Position Paper for the Commission on Sustainable Development
The issues of the current world community that need to be solved as soon as possible are: combating the global loss of biodiversity due to habitat destruction, the development of renewable energy at affordable prices to foster states' energy independence and regulating the global trade of GMOs. Fully aware that numerous Member States consider these issues to be crucial and essential to solve, the Russian Federation will highly support a fruitful debate and give its utmost to pass resolutions that are justifiable and contribute to the effectiveness of the United Nations as a whole.

I. Combating the global loss of biodiversity due to habitat destruction
The Russian Federation recognizes that habitat destruction is a significant threat to biodiversity that creates a crucial issue regarding the protection of life on our planet. The loss of forests, which constitutes the habitat of 80 percent of the world’s terrestrial biodiversity, is primarily a result of the expansion of agricultural land, overgrazing, pollution, and the intensive harvesting of timber, wood used for fuel, and other forest products. All of these threats to biodiversity are consequences of human actions, and measures desperately need to be taken to prevent the situation from worsening. The Russian Federation further believes that active membership and support of international activities in the field of the living nature conservation is essential, and wishes to express its determination and willingness to work on this and the global increase in biodiversity.

Thus, Russia has taken responsibility for the conservation of living nature on the 1/7th of the planet’s land with the ratification of Convention on Biological Diversity in 1995. Despite the critical political, economic and social situation, Russia does its best to fulfill the Conventions obligations. It developed a system of 100 zapovedniks (strictly protected areas functioning since precisely 100 years), 35 national parks, 59 federal refuges, and 17 national natural monuments, prepare a new edition of the Red Data Book and implements national programs for the salvage of rare animals. On the other hand, offices of about all international environmental organizations were open in this country. Some of them (for example the IUCEN, GEF, WWF) are involved in the realization of significant projects in Russia. With 22 percent of the world’s forest (and 24 percent of timber resources), the total input of Russian natural ecosystems in the sustainability of the Earth's biosphere comprises at least 10%. Because the forest fund occupies about 69% of the total Russian lands and has a substantial global impact, Russia is aware that it is their responsibility to act appropriately. In 1997, since the introduction of the Russian Federation Forest Code, the structure of ownership for the forest fund has radically changed. The Code made for a transfer of a part of the forest fund to the ownership of Federation subjects and enacted other forms of its possession, disposal and use. Moreover, a significant progress in Russian forest certification in accordance with the Forest Stewardship Council standards (more than 30 million ha in 2013 – 25% of commercial forests are certified, second in the world (after Canada) by the area of FSC-certified forests).
has been developed. By 2020, sustainable forestry is implemented on no less than 50% of exploitable and protective forests, which warrants preservation of biological diversity.

In order to improve the current situation, the Russian Federation highly relies on the work of international environmental organizations and is further convinced that certifications will raise awareness of the issue, and therefore believes that certifications such as the FSC, should be supported. The Russian Federation recognizes that every Member State should improve the establishing of natural protected areas as well as public awareness of the issue by for example the use of mass media.

II. The development of renewable energy at affordable prices to foster states' energy independence

The Russian Federation is aware of the global benefits regarding the development of renewable energy at affordable prices to foster states' energy independence. The role of renewable energy solutions in mitigating climate change is proven and should be used to determine global warming and natural disasters. Furthermore, several principles of sustainable development are reflected in the Constitution of the Russian Federation and have been embodied in a number of environmental laws. An example can be found in Article 9, which states land and other natural resources are to be used and protected in the Russian Federation as the basis of the lives and livelihoods of the people living in the country. These constitutional provisions are fundamental to the legal regulation of natural resources and the protection of the environment. As stated before, the Russian Federation as an active supporter of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the Paris Agreement on climate change, is demonstrating its general willingness to combat global environmental issues.

The Russian Federation has also improved their standards; the IRENA report shows, that in 2010, the renewable energy usage in Russia was dominated by hydropower in the power generation sector, while bioenergy dominated heating in industry and buildings. Hydropower accounted for 70% of the total final renewable energy use. Thus, the Russian government supports private companies that produce renewable energy, such as EN+, the world’s largest hydropower company. By the end of 2015, the total installed renewable power generation capacity reached 53 GW, representing about 20% of Russia’s total installed power generation capacity. In the draft Energy Strategy of Russia for the period up to 2035 (“Energy Strategy to 2035”), Russia has prepared a detailed projection of its energy use by sector and fuel. This includes Russia’s plan to expand its total solar PV, onshore wind, and geothermal capacity. In the reference, the total final renewable energy use nearly doubles from 2010 to 2030. Overall, the Russian Federation aspires to achieve a balance between environmental and economic interests and guaranteeing environmental rights and interests of individuals and companies.

To improve the current situation, the Russian Federation highly relies on the work of IRENA in the pursuit of sustainable development, energy access, energy security and low-carbon economic growth and prosperity, and is further convinced that methods raising the awareness of the issue should be supported. In order to combat climate change, the Russian Federation urges all Member States to join the Paris Agreement on climate change as well as to meet its requirements.

III. Regulating the global trade of genetically modified organisms (GMOs)

The Russian Federation is aware that the development of human society has led to critical experimentation with GMOs whose global trade needs to be regulated. GMOs can cause
environmental damage (e.g., encourages the trend toward industrial-scale “monoculture” growing) and health problems for consumers with unknown long-term effects. GMO production also favours big companies over small farmers what enlarges social disparity. The Russian Federation further believes that its active membership and support of the World Health Organization (WHO) express its willingness to work on global health security issues.

The Russian Federation has the world’s most extensive GMO-free territory and offers an excellent platform for the development of organic agriculture. This statement is based on the Federal Law 358-Z from 2016:

“It is prohibited to grow or breed plants and animals whose genetics have been modified by using genetic-engineering methods and which contain genetic-engineered material that cannot be introduced as a result of natural (spontaneous) processes, with exception of growing and breeding such plants and animals in the course of expert examination and research activities.”

This decision made by the Russian government was also influenced by environmental organizations, farmers and other representatives of Russian society, concerned by the absence of reliable scientific studies on the long-term risks of GMO food to human health and the environment what demonstrates Russia’s belief that health care and security are of the utmost importance. In order to facilitate healthcare worldwide, the Russian Federation has also supported several international agreements such as the Declaration of Alma Ata defining health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and a fundamental human right.

As long as partners and friends of the Russian Federation respect its national law, the Russian Federation further believes that it is a question of the sovereignty of every single Member State to decide to which degree genetic engineering affects the national code of laws. An agreement on rules for a required biosafety assessment and traceability guarantee of genetically modified products (e.g., creating a mandatory label) might be a significant step to laying a clear foundation for the trade of these goods that could easily be monitored and regulated if needed. The Russian Federation entrusts all Member States with the capability of handling such substantial issues and reminds them of their responsibility to protect their population as well as the environment.