



# UGANDA

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**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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**PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF UGANDA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**AT THE**

**8<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

**New York,**

**February 4, 2014**

*Please Check Against Delivery*

**Co- Chairs,  
Distinguished Participants,**

Let me begin by thanking the Co-Chairs for their diligence in guiding the work of the Open Working Group on SDGs which has covered significant ground so far, this being the last of our stock-taking sessions.

Uganda aligns itself with the Statements delivered by the Representatives of Bolivia, Guinea and Benin on behalf of the G77 and China, the African Group and LDCs respectively.

At the outset, my delegation would like to underscore the need to give the necessary priority to oceans and seas, as well as lakes and rivers, forests and biodiversity in the elaboration of the SDGs, as they are an essential component of the Earth's ecosystem and are critical to sustaining it. They are interlinked and contain the biggest reservoirs of biodiversity.

We therefore stress the importance of conserving and using oceans and seas, forests, and biodiversity in a sustainable way, given the significant contribution they make to poverty eradication, sustained economic growth, food security, supporting livelihoods as well as in mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

**Co-Chairs,**

Oceans and seas, which cover nearly two-thirds of the earth's surface, greatly contribute to economic growth and development by providing resources, livelihoods and jobs in fisheries and marine aquaculture, shipping and shipbuilding, ports, tourism, oil, gas, mining, and maritime transportation industries. Given that over three billion people, nearly half of the world's population, depend on marine and coastal resources for their livelihoods, the importance of oceans and seas cannot be overemphasized.

It is essential to address the challenges to sustainable management of oceans and seas which include unsustainable extraction and exploitation of marine resources, pollution, ocean acidification as well as climate change impacts like rising sea levels. As we know, a big portion of oceans and seas, beyond 200 miles from the shores of coastal countries, is part of the global commons. We stress, in this regard, the need to implement the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and building the capacities of developing countries to benefit from the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas and their resources.

On forests, my delegation stresses the importance of sustainable management of forests. Forests are vital sources of water, energy, biodiversity, timber products, and livelihoods for many people.

In Uganda, the government has taken a range of measures to promote reforestation and afforestation in a bid to halt and reverse deforestation. One of the key interventions we have made, and which will gradually have a tremendous impact, is to promote rural electrification in order to provide the population with alternatives to wood fuel.

We are striving to restore 17–18 % forest coverage and welcome initiatives such as REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation “plus” conservation) as they provide opportunities to protect forests while combating climate change and improving human well-being in developing countries.

The United Nations Forum on Forests, with its universal membership and comprehensive mandate, should continue playing its key role in addressing forest-related issues and promoting international policy coordination and cooperation.

### **Co-Chairs,**

The severity of the global loss of biodiversity, the degradation of ecosystems and the resultant impact on global development, including affecting access to water, food security and nutrition, is widely recognized. This puts in sharp focus the importance of conserving biodiversity, enhancing habitat connectivity and building ecosystem resilience.

We already have, in the Convention on Biodiversity, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for 2011-2020, and the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, a universally agreed framework and foundation on which to build for effective action on biodiversity. Some of the time-bound targets therein, such as reducing by 50% deforestation and the loss of other natural habitats by 2020 and protecting 17% of land and 10% of oceans through protected areas by 2020 could provide a good starting point, as we consider possible SDG targets.

It is clear that we need to take a holistic approach and consider oceans and seas as well as lakes and rivers, forests and biodiversity as integral parts of the Earth’s ecosystem.

In conclusion, as my delegation has stressed before, mobilizing the necessary means of implementation in terms of finances, technology development and transfer, and capacity-building will be critical in achieving the SDGs and targets, including on oceans and seas, as well as lakes and rivers, forests and biodiversity, that we will eventually agree on.

Thank you for your attention.