

## **December 1-2 UNECE Rio +20 Regional Preparatory Meeting**

### **United States Statement delivered by Ambassador Betty E. King**

Thank you Mr. Chairman, the UNECE Secretariat and colleagues. We look forward to a fruitful meeting and one that enables an open exchange of views by UNECE member states as we get closer to Rio +20.

The U.S. government sees Rio+20 as an opportunity to move beyond the traditional international conference format dominated by speeches to government delegates and the negotiation of lengthy documents. We support broad participation from non-governmental actors and will look to integrate new technologies to bolster inclusive participation. We are encouraging all participants in Rio to bring their own compendium of commitments that describe in detail how the individual groups or coalitions of participants will undertake action to help build a sustainable future. In our opinion, Rio+20 should be cross-sectoral and we need to extend the conversation on sustainable development beyond environment ministries. Above all, Rio+20 should be positive about the opportunities for the future and realistic about the challenges.

At Rio, the U.S. will seek to advance science, technology, and innovation as critical elements for sustainable development. Agreement on the principles of a Shared Environmental Information System as reflected in the UNECE Environment for Europe Astana Declaration is an important example of what countries and regions can do to improve science and information decision making for sustainable development. Rio + 20 should prioritize the ability of all countries to monitor and assess their own environments and integrate that information with social and economic information to inform the development decision making process.

***Let me turn now to the first theme of Rio +20 – the Green Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication.*** The green economy offers a flexible and actionable approach to achieving economic growth in a way that mitigates negative impacts on the environment. It provides policy options and best practices that countries can adapt to their individual circumstances. The green economy can expand growth opportunities, offer wide-ranging benefits and resonate with countries at all stages of development. We oppose a "one size fits all" framing of the green economy and support the notion that the green economy provides numerous tools that countries can draw on to pursue sustainable development.

These tools include:

- improving data collection and data sharing;
- developing strategies for resource conservation and productivity to assure food security;
- conserving biodiversity and using natural resources and ecosystems sustainably;
- developing and deploying clean energy technologies;
- promoting low carbon development;
- improving consumer outreach efforts to promote green purchasing;
- developing human capacity for the green economy and green job creation;
- eliminating fossil fuel subsidies;
- and supporting the elimination of trade barriers to environmentally friendly goods and services.

We support active engagement with the private sector and civil society to leverage investment, create employment opportunities and promote green business practices. We recognize the importance of scientific research and innovation to spur green growth. We also support worker training and education to increase green job opportunities and to mitigate the social costs of transitioning to a green economy.

Rio +20 should encourage the global community to scale up investments in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and energy access by creating a commercial landscape that demonstrates a return on capital and attracts private sector investments to underserved areas and populations. To achieve this, governments must target public resources carefully to leverage private capital, to reduce the risk and cost of capital, to stimulate innovation, and to create competitive and viable markets for electricity and energy.

It should also be said that – when it comes to a consideration of the green economy at Rio – the U.S. is not prepared to endorse the idea of a “green economy roadmap” as several have suggested.

***Now, with regard to the second theme - an Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development*** – it is our opinion that this theme extends beyond the UN system to a discussion about how sustainable development is advanced and practiced throughout societies. The U.S. stresses open, transparent, inclusive governance structures at all levels. Within the UN system, we recognize the need to explore a structure that can efficiently and effectively monitor sustainable development issues and programs, with an emphasis on integration of the three pillars.

The UN needs a body through which governments can cooperate to recommend environmental policies, promote best practices, and build national capacity for governance, monitoring, and assessment. That institution – the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) – already exists and, at Rio +20, we need to work together to strengthen it within the UN system to ensure a viable environmental pillar that can meet 21st century demands. We do not believe that alternative proposals for a new statutory institution on the environment, a World Environment Organization or UN Environment Organization, will strengthen environmental governance or solve any of the problems that we all recognize persist. We think the more effective course is to focus intellectual and financial resources on strengthening existing institutions that have already proven their worth and to avoid the distraction of trying to set up something new and untested.

Rio + 20 should seek to make governments around the world more transparent and accessible, to better engage citizens, and to build new networks across all sectors of our societies. We look forward to achieving these goals together. Thank you.