



## SUMMARY OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: 14-15 MARCH 2013

The first session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) took place on 14-15 March 2013 at UN Headquarters in New York. The OWG elected, as Co-Chairs, Csaba Körösi, Permanent Representative of Hungary, and Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya, who had served as co-facilitators of the consultations pertaining to the preparations for the first session of the OWG.

The meeting brought together OWG members, other Member States, observers, representatives from the UN system and Major Groups. A general discussion, taking the form of statements, was held Thursday morning and all day Friday, and an interactive discussion on “Conceptualizing the SDGs” took place on Thursday afternoon. The interactive discussion provided an opportunity for exchanges between delegates and a panel of representatives from various sectors.

Delegates seemed relieved that the OWG finally held its first formal meeting, after months of deliberations on the composition of the group and on modalities and organization of its first meeting, with some disappointed that a discussion on substantive matters had only just emerged. While most of the meeting was dedicated to statements, allowing delegates to position themselves on the OWG process and SDG priorities, some participants said they were pleased to have a real “interactive” discussion on Thursday afternoon on substantive issues and challenges that the group will have to tackle in the coming months. Reflecting on the statements, one observed that the numerous speakers on the list indicated the importance given to the SDGs at the international level.

During the meeting, participants shared their initial views on both the process and substance of the SDG framework. While most statements addressed general considerations for the SDG framework and the OWG’s work, some outlined priorities for issues to include in the goals. According to an oral summary by Co-Chair Körösi, the main areas emphasized were: eradication of poverty and hunger; employment and decent jobs; sustainable consumption and production (SCP); gender equality and empowerment of women; access to and good management of the essentials of human well-being, such as food, water, health and energy; and means of implementation.

In addition, numerous delegates outlined their views on integrating the SDGs with the post-2015 development agenda. Many also called for remaining focused on implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While a certain number of participants highlighted complementarities between MDGs and SDGs and potential for convergence, others said the two approaches should be kept separate. In total, 57 UN Member States, three observers and three civil society representatives delivered statements. Eight representatives of the UN system did not have the opportunity to speak and were asked to provide their statements online.

Closing the meeting, Körösi said the Co-Chairs will consult with delegates to finalize the dates of upcoming meetings and release a workplan for the next several meetings, ensuring more advance notice for future sessions.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE OWG

During the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012, Member States agreed to launch a process to develop a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) and called for establishing an Open Working Group (OWG) comprising 30 representatives from the five UN regional groups, nominated by UN Member States, to work on an SDGs proposal to be submitted to the UN General

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Assembly (UNGA) for consideration and appropriate action during its 68th session.

**RIO+20:** The UN Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio+20, marked the 20th anniversary of the UN Conference on Environment and Development that took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 3-14 June 1992. The UNCSDD was charged with securing renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assessing progress and implementation gaps in meeting previously agreed commitments, and addressing new and emerging challenges.

The third and final meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the UNCSDD, Pre-Conference Informal Consultations facilitated by the host country, and the UNCSDD convened back-to-back in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 13-22 June 2012. During their ten days in Rio, government delegations concluded the negotiations on the Conference outcome document, titled *The Future We Want*. *The Future We Want* calls for the UNGA to take decisions on, *inter alia*: designating a body to operationalize the ten year framework of programmes (10YFP) on sustainable consumption and production (SCP); determining the modalities for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, which is to convene in 2014; identifying the format and organizational aspects of a high-level political forum (HLPF), which is to replace the Commission on Sustainable Development; strengthening the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); establishing an intergovernmental process under the UNGA to prepare a report proposing options on an effective sustainable development financing strategy; and considering a set of recommendations from the Secretary-General for a facilitation mechanism that promotes the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies.

*The Future We Want* also calls for establishing an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on SDGs, open to all stakeholders, with a view to developing global SDGs to be adopted by the UNGA. It specifies that an OWG comprising 30 representatives should be nominated by Member States no later than the opening of the 67th session of the UNGA, and that these representatives should come from the five UN regional groups in order to achieve fair, equitable and balanced geographic representation. It notes that the OWG will decide on its method of work, including developing modalities to ensure the full involvement of relevant stakeholders and expertise from civil society, the scientific community and the UN system, and will submit a report to the 68th session of the UNGA containing a proposal for SDGs for consideration and appropriate action. The outcome document outlines, *inter alia*:

- the importance of remaining firmly committed to the full and timely achievement of the MDGs and of respecting all Rio Principles, taking into account different national circumstances, capacities and priorities;
- the SDGs should be action oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries, and focused on priority areas for the achievement of sustainable development;
- the need to ensure coordination and coherence with the processes considering the post-2015 development agenda, and to get initial input to the OWG's work from the UN Secretary-General in consultation with national governments;

- the need to assess progress toward the achievement of the goals, accompanied by targets and indicators while taking into account different national circumstances, capacities and levels of development; and
- the importance of global, integrated and scientifically based information on sustainable development and of supporting regional economic commissions in collecting and compiling national inputs to inform this global effort.

The UNGA endorsed *The Future We Want* in resolution 66/288.

**UNGA SPECIAL EVENT ON "CONCEPTUALIZING A SET OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS":** On 16 October 2012, the UNGA Second Committee convened a special event on "Conceptualizing a Set of Sustainable Development Goals" at UN Headquarters in New York. The event served as an initial opportunity for participants to discuss how the SDGs can build on the MDGs, and possible elements of SDGs characteristics and architecture.

**INITIAL INPUT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TO THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SDGs:** On 17 December 2012, the UN Secretary-General released his initial input to the Open Working Group on SDGs (A/67/634). The report offers a synthesis of the input received from a questionnaire sent to Member States in September 2012. It includes Member States' views on: SDG priority areas; balancing the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development; key use of SDGs at the country level; defining national targets for global, universally applicable goals; incorporating existing goals and targets; ensuring coherence with the post-2015 development agenda; assessing progress; engaging all stakeholders; SDG principles; and new global partnership for development.

**UNGA RESOLUTION 67/203:** On 21 December 2013 the UNGA adopted resolution 67/203 that calls for the SDG OWG to report to the General Assembly in the early part of its 68th session, preferably before the first meeting of the HLPF. It also calls for the OWG to report regularly on its progress, taking into account the convening of the first HLPF, and the Special Event to follow-up on efforts made towards achieving the MDGs.

**UNGA DECISION ON THE OWG ON SDGs (67/555):** On 22 January 2013, the UNGA adopted a decision establishing the membership of the OWG as allocated to the five UN regional groups. According to the annex to the decision, six seats are held by single countries, as follows: Benin, Congo, Ghana, Hungary, Kenya and Tanzania. Nine seats are held by pairs of countries, as follows: Bahamas/Barbados; Belarus/Serbia; Brazil/Nicaragua; Bulgaria/Croatia; Colombia/Guatemala; Mexico/Peru; Montenegro/Slovenia; Poland/Romania; and Zambia/Zimbabwe. Fourteen seats are held by trios of countries, as follows: Argentina/Bolivia/Ecuador; Australia/Netherlands/UK; Bangladesh/Republic of Korea/Saudi Arabia; Bhutan/Thailand/Viet Nam; Canada/Israel/US; Denmark/Ireland/Norway; France/Germany/Switzerland; Italy/Spain/Turkey; China/Indonesia/Kazakhstan; Cyprus/Singapore/United Arab Emirates; Guyana/Haiti/Trinidad and Tobago; India/Pakistan/Sri Lanka; Iran/Japan/Nepal; and Nauru/Palau/Papua New Guinea. One seat is shared by four countries: Algeria/Egypt/Morocco/Tunisia.

**INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS IN PREPARATION FOR THE FIRST SESSION OF THE OWG:** Informal consultations were conducted from 6-12 March 2013 on the programme of work, the possible arrangements and the draft methods of work of the OWG's first session.

## REPORT OF THE MEETING

The first session of the OWG convened Thursday morning, 14 March 2013, in the UN General Assembly Hall in New York. Opening the session, UNGA President Vuk Jeremić welcomed delegates and thanked Csaba Körösi, Permanent Representative of Hungary, and Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya, co-facilitators for the preparations of the first session of the OWG, for their leadership and hard work. He also thanked Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Permanent Representative of Brazil and facilitator for the establishment of the OWG, for her efforts in “bringing us to this point.” He said the “process of formulating the SDGs will undoubtedly be a complicated one, requiring great diplomatic skills.” In accordance with the Rio+20 outcome document, *The Future We Want*, Jeremić recalled that the OWG would have to submit a proposed list of SDGs to the 68th session of the UNGA.

He added that the SDGs would need to be formulated in a manner that integrates the three dimensions of sustainable development into a “single, fully coherent whole” and that fulfilling the MDGs should be a starting point. He highlighted the importance of eradicating extreme poverty over the next decade or so, ensuring food security and sustainable agriculture practices, and reducing inequalities, and said addressing environmental sustainability should become a core national interest of all Member States. He stressed the need for inclusion and for significant resource mobilization for the SDG process. He mentioned a series of thematic debates and events that will be organized by the UNGA in the next few months with relation to sustainable development. He also noted the Special Event to follow-up on efforts made towards achieving the MDGs on 25 September 2013 as a final occasion for leaders to identify actions to complete the MDG process and to provide guidance on priorities. He said outcome of this event should be considered by the UN High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (HLP) and feed into the discussions of the SDG OWG, the HLPF, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and the Intergovernmental Expert Committee on a Sustainable Development Financing Strategy.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed the urgency of addressing the sustainable development challenge and called for advancing economic, social and environmental objectives in a balanced and integrated manner. He said MDGs and SDGs are mutually supporting concepts and the SDGs should accelerate and continue the work begun with the MDGs. He called for: taking into account poverty eradication, promotion of health, education and economic and social development; further integrating environmental sustainability, considering the rule of law, human rights, gender equality and empowerment of women, governance institution building and freedom from violence; and addressing special needs of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and challenges of post-conflict states. Noting the need for universal support when defining the SDGs, he said the UN Development Group is facilitating consultations on the post-2015 development agenda in 83 countries and conducting thematic consultations on 11 issues. He called on the OWG to build on the recommendations of the HLP report that will be delivered at the end of May 2013, and to coordinate elaboration of the SDGs with the post-2015 development agenda.

## ELECTION OF OFFICERS, ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

UNGA President Jeremić noted a general agreement that Co-Facilitators Körösi and Kamau should serve as Co-Chairs for the OWG. The Co-Chairs were elected by acclamation.

Thanking delegates for this election, Co-Chair Kamau said the next two years will be an historical opportunity to define a new development agenda. He highlighted the need to address social challenges, climate change and natural disasters. He recalled the task of the OWG to develop a proposal for a limited set of SDGs that must be action-oriented, concise, easy to communicate, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries, and called for inclusive and transparent deliberations. He emphasized that the OWG’s work would need to be coherent with the post-2015 development agenda process, and that regular interaction with the HLP would be ensured.

He invited the OWG to turn its attention to item 2 of the session’s draft programme of work on the Adoption of the Agenda and Other Organizational Matters. Delegates adopted the OWG provisional agenda (A/AC.280/2013/1) and the first session’s programme of work without objection. Co-Chair Kamau also invited the OWG to consider the methods of work document, as proposed under item 2. Mexico noted that his country had concerns with paragraph 7 of this document related to the adoption of the OWG report and recommendations by consensus. He asked the Co-Chair to take note, for the record, that Mexico would not recognize the right of veto in the OWG, and that consensus is a principle and objective and does not mean unanimity. Co-Chair Kamau said he would take note of that statement and declared that the methods of work document was adopted. On Friday, during the general discussion, Peru expressed support for Mexico’s intervention.

## FOLLOW UP TO THE OUTCOME OF THE UN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT RELATING TO A PROPOSAL FOR SDGs

Nikhil Seth, Director, Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) introduced the report of the Secretary-General, “Initial input of the Secretary-General to the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals” (A/67/634), compiled through consultations with Member States. Giving a summary of some of the discussions’ findings, he noted that many states believe that the priorities of the MDG agenda should continue to feature prominently in the post-2015 development agenda, while including new priorities such as: energy, economy and the environment, employment, gender inequalities, and SCP. He said report’s contributions state that the SDGs could “guide international cooperation on sustainable development,” but should contain fair targets and indicators that are easy to measure and explain. Noting that implementation of the SDGs will be complex, Seth said the SDGs will need to be a global partnership to make true structural changes for sustainable development.

Following this presentation, Co-Chair Kamau invited delegates to take the floor for a general discussion.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

The general discussion took place on Thursday morning and all day Friday. The following summarizes key elements of this discussion.

Starting the general discussion, France spoke of the “double challenge” of adopting sustainability in line with planetary constraints while eradicating global poverty. He acknowledged that these two challenges are interlinked and must be solved together, as global warming is the main threat to development. Insisting that the OWG should be an important tool and should waste no more time, he suggested that it move immediately into substantive discussions and focus on shared opportunities.

Kenya emphasized support for an open, transparent, inclusive, and intergovernmental process that upholds the principles of consensus. Recalling that African states are not on track to achieve the MDGs and of the disproportionate effect that economic and environmental crises have on the poor, she insisted that commitments to developing countries be fulfilled.

Fiji, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, stated that the SDGs should be the drivers for the implementation and mainstreaming of sustainable development. Emphasizing the importance to build on and complement the MDGs, he referred to a lack of enforcement of MDG 8 on a global partnership for development. He insisted that the SDGs should not place additional restrictions or burdens on developing countries, but should increase their voice and voting power. He also referred to the creation of effective targets and indicators for the SDGs, with each goal linked to means of implementation.

The European Union (EU), on behalf of the 27 Members of the EU and other countries including, *inter alia*, Croatia, Iceland, Ukraine and Georgia, stressed that the SDGs should: be coherent and integrated with the post-2015 development agenda; not deviate from efforts to achieve the MDGs; address and incorporate the three dimensions of sustainable development in a holistic and coherent way; be global in nature and applicable to all countries; be easy to communicate; and linked to concrete targets. He added that formulation of the SDGs should be coherent with existing agreed goals and targets.

Benin, on behalf of the LDCs, asked the OWG to, *inter alia*: fully reflect interests and concerns of the LDCs in the OWG outcome document; be guided by the rules of procedure and other rules of UNGA unless decided otherwise by the OWG; take decisions by consensus; and devote a full session to discuss special challenges and vulnerabilities of LDCs. He also called for according high priority to international support and for considering specific goals for LDCs.

Papua New Guinea on behalf of Nauru, Palau and the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) emphasized the need to establish a clear workplan to guide the process of defining the goals, noting the need to remain focused on implementation of and lessons learned from the MDGs. He called for including oceans as an integral part of the post-2015 development goals and stressed the importance of addressing climate change and energy.

Chad, on behalf of the African Group, stressed the importance of the MDGs and the commitments of the international community to achieve them. He said that the SDGs should not take away from MDG efforts, and should not put more pressure on the capacities of African countries by appearing unrelated or distinct.

Guyana, on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), stated that the objectives of the MDGs must be addressed so that “no country is left behind” in 2015. He said that SIDS will

provide a special perspective for the SDGs, but these goals should allow for flexible methods of achievement and contain a strong framework for implementation.

Iran offered statements on the modalities of the OWG, and stressed that it should strive for unified positions between the 30 member countries “on every matter.” He also expressed preference for a concrete development agenda, with general goals that define integrated targets for the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Ireland, also on behalf of Norway and Denmark, emphasized that objectives of eradicating poverty and protecting the planet are intrinsically linked, and that implementation gaps in these areas and others must be addressed. She highlighted poverty eradication, methods of sustainable consumption and production, and protecting the resource base of social development.

The Netherlands, also on behalf of Australia, and the UK, declared their commitment to listen to others, while creating universal goals through a single, integrated, coherent process. She said that focus should be on poverty eradication, which can only be achieved through sustainable development since environmental crises threaten to widen poverty.

Brazil, also on behalf of Nicaragua, stated that the SDGs must be universal goals that recognize the “asymmetries within and between countries.” He spoke of the success of the MDGs, but insisted that there are differences between the objectives of ending poverty and achieving sustainable development. Stating that limited funds given to the MDGs should not be “spread thin” through the SDGs, he encouraged everyone to keep their minds open for ways to achieve this two-fold objective.

India, also on behalf of Pakistan and Sri Lanka, stated that universal goals will only be meaningful if “differentiation is appropriately embedded in them.” He suggested that developing countries have “action points” for each goal, stressed the overriding priority of poverty eradication and the centrality of means of implementation.

China, also on behalf of Indonesia and Kazakhstan, highlighted the need for the SDGs to: be guided by the Rio Principles, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities; be based on MDGs; refer to priorities defined in Agenda 21 and the Rio+20 outcome document; and focus on sustainable development themes. He also called for the OWG process to be inclusive and transparent, and to reflect the views of all its members. He added that the OWG report should only serve as a reference for the adoption of the SDGs.

Spain, also on behalf of Italy and Turkey, called for a single set of goals for the post-2015 development agenda. He said poverty eradication needs to stay at the center of the goals, and human rights, rule of law, and sustainability should be part of the underpinning principles. He stressed the need to consider LDCs, fragile states and middle income countries, noting that no country should be left behind. He also highlighted the importance of employment, social inclusion, protection of human rights, water sanitation, protection of the environment and of natural resources, and change in unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.

Montenegro, also on behalf of Slovenia, stated that the SDGs should be flexible to allow for differences among countries, and that goals should be coherent, incorporate all three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner and should be

integrated into the post-2015 development agenda. He also spoke of the challenging task of creating concrete targets and indicators for the goals.

Serbia, also on behalf of Belarus, stated that the OWG should set timeframes, deadlines and define a workplan for the rest of the process, and that the SDGs must take into account national capacities and particularities. He identified issues to be considered by the OWG, *inter alia*: food security and nutrition, social protection, youth unemployment, education for sustainable development, sustainable cities, water cooperation, sustainable forest management and resource efficiency.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic, on behalf of the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), said the special needs and challenges of LLDCs should be reflected in outcome documents of relevant processes, and stressed the need for sufficient support and partnership.

Argentina, also on behalf of Ecuador and Bolivia, highlighted, *inter alia*, the need to: respond to development alternatives based on recognition of human beings and nature; reform the financial architecture; adapt objectives to the specific context of countries; continue working on the MDG agenda while developing the SDGs; and legitimate governance and promote full participation, including vulnerable groups, local farmers and the elderly.

Bhutan, also on behalf of Thailand and Vietnam, emphasized the need for: transparency, consensus and inclusiveness in the adoption of the OWG's report, and for clear indication on upcoming OWG formal and informal meetings. He also called for building upon the MDGs, taking into account their gaps, challenges and successes; and for giving high priority to poverty eradication.

Cyprus, also on behalf of Singapore and the United Arab Emirates, said the Group's work should be guided by paragraphs 246-247 of *The Future We Want*, be consistent with processes to develop the post-2015 agenda, and draw from various sources and proposals to yield robust recommendations to the UNGA.

Colombia, also on behalf of Guatemala, observed tacit agreement that: the MDGs will be an integral part of the new agenda; goals are common to developing and developed countries, and the new agenda must be universal; a focus on SCP is fundamental; and equity, particularly intergenerational, is needed to ensure decent life. She called for a single set of goals, noting the irreversible eradication of poverty will require structural changes. On architecture, Colombia proposed a "dashboard" of agreed global goals, to be supplemented by countries' own goals and indicators for a system that is both "bottom up and trickle down." On process, she called for deadlines and timetables for future OWG meetings, greater interaction among participants, and more than two days for each meeting.

Ghana said the MDGs could form the basis for social goals of the SDGs, and specific means of implementation should be attached to goals. He suggested mandating the UN interagency group to compile relevant international goals and their implementation gaps.

Tanzania called for the MDGs to remain at the center of discussions and form the basis for the SDGs, which are "the second set of MDGs." He cited the need for resources to complete the MDGs and a focus on the transition to the SDGs.

The US, also on behalf of Canada and Israel, highlighted the importance of: considering poverty eradication and inclusive

growth; considering the MDGs; building on diverse perspectives including from academia, civil society and the private sector; and learning from the scientific and research community.

Zimbabwe, also on behalf of Zambia, emphasized the need to not divert attention or effort from MDG achievement and highlighted priorities including, *inter alia*, poverty alleviation, climate change, water and sanitation, SCP, and forests and desertification. He added that the SDG process should be guided by agreed international principles and that adequate means of implementation should be addressed.

Peru, also on behalf of Mexico, said the MDGs should be considered as the basis of the SDGs development process and convergence must be ensured between the MDGs, SDGs and the post-2015 development process. He highlighted the importance of, *inter alia*, human rights, equity, sustainability and gender as cross-cutting themes; an inclusive agenda; employment of young people and decent work; goals adapted to the domestic context; and concrete indicators.

Bulgaria, also on behalf of Croatia, highlighted the importance of: elaborating new benchmarks at national, international and local levels; goals applicable to all countries while respecting national policies; and action by all countries.

Barbados, also on behalf of the Bahamas, emphasized: the need to go beyond gross domestic product (GDP) to measure sustainable development; employment, employability and entrepreneurship; and oceans.

Japan requested the Secretary-General to submit to the UNGA a new report in 2014 on how to integrate SDGs into the post-2015 development agenda, and called for: clear, concise and measurable goals that respond to the people's needs; human security; integrating sustainability into development; and partnerships.

Germany highlighted that: the new goals will be universal; they must account for interlinkages between water, energy and food; and the SDG and post-MDG processes must converge as early as possible.

The Farmers, NGOs, and Children and Youth Major Groups proposed establishing a Multi-stakeholder Advisor Group to work with the OWG, in order to ensure that its outcomes are "inclusive, empathetic and sustainable." He stressed the importance of timely access to information, including documents under negotiation. In addition, he called for merging the post-Rio and post-2015 agendas into a single set of development goals, holding a coordinated event between the HLP and OWG, and incorporating the HLP report into the OWG process.

The Republic of Korea said: the OWG should be informed by diverse stakeholders, research-based evidence and expert analysis; online platforms should be utilized more actively; and there is a need for one coherent set of goals. On substance, he said the areas covered by the SDGs should be wide in scope to ensure their universal application, and that agreement on goals will imply a collective commitment to their achievement.

Uganda stressed the importance of: poverty eradication, building on and complementing the MDGs, and accompanying the SDGs with means of implementation. He also called for the SDG process to incorporate the views of all stakeholders and called for the Intergovernmental Expert Committee on a Sustainable Development Financing Strategy to start its work as soon as possible.

Malaysia said the SDGs should be guided by the Rio Principles and principles contained in the Millennium

Declaration, and integrated into the post-2015 agenda while not undermining the achievement of the MDGs. There should also be means of implementation for each goal; balance, universality and relevance of goals at the country level; and a people-centered approach.

Egypt emphasized creating opportunities for a better future including quality health services and decent jobs; addressing the root causes of the global economic crisis and the increasing impact of corruption; linking SDGs to means of implementation; and including agreed indicators.

The Business and Industry, Local Authorities and Scientific and Technological Community Major Groups stressed: addressing local issues; building on good governance; incorporating best available knowledge on economic, social and environmental considerations and their interrelationship; addressing planetary boundaries; considering technological know-how; and reflecting economic circumstances.

Switzerland highlighted the need to provide measures to eradicate poverty, take into account the legacy and experience of the MDGs, and address peace, security and resilience. He also called for a robust framework for SDG implementation such as using the HLPF as a review mechanism and ECOSOC as a coordination mechanism.

Nigeria said the SDGs should build on the MDGs and focus on, *inter alia*: job creation, gender equality, education and good governance. He stressed national ownership and sovereign equality, and asserted that peace and security are indispensable to achieving sustainable development.

Sri Lanka named among its top priorities: expanding youth employment; mainstreaming women's issues in the global development agenda; addressing water shortages and the effects of climate change; addressing oceans as a growing resource base; and integrating the 10YFP on SCP into SDGs' implementation. Noting the critical need for funding, he said "clever but hollow formulas will not solve our problem."

Botswana said all possible goals should be treated with equal value, and that if the September 2013 stocktaking of the MDGs shows unfinished business, then completing pending issues should be the first priority.

The Russian Federation expressed hesitation about a "so-called fourth pillar" on peace and security. He indicated a preference for a broad post-2015 development agenda incorporating the MDGs and SDGs, and expressed support for a menu of options from which countries can formulate their own sets of targets, indicators and benchmarks.

Bolivia said the SDGs should be based on key criteria including the right to development, space for policy sovereignty, and common but differentiated responsibilities. Noting that "human beings are not clients," he spoke of the need to reform international financial institutions.

Lesotho underlined the need to build on the successes and gaps of the MDGs, and called for openness, inclusiveness and transparency in the work of the OWG and for a holistic approach for the SDGs. She outlined eradication of poverty, food security, natural resources, access to energy and technology transfer, and agriculture among others.

Saudi Arabia highlighted the OWG's intergovernmental nature and said it should be open, transparent and inclusive. He also emphasized the importance of partnerships for expanding opportunities through finance, training and technology.

Indonesia said the OWG must be guided by principles of equity and common but differential responsibilities, and by *The Future We Want* paragraph 246 regarding the SDGs as coherent and integrated into the UN development agenda beyond 2015. She called for active involvement of all relevant stakeholders, and inclusive, transparent and intergovernmental methods of work.

Ecuador cautioned against the current paradigm of "infinite growth," which undermines nature's limits. He called for a new approach to measuring development, and new modes of production and consumption. He also stressed the need for the OWG to ensure the inclusion of historically disregarded groups, and said culture should be incorporated as the fourth pillar of sustainable development.

The Women, Indigenous Peoples and Trade Unions Major Groups discussed the needed transformation from piecemeal to consistent social protection, for example, prevention rather than reparation for sexual- and gender-based violence. Exclusion, discrimination and violence, she said, prevent the three groups' full participation in sustainable development, and must be addressed to ensure that everyone can share its benefits.

Liechtenstein said the SDGs will be main driver of post-2015 development agenda, and expressed hope for a single set of goals. He called for a strong rule of law dimension in the SDGs, a rights-based approach to development and a strong gender dimension to the SDGs, both as a stand-alone goal or goals, as well as mainstreaming it into the overall process.

Nepal underlined, *inter alia*, that: the MDGs should be fully integrated into the SDG framework and the unfinished work should be focused on first; poverty eradication is a priority, along with building capacity, promoting agriculture, forestry, agriculture, and addressing climate change, among others; strong means of implementation are needed, as well as a plan to implement the SDG framework.

New Zealand asked the OWG to be open and inclusive and proposed that an SDG progress report be submitted before the Special Event to follow-up on efforts made towards achieving the MDGs and the First Meeting of the HLPF. She said goals should be: framed in simple terms, in a way "short enough to be tweetable"; aspirational; and focused on a small number of priorities that could expand in the future; and be accompanied by practical and measurable targets. She called for the Intergovernmental Expert Committee on a Sustainable Development Financing Strategy to be established as soon as possible.

Tunisia said the SDGs should: not divert efforts from achieving MDGs; be action oriented, concrete, accompanied by means of implementation; and give particular importance to various areas including poverty and hunger eradication, job creation, environmental sustainability, education and training, good governance and strengthening national institutions.

Libya called for: partnerships; poverty eradication as a key goal; predictable sources of funding; and incorporating the MDGs that have not been achieved into the SDGs.

Chile stressed the need to: build on the basis of progress made in the implementation of MDGs while recognizing gaps; consider enhanced adaptability and flexibility of goals without losing universality; provide financing; focus on social responsibility; and have a transparent and participatory process.

South Africa called for: considering, as a priority, global efforts for poverty eradication; addressing inequality in all areas and social protection; not distracting from financing for the MDGs; identifying a limited set of critical priorities with concrete targets; addressing the root causes of poverty; and alignment with regional priorities.

Cuba called on the OWG to allow all Member States in all meetings of the group. He added that the SDGs should not prevail over the MDGs, and priority areas, including equity, poverty eradication, health, education, access to water and energy, climate change adaptation and mitigation, should be considered.

Bangladesh said social and environmental gains are not sustainable without economic development, and the latter would make a real difference on the ground. Without targeting all SDGs toward poverty eradication “we’ll keep ourselves busy containing the repercussions” of the injustices of poverty. To this end, the SDGs should not be considered “new and improved MDGs” and based solely on them, since the MDGs are mostly social. Finally, he asked the Secretariat to develop specific ways to frame metrics on SDGs.

Venezuela spoke of a crisis facing humanity, and the need for a development model based on sustainable consumption and real production, not accumulation of capital through the financial economy.

Ethiopia said consensus, as affirmed in the OWG method of work adopted on Thursday, is a guiding principle of the Group and the only basis for its success. He cited the need for means of implementation to overcome weaknesses in the MDG framework.

Costa Rica noted that sustainable development requires the protection and enhancement of natural capital, that the SDGs should be based on a human rights perspective, and that the immediate challenge is translating broad aspirations into a clear set of verifiable and universal goals. Regarding the convergence of processes, he suggested an initial focus on the substantive elements of both agendas, before turning to elements for achieving them.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said the SDG framework should incorporate a nature-based solutions approach, since nature is critical for access to economic and social development. Environmental sustainability should not be confined to a stand-alone goal but cut across the others, he said.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union said parliaments will be crucial to implementing the SDGs and highlighted its forthcoming proposal on democratic governance within the SDGs.

International IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) said the SDG debate could address feelings of exclusion among youth, volatility of economies and demand for equality, dignity and justice. Democratic governance should be at the core of the post-2015 agenda both as a “core enabler” and a goal, he said.

### **INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION ON “CONCEPTUALIZING THE SDGS”**

On Thursday afternoon, an interactive discussion on “Conceptualizing the SDGs” was organized. Co-Chair Körösi introduced the panel discussion by referring to country statements from earlier in the morning. Having heard delegates asking for “productive, evidence-based, science-driven goals,”

he invited the OWG to use the expertise of the various on-going processes of the post-2015 agenda. He stressed the need for a truly interactive discussion between panelists and delegates.

Amina Mohammed, Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Planning, began the discussion by reiterating the Secretary-General’s full commitment of the UN system to the work of the OWG and advising Member States to draw on the work of the existing post-2015 processes. She emphasized a need for the international community to create a strong narrative for the new development agenda that will galvanize political support at the country level. She also emphasized issues of good governance, human rights, the rule of law, and the nexus between development and peace that needs careful thought in relation to a new set of international goals. Stressing that this transition to a new development agenda represents a paradigm shift in North-South relations and the challenges that all countries have to address, Mohammed told states to embrace the three dimensions of sustainable development to respond to these contemporary conditions.

Martin Khor, Executive Director, South Centre, focused on the needs of developing countries for a post-2015 development agenda and proposed a design for goals separated between SDGs and enhanced MDGs. Stating that developing countries must be supported by removing boundaries to their development, he called for reforms in international financial, trade, and social systems to enable their country-level goals. Khor also proposed several goals for each dimension of sustainable development in order to maintain balance between the social, economic, and environmental challenges, and stated the importance of highlighting the inter-linkages of these dimensions within each goal. On the issue of converging the SDGs and enhanced MDGs, Khor explained that both of these processes have their own histories and actors, and may be difficult to put together at this time.

Responding to the separation of the SDG and enhanced MDG agendas, Manish Bapna, Executive Vice President and Managing Director, World Resources Institute, proposed that a proactive merging of these agendas may actually be a better path. Stating that the SDGs should in fact build on the successes and respond to the shortcomings of the MDGs, he specifically emphasized “connective tissue” between the three dimensions of sustainable development that was not recognized in the past. Bapna called on countries to create forward-looking goals that will be able to respond to deepened challenges in the future. He specifically stressed tackling a systemic problem of global inequality, remarking, “ask not what growth can do for inequality, but what addressing inequality can do for growth.” He also called for explicit sustainability goals, targeted at global collective action problems that require all countries to come together, that will engage a wide range of actors and inspire the public’s imagination.

David Steven, Associate Director, Center on International Cooperation, New York University, told the audience to not lose site of the “historic opportunity” that we have today, while recognizing the limits on this global framework. He stressed that an SDG should not be created when political consensus does not exist, but that goals should actually be expressions of global consensus to solve an issue. Steven challenged members to start with a plan for implementation and work backwards from that point, determining methods, finance, and plans to make change before setting the goal. He also emphasized the high importance

of putting young people at the center of the new development agenda. Calling for goals that will deliver for young people over their lifetimes in the short, middle, and long terms, he asked for the “next generation of goals for the next generation of young people who will inherit the future.”

Following the presentations, delegates had the opportunity to provide comments and questions.

Ireland highlighted the importance of getting outside governmental and UN silos by taking into account real issues on the ground.

Pakistan asked for clarification on the meaning of paradigm shift, and on how systemic barriers and positive discrimination should be looked at within the OWG.

Bolivia observed that MDGs are different from SDGs as they require immediate action whereas SDGs refer to the need to invest in the long term and the need for institutional change. He stressed continued working on the MDGs agenda, a set of indicators and targets differentiated for the SDGs and the MDGs, and the importance of means of implementation when developing the SDGs.

Benin highlighted the need for convergence and balance to ensure that SDGs do not “cancel” the efforts made in area of economic and social development since all MDGs will not be attained by 2015.

Venezuela noted the impacts of global crises on the poor, the current model for development, and the links between human and environmental sustainability.

Colombia asked the panelists how to create an agenda that is flexible, dynamic and the most useful for unknown conditions of the future.

Belize asked how to build a flexible framework of sustainable development goals that will respond to medium- and long-term changes, and that will take into account the various meanings of “sustainability.”

The United States raised a question on the dichotomy between sustainability and growth, asking the panelists for recommendations on how national policies can create the right incentives for both in the private sector.

The Netherlands wondered whether it is not “high time” for the poverty eradication and sustainable development work streams to come together, and asked about issues of intergenerational equity and the gendered nature of sustainability.

The Republic of Korea intervened to ask about the ability to take into account different national realities and levels of development.

Representatives of Major Groups, in two interventions, asked questions about natural resource limitations and planetary limits, human rights mechanisms to hold corporations accountable, the need to address women’s unpaid work, and the inclusion of civil society in the continued deliberations of the OWG.

Responding to delegates’ questions, Steven said the goals are about mobilizing society; poverty eradication needs to be addressed urgently and cannot get lost in the rest of the agenda; and the challenge is environmental sustainability and to bring enough financial resources to deliver change. He remarked that by moving to zero-based goals of “eradication” we will be forced to look at the most marginalized groups in society. He suggested that our effectiveness for helping the poor will improve with a better use of assessments, such as integrated assessments, to enhance our understanding of sustainability.

Bapna said that the challenge is how to get the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development right and to have a clear set of measurable goals. He noted the importance of natural capital accounting and called for the OWG to think about how to deal with risks and resilience in the development agenda. He said that goals that set global priorities and bottom-up approaches that enable all to participate might be needed, along with adequate social protection mechanisms to address the problems of the poor.

Khor said one of the MDGs’ weaknesses is that they did not analyze the factors that caused poverty. He highlighted the importance of addressing systemic barriers, including political, economic and social ones, called for additional funding for the poor in order to achieve environmental goals, and advocated removing discrimination against the poor, including tariff escalation. Noting that social considerations are reflected in the MDGs and that environmental considerations are reflected in multilateral environmental agreements and other international instruments, he called for more focus on the economic pillar as it has been “left out”. He also called for a UN instrument such as a UN declaration to accompany the SDGs to capture enabling factors. He recognized the need for a flexible and dynamic development agenda.

Noting that developing the goals is not going to be an academic exercise, Mohammed emphasized the need to deliver results to people. She recognized the importance of a global agenda but outlined the need to take into account countries’ development agendas and specificities. She said the SDGs will automatically include many of the MDGs as they will come to reality, and outlined that MDGs and SDGs do not follow two different tracks but are part of the various streams that inform the post-2015 development agenda. She highlighted the need to look at successes, gaps and challenges of the MDGs and take into account partnerships as a basis for financing.

Co-Chair Körösi concluded the panel session by highlighting some of the key points of discussion. He acknowledged participants’ general appreciation for such an interactive discussion, and committed to providing more interaction of this sort at future meetings.

### CLOSING SESSION

Closing the meeting, Co-Chair Körösi thanked delegates for an enormous amount of information provided through their contributions and statements. He said delegates’ statements highlighted, *inter alia*: a coherent development agenda with a core set of SDGs at the center; ensuring ownership and “that no country is left behind”; and the need to build on the MDGs.

He added that the two days of discussion have affirmed the need for action-oriented goals to address the three dimensions of sustainable development and the need for people-centered SDGs. Referring to the variety of issues that the SDGs could cover, Körösi highlighted: eradication of poverty and hunger; employment and decent jobs; SCP; gender equality and empowerment; access to and good management of essentials of human well-being including food, water, health, energy and means of implementation.

He noted encouragement from delegates to embark on the next phase of interaction, noting that each meeting would deepen a “shared understanding.” He said that the Co-Chairs would post the summary of the meeting at: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org> and invited UN representatives and other delegates to

post their statements on the website. He informed delegates that the workplan for the process to follow in the coming months was under preparation and would be shared with them soon. He announced the tentative dates of 18-19 April 2013 for the next meeting of the OWG.

Some countries then asked to intervene. Nicaragua proposed that three days or more be devoted to the next OWG meeting to allow delegates from capitals to participate. Colombia endorsed that request and asked to review the frequency of the meetings for enhanced participation. Countries including Pakistan, Bolivia, Egypt, Bhutan, Venezuela and Turkey also endorsed those proposals. Körösi said the Secretariat would investigate the availability of facilities and services next week, and would organize phone calls or, if necessary, a short consultation to agree on a workplan regarding the next meeting. Turkey observed that the tenth session of the UN Forum on Forests will be held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 8-19 April, which could overlap with the tentative dates mentioned for the next OWG meeting. Körösi said those requests would be noted, and expressed his readiness to start the substantive work. He closed the meeting at 5:45 pm.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

### Expert Group Meeting on Science and Sustainable

**Development Goals:** This meeting will discuss how science can best inform the SDG process and will provide an opportunity for the scientific community to initiate a dialogue with policy makers who are engaged in intergovernmental deliberations on the SDGs. It is organized by the UN DESA in partnership with the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the International Social Science Council (ISSC). **dates:** 20-21 March 2013 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **phone:** +1-212-963-8102 **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** [dsd@un.org](mailto:dsd@un.org) **www:** <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

### Advancing the Post-2015 Sustainable Development

**Agenda: Reconfirming Rights-Recognizing Limits-Redefining Goals:** This event brings together civil society inputs into the sustainable development and post-2015 discussions, in order to gain a better view of civil society perspectives and advocate more effectively for their implementation. The event is supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and UN DESA, and is being shaped by a Steering Committee composed of CIVICUS, Beyond 2015, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP), Global Campaign for Climate Action (GCCA), Social Watch, VENRO and the Baltic Sea Forum, among others. **dates:** 20-22 March 2013 **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** Sarah Strack **email:** [Sarah.Strack@berlin-civil-society-center.org](mailto:Sarah.Strack@berlin-civil-society-center.org) **www:** <http://www.berlin-civil-society-center.org/shared-services/post-2015/>

**Fourth Meeting of the UN High-Level Panel on Post-2015 Development Agenda:** The fourth meeting of the UN High-Level Panel of the Post-2015 Development Agenda (HLP), hosted by the Government of Indonesia will focus on "Global Partnerships." **dates:** 25-27 March 2013 **location:** Bali, Indonesia **contact:** HLP Secretariat **www:** <http://www.post2015hlp.org/>

### Expert Group Meeting on High-Level Political Forum:

This expert group meeting aims to provide thinking on the various aspects of the HLPF and its role in the wider institutional

framework for sustainable development by different experts in the area of governance to inform decision-makers, UN system and other relevant stakeholders. **dates:** 3-4 April 2013 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **phone:** +1-212-963-8102 **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** [dsd@un.org](mailto:dsd@un.org) **www:** <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

### Sixty-fifth session of the Economic Commission for

**Europe (ECE):** This meeting will include a High-level segment on "Enabling the shift to a sustainable future" and will discuss, *inter alia*, the follow-up to Rio+20 and the post-2015 development agenda in the context of the ECE. **dates:** 9-11 April 2013 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** ECE Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-4444 **fax:** +41-22-917-0505 **email:** [info.ece@unece.org](mailto:info.ece@unece.org) **www:** [http://www.unece.org/commission/2013/65th\\_index.html](http://www.unece.org/commission/2013/65th_index.html)

### Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

**(ESCAP) Regional Implementation Meeting:** This meeting will be convened to inform the development of sustainable development goals and follow-up to Rio+20. **dates:** 22-24 April 2013 **location:** Bangkok, Thailand **contact:** ESCAP Secretariat **email:** [escap-esdd-oc@un.org](mailto:escap-esdd-oc@un.org) **www:** <http://www.unescap.org/events/RIM2013>

### Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ECSWA)

**Regional Implementation Meeting:** This meeting will be convened to inform the development of sustainable development goals and follow-up to Rio+20. **dates:** to be determined **location:** to be determined **contact:** ESCWA Secretariat **www:** <http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetings.asp>

### Second Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA)

#### Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals:

The second session of the UNGA Open Working Group on SDGs is tentatively scheduled to take place in April 2013. **dates:** 18-19 April 2013 (to be confirmed) **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **phone:** +1-212-963-8102 **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** [dsd@un.org](mailto:dsd@un.org) **www:** <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549>

## GLOSSARY

10YFP	Ten Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
HLP	UN High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda
HLPF	High-level political forum
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
OWG	Open Working Group
Rio+20	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD)
SCP	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly



# Post-2015 Policy & Practice

<http://post2015.iisd.org/>

A knowledge management project carried out by the International Institute for Sustainable Development Reporting Services (IISD RS) in collaboration with the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).

New posts to the knowledgebase are circulated via the POST-2015 Update, which is distributed exclusively through the POST2015-L listserv.

POST2015-L is a companion project managed by IISD RS. This community listserv offers subscribers an opportunity to post announcements regarding their own organizations' publications and meetings.

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To receive the POST-2015 Update and to subscribe to the POST2015-L community listserv:  
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For further information on our knowledge management activities, please contact Lynn Wagner, Senior Manager, Knowledge Management Projects ([lynn@iisd.org](mailto:lynn@iisd.org)).

To provide us with information about your post-2015 development agenda related activities, please contact Faye Leone, Content Editor ([faye@iisd.org](mailto:faye@iisd.org)).

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