisis is because we have focused too much on negotiation and not enough on implementation. While implementation is the responsibility of each sovereign state it hinges on the capacity of states to realise their commitments. In an average year, just 12 of the major MEAs produce 200-300 decisions that need to be implemented at the national level. MEA

secretariats are not meant to implement directly so where do developing countries turn? They have to turn to a complicated myriad of UN bodies.

There are gaping holes in our delivery mechanisms for implementation support, not just in the area of financing, but also in how the UN works together to assist countries meet their global commitments at the national level. What we lack is an anchor institution for implementation support as we see in other international regimes such as health, labor, trade and food and agriculture and we lack a common strategy to support the implementation of globally agreed environmental policy at the national level.

It may be tempting to take what we have at the moment and leave the fundamental reforms to later, but the ecological crisis is one that if we don't address it now it will get more perverse quickly.

Rio+20 is an opportunity that we must not miss to redesign a system that is more responsive to countries' needs and at the same time better suits the economic climate of the current and future years by making it less fragmented and more cost-effective.

UNEP will be 40 years old next year, an age that is considered in many societies as an age of maturity. It would be timely on this anniversary of UNEP, for governments to rethink whether they have given the organisation the authority and resources that it needs to meet the challenges that countries and their citizens will face in the next 40 years.

Many of the same challenges we face for overall sustainable development governance are similar to the challenges for IEG. Like IEG, the single greatest challenge is moving from the negotiations and process mode toward a shared agenda for implementation. This will be an immense task as we have hundreds of agreements and thousands of decisions that require implementation at the national level. The vastness of the landscape is intimidating if you begin to look at it in its entirety. Here the proposed Sustainable Development Goals can offer some coherence and focus global efforts. Lets not strive for a perfect system otherwise we risk spending the next 5 years negotiating it. Let's learn from the MDGs and set goals that are simple, practical and manageable. The primary lesson learned from the MDGs is the need to put in place stronger governance arrangements to peer review the goals and a stronger system-wide ownership to share responsibility for the goals among UN agencies. It won't be perfect system but it will be a good start and we can learn by doing.

Finally, in light of the complexity of sustainable development we must question whether the system of stakeholder participation we have in place is still adequate. It is widely recognized that governments alone are not able to realize sustainable development alone. The task for Rio+20 is therefore, based on Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, to find new models for stakeholder participation, which will truly assist governments in implementing sustainable development. Such models could include a re-formulation of the major groups structure; enhanced participation in intergovernmental decision-making; a permanent role in a new peer review mechanism; and a strengthened role in implementation at the national level.

Rio+20 is an extraordinary opportunity that we cannot afford to miss. Let's make the best of the time that we have left until Rio+20 to flesh out the details of governance reforms that will become the cornerstones for improving IFSD and achieving sustainable development, which we have spent negotiating the last 20 years.