

**EXPERT GROUP MEETING FOR THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT REPORT
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Opening statement: Towards Sustainable Development Goals

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Good morning everybody.

I would first like to affiliate myself with the warm words of welcome expressed by our Director General; although we have quite intensive program for these two days meeting, I do hope you will have some time to walk around this beautiful old city walls and to visit some of its most important historic sites.

I would like to share with you in brief some of the most important findings in respect to the Sustainable Development Goals. As you know, the SDGs are in the process of elaboration within the UN Open Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG); and maybe as something that some of you did not know, Croatia is a member of this important group, where we share our seat with Bulgaria. There are many challenges that this group is facing, many mutually competitive issues that have to be addressed and many interests that should be reconciled.

Members of the OWG and key stakeholders – basically representatives of the UN major groups, have highlighted during the past OWG's sessions many concepts that have set the foundation and tone for discussions on how to develop the SDGs. Broad outlines of convergence of views have been reached in many issues, including on the basic building blocks and underpinning principles that should be captured.

SDGs could basically serve three functions: norm or priority setting; measuring actions and outcomes at the national levels; and generating and coordinating global action.

Indeed, what we are looking for are the SMART SDGs: Specific-Measurable-Attainable-Relevant-and-Time-bound.

If I may attempt to summarize, **as from our national point of view**, some of the emerging principles which will guide the work of the OWG and gradually craft the backbone of development agenda, with the SMART SDGS at the center, the touchstones would be as follows:

- First, to prioritize; We have heard many proposals for goals and targets in the thematic areas; some call for stand-alone goals, some for stand-alone targets, others for cross-cutting targets, etc; What we need is a sharp focus on the critical problems we want to address; the focus should be given on key developmental issues being the enablers, drivers or barriers for development; not all our priorities are “goalable”. The Goals will most probably be clustered according to the specific interconnectedness among the issues. At the same time, in setting the priorities we have to think on the principle of universality; not all our priorities are “globable”, which means not all of them might be considered as priorities for all countries.
- Second, to set bold, yet practical and deliverable targets; basically, targets should express the transformative changes in precise and measurable terms; and we need the indicators to track these targets.
- Third, to set clear linkages between the goals; namely, we have to avoid the silos effect that the MDGs framework is often producing. Goals should be mutually enforcing while remaining specific enough to be monitored. To achieve coherence between the SDGs, they will have to capture at balanced way the three pillars of sustainable development, while their targets will have to address the relevant cross-cutting issues. At the same time, we should not fall into the trap of overengineering the SDGs structure; they would still have to be concise and easy to communicate; or as heard from several members - tweetable. In this respect, several OWG members have suggested a dashboard of targets and indicators tailored to national levels.
- While reflecting on the possible SDGs structure, adequate means of implementation within the structure is considered critically important for the success; and the OWG will require future discussions on this important issue as well.
- And last but not least in relations to some of the touchstones for the SDGs, people-focused goals and targets anchored in human rights and fundamental freedoms included the gender equality and empowerment of women, ensured by the rule of law, democratic governance and effective institutions as well as peace and security, are among the emerging issues of the post-2015 agenda in

general. The SDGs will have to address these issues and position them properly in their structure.

The OWG still has lot of work ahead in this stocktaking phase in which many of weighty and competitive topics will be covered. Only after all the issues will be dully discussed, the Group will turn to crafting the SDGs proposal.

There is one very important emerging principle for crafting the SDGs: the SDGs should be the result of consensus, and not the decisions. To respect this principle, Ladies and Gentleman, and for goals to be seen as legitimate, the process must be knowledge-based and inclusive. It must balance equitable political engagement with expertise and multidisciplinary perspectives from science, business, civil society and local communities. We will need to tap the best scientific knowledge to inform the discussions of the post-2015 institutional processes. It is important to provide evidence-based inputs on how to set and construct appropriate goals and on how to make the best possible choices of indicators to effectively measure the progress; and it is of course of utmost importance for setting up the effective monitoring framework and evaluation of progress.

It is really a demanding and challenging task to be a part of this daunting and exited process of innovation that the OWG is performing. Croatia stands committed to the work of the OWG and it will continue to engage in a most constructive possible way in the discussions ahead. As already practiced during the past OWG's sessions, Croatia supports and commends further interaction of the Group with the scientific community. As said before, the SDGs should be the result of consensus and not decisions; thus, multidisciplinary research-based consensus making on the content and the structure of the SDGs would be the best possible guarantee to ensure common understandings and to offer deliverable outcomes. It is one of the important reasons why we have to encourage such science-policies linkages, as fostered by this Expert Group Meeting; We are looking forward to Dubrovnik Conclusions that this Meeting will produce, and most of all we are looking forward to see how and at which extend the findings of this Meeting might be transposed in the processes of setting the Post-2015 Agenda and the SDGs, as well as in the follow-up processes under the mandate of the HLPPF.

I hope you'll have a productive meeting and enjoy your stay in Dubrovnik.