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**Swedish Presidency
of the European Union**

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**Presidency response to conference on proposal for a HLESD in 2012,
European Economic and Social Committee, October 1-2, 2009**

- Sustainable development is an overarching objective of the EU, set out in the Treaty, that governs all our policies and activities. It is clear however, from the presentations made here at the conference that in spite of all the efforts since the Stockholm Conference in 1972, we are still witnessing unsustainable trends in relation to climate change and energy, public health, land use and transport etc. both regionally and globally. The multiple crisis we're experiencing reminds us of this.

- I would like to give some examples of how our own sustainable development work is starting to have effect. The EU's Lisbon strategy is being revised and Sweden together with Spain are now working for the EU summit in December to prepare a decision on a new 10-year strategy this spring. The new strategy will be broader than the present Lisbon strategy with stronger inclusion of environmental and social aspects, Eco-Efficient Economy as we call it. This is integration of sustainable development thinking in the economic policy of the EU.

- As mentioned by Mr Hontelez, during the Swedish Presidency we are also doing a follow-up the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy, where we are trying to get many of the aspects brought up yesterday included. One of 7 priority areas is global poverty, where also governance issues will come in. Global poverty is identified as one of 4 areas where the EU shows unsustainable trends.

- Finally, I am happy to inform you that there is a far-reaching agreement among EU member states to develop the “Beyond GDP”, into taking into account for example environmental degradation and income distribution.

- Linked to this work there is also an ongoing process within the EU, as well as within UNEP, OECD, G20 etc, as has been referred to by the panel today, with a view to turn the multiple crisis into an opportunity by shifting to a resource and eco-efficient economy, underpinned by more sustainable life-styles. While reducing the use of energy and natural resources, it will also minimise negative impact on health and the environment. A transition to an eco-efficient, or Green, economy will entail new business opportunities, boost competitiveness for those in the forefront and stimulate employment growth. In this way, it addresses all three dimensions of sustainable development. As an approach it can help develop a more strategic thinking on sustainable development, as well as a way to ensure that poverty alleviation does not take place at the expense of the environment.

- Against this backdrop the EU MS would value a HLESD as an opportunity to make further international progress on the mainstreaming of sustainability policies that foster green economies and eradicate poverty. Green Economy would be a relevant, timely and politically interesting theme and we believe it should be the main theme of a conference, if a decision is taken on holding a high level event.

- To implement a Green Economy, an efficient environmental governance is a prerequisite, even though I agree with Mr Osborne that it is not in itself enough. The EU MS has for some 10 years now been strong advocates for reformed international environmental governance. Unfortunately, the debate on how to fix the system has been almost as fragmentized as the system itself. Very little of what has been agreed (for ex. Cartagena) has been implemented, even though the two co-chairs leading the IEG-process in NY concluded that there is a consensus on the need to strengthen and improve coherence and coordination.

In times of economic decline and other crisis it becomes even more evident that we cannot afford inefficient use of limited resources, overlapping of activities and

incoherent responses to the challenges we face. In other words, no, the status quo is not an option.

We need to build a common vision for IEG and in doing so try to bridge the mistrust, brought up by ambassador Engfeldt yesterday, that is one reason why we have not made more progress so far. A HLESD in 2012, and its preparatory process, could provide us with a platform for this.

The EU also sees a need to discuss improvements of the CSD: incremental ones but most importantly, we should look beyond the CSD work programme and start thinking of how we envisage a post-2017 CSD.

- Regarding possible themes for a HLESD, in more general terms, the agenda would have to be focused on a limited number of themes in order to have concrete and substantive outcomes. We all know how difficult it is to make progress in negotiations. Therefore we need to be forward looking and creative, to echo Mr Strandenaes, but also focused.

This brings me back once again to the multiple crisis, more specifically the economic crisis. Add to this the already extensive international sustainable development agenda we have in front of us the coming years. The expected value added of an event must be sufficiently politically relevant to attract high level participation in competition with other international meetings, but also enable the mobilisation of necessary funding for a HLESD.

For a conference to be meaningful, and to ensure funding, there has to be broad agreement in the UN's General Assembly on holding the event.

It is important that a HLESD does not divert resources from or duplicate already ongoing processes in the field of sustainable development, for instance the post-2015 agenda on the MDGs where there will be a review summit in 2010, the CBD COP and summit on biological diversity next year, CSD, Financing for Development etc. We have to make sure that a HLESD would substantially contribute to and complement such ongoing processes.

- If a decision is taken, it is a strong viewpoint of the EU MS that the event and its preparatory process must allow for effective contributions from all major groups of civil society. Governments cannot, and should not, do this alone. One important purpose of holding a conference could even be to mobilize non-state actors, the scientific community, business organisations and others. We should work together to find forms for meaningful participation of stakeholders and how it best can be ensured. I am certain that we will have the chance to discuss this matter further with several of you in the coming months.

- I would like to conclude by thanking the organizers and congratulate them to a successful and well-timed conference. The EU member states are currently preparing for the upcoming negotiations in the General Assembly's 2nd committee. An important element of these preparations is outreach to other actors – state, non-state as well as multilateral organisations. So for us it has been highly relevant, and for me personally, inspiring and thought provoking to listen to the discussions these two days. Thank you.