

# REPUBLIC OF MALTA



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Co-Chairs,

At the outset we would like to thank you for your hard work and able leadership in this Open Working Group, as well as for your document dated 21 February 2014 listing a number of focus areas for continued consideration by United Nations Member States following eight sessions of this Group over the past months. We welcome this document as an important and focused basis for our future work, particularly since it takes into consideration all three dimensions of sustainable development. We would thus, at this important stage at the beginning of the next phase of work, like to provide the following input.

Co-Chairs,

As we all know, future SDGs will provide an important basis for the UN's development agenda. In the years after 2015, all United Nations Member States will need to strengthen, and where appropriate, adjust their own national institutions, as well as their international actions, relating to development issues. To this end, we consider Peace and Security, the Rule of Law, as well as Good Governance as essential elements of any future development activity. We believe that it is pointless to formulate the best possible goals and targets through the post-2015 process, but then fail to create national structures in order to implement what we agree. Good governance not only strengthens national governmental institutions; it creates the necessary environment and confidence, for all national actors, both governmental and non-governmental, as well as civil society. All actors, whether at the national or local level, need to feel part of their domestic process, and need to have confidence in their national structures. Another result of such a system would be to enhance international development effectiveness, as good governance ensures that development mechanisms are well managed.

Co-Chairs,

Like others, we consider migration as an important element of sustainable development. However, migration should not be considered as part of the SDGs for its own sake or in a vacuum. We therefore would like to propose that any migration related goals and targets include the following:

- Strengthen the fight against human trafficking and smuggling of persons;
- Underline and include the already agreed principles of international law in combating irregular migration;
- Ensure that with well-managed migration, readmission policies become an integral part of migration management.

We believe that trafficking and smuggling of persons has a direct effect on developing countries as much as on developed countries, and ultimately, effectively combating irregular migration will first and foremost aid the migrants themselves, who are often victims of international organized crime. We see no reason to remind all Member States about the horrific consequences of ill-managed migration, as we all remember the tragic events in the Mediterranean last October.

Co-Chairs,

We would like to underline the vital importance of listing universal access to education for men and women, boys and girls. If development policies are to succeed, access to education is essential. A well-trained workforce is a key to success in achieving higher standards of development. My own country, Malta, is a visible example of education's importance. We do not possess any natural resources; we have a limited territory, and a small population. Yet, we have achieved high levels of economic and social success through our successful education policies, allowing Maltese nationals, both men and women, to become successful entrepreneurs and business owners not only in Malta, but around the world. We therefore urge the inclusion of universal access to primary and secondary education, for women, men, boys and girls as a primary target. Naturally we also support all the other elements in your paper in focus area 4.

Co-Chairs,

One other important element is population dynamics. We understand that this is a complex issue, however it is also an important one, especially considering that in a number of developed countries, population is declining. As we have stated in this working Group during previous sessions, we underline the important need for the Open Working Group to keep in mind that national positions of Member States vary on these specific issues, particularly on the highly controversial matter of abortion, which as we would like to remind the Working Group, remains prohibited under Maltese law. We remain of the view that any recommendation or commitment related to the Overarching Post 2015 Agenda should not in any way create an obligation on any party to consider abortion as a legitimate form of reproductive health or rights or services or commodities. We would thus like to welcome focus areas 3 and 5. We understand that these focus areas may not be seen as a perfect formulation by a number of Member States. That said it is important at this juncture not to make the best the enemy of the good. To this end, we would like to suggest the following concrete proposals specifically relating to sexual and reproductive health:

- Ensure universal access to modern and effective methods of contraception to women and men;
- Ensure comprehensive sexuality education as part of national curricula, including for adolescent girls and boys;
- Ensure unrestricted access for women and girls to health care facilities, including for their reproductive health needs, as well as to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls for their health needs.

Naturally, we would like to be clear that these proposals only relate to sexual and reproductive health matters. We fully endorse the other important areas indicated in focus areas 3 and 5, such as universal health coverage, addressing non-communicable diseases, ending violence against girls and

women in all its forms as well as equal pay for equal work, which we fully support and look forward to see included in the formulation of SDGs.

Co-Chairs,

As we move ahead in this process, we place our full faith in your abilities in guiding this process, and we appreciate your willingness to listen to all Member States. We believe that this is an essential element in achieving a consensus outcome. We should in our view, clearly avoid pursuing language for political reasons, but instead pursue the common interest to achieve clear, achievable and universal SDGs.

I thank you.