Open Working Group, February 2014:

Australia, the Netherlands, United Kingdom Constituency Statement

Oceans and Seas, Forests and Biodiversity

Healthy ecosystems, biological diversity (biodiversity) and natural resources are fundamental to human life and wellbeing. They provide employment, income, food and water, and support sustainable economic growth and development. It is estimated that 40% of the global economy relies on biological processes and products. With the world's population and levels of consumption growing rapidly, pressure on natural resources is increasing. It is therefore essential that we recognise the linkages between environmental, social and economic concerns within the post-2015 framework: for example, the importance of biodiversity for food security; of forests in climate regulation and water storage; and of environmental quality for human and ecosystem health.

Environmental degradation at global, regional and local levels is compounding social and economic problems. Depleting renewable natural resources and degrading ecosystems will impose additional costs and will ultimately undermine long-term growth. It can also undermine the capacity of communities to address development challenges and reduce their resilience to natural disasters and other shocks. Poor and vulnerable people in particular are disproportionately affected by environmental and resource degradation due, in part, to their direct dependence on local natural resources for their livelihoods and their inability to secure access to alternatives.

Without the sound sustainable management of natural resources, lasting poverty eradication and prosperity globally will not be achieved. We therefore need to ensure that natural resource issues are properly reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals framework.

Oceans and Seas

- Oceans, seas and coastal areas supply critical services to society such as food security, coastal protection, erosion prevention and carbon absorption.
- Oceans provide an essential source of nutritious food – almost 1 billion people in developing countries depend on fish for their primary source of protein.
- Oceans and seas provide income, employment and livelihoods in fisheries, aquaculture, shipping, renewable energy, natural resource extraction and tourism
    - marine renewable energy and hydrocarbons are growing industries providing jobs and modern energy
    - shipping is vital for the global economy, accounting for 90% of international trade.
- Oceans are particularly important to small island developing states (SIDS), whose land area is dwarfed by the oceans over which they have exclusive economic rights, and for whom they often have important cultural significance
    - for example Nauru has 21km^2 landmass and 320,000km^2 ocean exclusive economic zone[i].

- Oceans are an essential source of livelihoods and support major economic sectors. For example, in the Pacific region:
    - fisheries products account for up to 80% of the region's exports by value[ii]
    - tuna stock contributes $260 million to combined GDP, and provides over 13,000 jobs, and there is potential to significantly increase returns to countries in the region from this resource
    - coastal tourism accounts for 7.2% gross value of product, and up to 25% of gross domestic product for some countries.
- Small island states and low lying coastal countries (e.g. Bangladesh) are some of the most vulnerable to natural hazards such as cyclones and tsunamis
    - marine ecosystems including coral reefs and mangrove forests provide vital coastal protection and support resilience.
- Despite a range of multilateral commitments relating to oceans, marine environments continue to deteriorate
    - unsustainable extraction of marine living resources leading to depleted fish stocks, loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystems
    - globally 57% of fish stocks are fully exploited, 30% over-exploited, and up to 20% of fish landed may be the result of illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing
    - marine pollution, invasive species and the CO_2 related stressors of ocean acidification, warming and deoxygenation represent critical threats to marine environments
    - changing patterns of freshwater runoff, pollution, droughts and floods, changing sea levels and effects on coastal currents, all have the potential to significantly impact on fisheries and aquaculture.
- We need to improve governance and management of oceans by supporting effective planning at national, regional and global levels, and building capacity to enforce management plans, including by supporting the work of Regional Fisheries Management Organizations and through encouraging ratification of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement
    - managed sustainably some estimates suggest we could secure economic benefits worth an extra $50 billion annually from our fisheries.
- To **achieve healthy fish stocks** and produce maximum sustainable yield, we should:
    - prevent **illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing**, **increasing the flow of benefits to developing countries;**
    - protect critical coastal and ocean habitats upon which fish populations depend

- support the development and effective enforcement of **management plans for marine fisheries,** securing and respecting tenure rights over marine resources including customary rights

- set scientifically based targets within safe biological limits and stop overfishing, end destructive fishing practices and deliver fair and equitable use of healthy fish stocks, for both coastal and deep sea fisheries.

- We need **to realise the benefits of sustainable development of coastal and marine resources** by:

  - managing and, where necessary, treating waste discharges to waterways to reduce coastal and marine pollution

  - **supporting sustainable tourism activities and capacity building that promotes environmental awareness and conserves the environment**

  - promoting efficient and responsible use of chemicals in agriculture to reduce nutrient run-off and impacts on coastal ecosystems and fisheries

  - tackling damaging forms of pollution and CO_2 emissions at source, so as to minimise negative impacts, in particular to coral reef ecosystems which millions of people rely upon daily for the livelihoods

  - mitigating the risks of extracting non-renewable natural resources from sensitive deep ocean and continental shelf environments, and investing revenue wisely to maximise sustainable growth.

Forests

- An estimated 1.2 billion people depend on forests for their livelihoods[iii], including 60 million indigenous people who are wholly dependent on forests. Forests provide vital sources of employment and income.

- Forests provide functions such as water storage, erosion prevention, climate control and products such as food, wood, energy, shelter and medicine all of which are critical for sustainable development

  - forests are also critical for biodiversity, with tropical forests supporting an estimated 80% of the world's terrestrial species.[iv]

- Forests play a crucial role in mitigating, and building resilience to the effects of climate change. They collectively store more carbon than the atmosphere, and deforestation accounts for more than 10% of global man made CO_2 emissions. Forests also provide important ecosystem services, for example three quarters of the world's freshwater is delivered through forested catchments.

- Deforestation represents a critical threat to forests and the communities that rely on forest resources. Globally, rates of deforestation are decreasing, but there are still significant net losses (5.2 million hectares per year 2000–2010), and deforestation is increasing in some regions, presenting environmental, social and economic risks

- deforestation undermines livelihoods and disproportionately affects the world's poorest and most marginalised groups, including indigenous people and women.

- Our dependence on forests is without dispute: we therefore need to halt the persistent decline in our natural forests by tackling the drivers of deforestation including through illegal trade. Management and systems of governance of forests need to be strengthened, should be inclusive, considering the sustainability of forest use and the needs of the communities that rely on them economically and culturally – especially indigenous people and the rural poor.

- Integrated natural resource planning and management should be applied at the landscape level, and include forest inventories and scientific knowledge combined with traditional knowledge.

Biodiversity

- Biodiversity, the variety of life on Earth, contributes to human well-being and is a critical foundation for the ecosystems that support global society and economy.

- Biodiversity and ecosystem services are key enablers of human development and well-being. They generate economic growth through agriculture, fisheries, forestry, tourism and provide cultural value for billions of people.

- Loss of biodiversity particularly impacts the poor and vulnerable, including women and children and indigenous people. Diverse ecosystems are essential for life; biodiversity supplies: clean water and air, crop pollination, the regulation of pests and diseases, soil nutrient cycling and soil fertility. Biodiversity also has significant cultural value.

- Healthy ecosystems are more resilient to damage from disasters and can protect people and livelihoods in the event of extreme weather events.

- Ecosystems that have lost key species are more susceptible to change and may become less productive, compromising the socio-economic benefits they provide

    - an estimated 40% of species were lost between 1970 and 2000.

- Land degradation, land use change, overexploitation of natural resources, pollution, invasive species and CO_2 related impacts on marine ecosystems are threatening biodiversity globally.

- We need to address the continued loss of biodiversity – without it we risk losing development gains and undermining our chance of achieving long-term sustainable economic growth.

- The global community has committed to an ambitious set of goals on biodiversity. We need to deliver on those commitments.

- Additionally we can no longer treat the environment and the goods and services it provides as free goods. An important step to achieving more sustainable management of our natural resources would be to ensure that the economic value of biodiversity and ecosystems are reflected in decisions made by governments and businesses.

Summary

Oceans, seas and forests, and the biodiversity contained within them, are necessary for the wellbeing of communities. Despite efforts to address management problems relating to these global resources through international goals and treaties, the health and diversity of ecosystems continues to decline. While all countries are affected, the poorest and most vulnerable people are hardest hit by this decline.

The post-2015 agenda should complement but not duplicate existing international agreements on oceans and seas, forests and biodiversity. It should recognise the linkages between environmental, social and economic objectives and acknowledge that a healthy environment enables long-term economic and social development. Sustainable management of the earth's natural wealth and its resources is essential for eradicating poverty, and generating lasting and sustainable growth, and protecting the environment for the benefit of future generations.

[i] Siedal & Lal, 2010, *Economic value of the Pacific Ocean to the Pacific Island Countries and Territories*

[ii] Gillett, 2009, *Fisheries in the Economies of the Pacific Island Countries and Territories*, ADB Pacific Studies Series

[iii] Eliasch (2008)

[iv] World Bank, Forests Sourcebook: Practical Guidance for Sustaining Forests in Development Cooperation