

Preparatory Committee Meeting of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

May 17-19, 2010

Opening Remarks

Thank you, Mr. co-chair, and congratulations.

The United States is pleased to be here at the first Preparatory Committee meeting of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, 18 years next month since Rio and eight years since Johannesburg.

At the 2012 conference we hope to consider broad and far reaching issues that will profoundly affect the future of our shared environment. With this in mind, the conference must be practical and we must focus on what can be achieved in real terms. We must also be prepared to engage a full range of stakeholders, and especially young people who care so deeply about the state of our environment. Indeed, some have aptly called this conference “Rio for 20-somethings” – referring to the age group – because of the need to ensure that the next generation is informed about, and connected to, sustainable development issues.

We are eager to share the progress we have made in promoting sustainable development at home and abroad, in fostering a green economy, and in strengthening institutions for sustainable development, while recognizing that there is still much to be done.

As we assess the progress to date and remaining gaps in implementing sustainable development initiatives, the United States will emphasize our commitment to a range of interrelated issues, including addressing climate change concerns, protecting global health, ensuring food security, maintaining the health of our oceans and marine environments, and promoting access to clean water.

We will also focus on truly integrating the three pillars of sustainable development into development activities. Economic, social, and environmental concerns must all be addressed in a comprehensive manner.

In the discussions about new and emerging issues, we will highlight the centrality of human capital in sustainable development – the competencies, knowledge and

attributes that people develop through education and work experience and that allow them to lead productive lives.

The green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication is a broad issue, but an important one that deserves our full attention. Our initiatives involve a full range of U.S. government agencies, and will help build an economy based on clean energy and resource efficiency, all the while paying attention to job training and building a robust workforce for a green tomorrow.

Regarding the institutional framework for sustainable development, the United States will stress the importance of implementation at both national and local levels, as well as engagement with stakeholders and non-governmental organizations. We fully support actions that will strengthen the Bali Strategic Plan and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and we will continue to support progress through the UN Environment Programme initiative on International Environmental Governance. We will promote the integration of gender issues in the institutional framework. We also support fully integrating the environmental pillar into economic and social development efforts at all levels.

We look forward to working with governments and stakeholders over the course of this meeting and as we continue the preparatory process over the next two years, and we look forward to a successful outcome to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012. Thank you.