

STATEMENT

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Leader of the Indian Delegation to

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(GMEF)

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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ambassadors, Ladies & Gentlemen,

It is a privilege to be here at the Twelfth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of the United Nations Environment Programme being held on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the landmark Rio Earth Summit of 1992 which set out the concept of sustainability and its importance as a critical parameter of human development. Therefore, the 12th Special Session of the Governing Council and the Global Ministerial Environment Forum of UNEP assumes a special significance. We hope that the deliberations in this meeting here in this beautiful city of Nairobi would contribute to the ongoing deliberations for a forward-looking, positive, ambitious, fair and equitable outcome to the Rio+20 conference. At the same time, Mr Chair, as we all know Sustainable Development is more than just environment; it is a broader canvass and must be approached with a broader vision. It is important that we ensure that our discussions here do not in any way prejudice or pre-empt the inter-governmental negotiation process that is going on for an outcome of the Rio+20 conference.

Mr. Chairman,

The foremost priority for us at this stage, as we approach Rio+20, is to evaluate all that has happened, and much that has not happened, in the last 20 years, and what remains to be done. In other words, to draw up an agenda for the future by focusing on the implementation gaps of the past. Only by doing so can we ensure that our environment is not only protected but also revived and enriched. While doing so, we need to recognise that poverty eradication continues to be the most important challenge before the world and our overriding priority.

While stepping up our efforts for environment protection and management we need to ensure that equity, poverty eradication and balance between the three pillars of sustainable development remain at the very heart of these efforts. It is also important that the unsustainable patterns of consumption and lifestyle of the developed world must be rationalized to release ecological space for equitable and sustainable growth of the world.

The Rio Principles should, under no circumstances, be diluted in a bid to define a new framework of actions. The framework of actions has to be anchored in the principles of equity and

common but differentiated responsibilities, the principle of right to development, the principle of the sovereign right of States over their natural resources and principle of Multilateralism. India has remained actively engaged in the international discourse on environmental and sustainability discourse for the past four decades. We are prepared to engage constructively on the two themes of Rio+20, that is, Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and International Framework for Sustainable Development within the parameters I just outlined.

Mr. Chairman, developing countries like India are playing increasingly important roles in the international debates on environment and sustainable development. Nothing illustrates this better than the fact that in a space of less than a year, three important global conferences seeking to define our collaborative approach to environment and sustainable development are being hosted in developing countries. South Africa just hosted the 17th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC which came out with some very important conclusions. We know that Brazil is hosting the Rio+20 global conference in June this year. Later this year in October, India will be the proud host of the 11th Conference of Parties (COP-11) to the Convention on Biodiversity the city of Hyderabad. We sincerely hope this conference will also see large scale participation from countries across the world and all stakeholders and look forward to working closely with UNEP and other countries to make this conference a success.

Mr Chairman what has intrigued my delegation today is your decision to allow introduction of a CRP in the form of a 'Declaration', which is yet to be discussed, to the delegation of Switzerland, even before Member States were allowed to make their interventions at the opening plenary. This appears to be in contravention of the usual practices and norms of multilateral meetings. This may please be clarified.

Before concluding, let me say that we appreciate the role UNEP has played in mainstreaming environment in the global agenda. The challenges before us are many and I believe that we can respond to them better when we work collectively. India has come prepared to work constructively to evolve a shared vision and approach to address these challenges.

Thank You
