

**MEETING OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS,  
March 31 – April 4, 2014**

**Statement of Latvia**

**Delivered by Ms. Inese Freimane-Deksne, Deputy Permanent Representative**

**Cluster on Peaceful and non-violent societies, rule of law and capable institutions**

Latvia fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union.

In addition, we would like to make the following remarks on this Cluster:

1. Both the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and of the Special Event convened by the President of the General Assembly on 25 September 2013 reaffirmed that peace, the rule of law, respect for all human rights, good governance and accountable institutions are closely interlinked with the sustainable development and should be properly reflected in the new development agenda.
2. The new development agenda should carry forward the spirit of the Millennium Declaration and the best of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but, at the same time, must go beyond the MDGs and address the issues which were not tackled by the MDGs framework and were proven to be crucial for the eradication of poverty and for sustainable development. The last decade has clearly shown that without peace and justice, there can be no development. Numbers speak for themselves – by 2015, more than 50% of the total population in extreme poverty will reside in places affected by conflict and chronic violence. Therefore **peaceful and stable societies should be one of the focus areas of the new development agenda.**
3. We fully agree that there can be no peace and stability in the society without good governance and transparent, capable and accountable institutions which enable people to work together, effectively and peacefully. At the same time, good governance and institutions that guarantee the rule of law and the realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, are the core elements of wellbeing in every society, not only in conflict-affected settings. All people want their voices to be heard, their governments to be honest and accountable, and their taxes to be invested in their future and prosperity. Therefore we believe that, **while keeping interlinkages, peaceful and stable societies, on the one hand, and good governance, the rule of law and effective institutions, on the other hand, should be addressed as two separate focus areas in the new agenda.**

4. We believe that **freedom of speech and association, as well as access to independent information and media, including social media**, are integral parts of good governance and the rule of law. Another important aspect of good governance is **transparency of public institutions and improved access to the information and data owned by those institutions**, whether at local, regional or national level.
5. We also support **inclusive and participatory decision-making and engagement of civil society and private sector** in decision-making processes at local and national level. **Engagement of the private sector** should be also explicitly mentioned in the targets since public - private cooperation fosters sustainability, global public goods management and long-term private sector involvement.
6. We are convinced that promoting **participation of women in decision-making processes, as well as addressing women's justice and security concerns** is an inseparable part of those efforts. Therefore proper interlinkages should be reflected with the Focus area on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.
7. We consider **accountability and fight against impunity** essential for strengthening good governance and the rule of law at both national and international level. Therefore they should be also included as target areas.
8. We welcome the recognition of the need for **strengthening local governments** but we **would like to broaden this target by including "strengthening local participatory governance" in it. In order to achieve the most effective results at local level, the governance mechanisms should be locally tailored, as well as they should include the engagement of all actors – not only public institutions but also private sector and civil society.** Essential parts of local government effectiveness are client oriented public administration, civic initiatives, use of innovative participatory mechanisms and public-private cooperation. Locally tailored and inclusive governance mechanisms are important, for example, also in the context of sustainable consumption and production, biological diversity, climate, food security, to name a few.

We all have challenges to overcome in strengthening good governance, the rule of law and effective institutions. Therefore those issues are one of the main focus areas in national planning processes in Latvia and in our bilateral development cooperation where we share our transitional experience. Latvia will also continue to engage in a dialogue and play a constructive role in further discussions on the new development agenda, considering the best ways how to reflect good governance, the rule of law and effective institutions in this framework.

I thank you.