

First Meeting of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals
Concept note - Interactive discussion on the SDGs, 3-6 pm
ECOSOC Chamber, 14 March 2012

Coherence

The Rio + 20 outcome document, *The Future We Want*, resolved to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on SDGs that is open to all stakeholders with a view to developing global sustainable development goals to be agreed by the General Assembly. The outcome document specifically states that the process leading to the SDGs needs to be coordinated and coherent with the processes considering the post-2015 development agenda

The question of the relationship between the processes for sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda has engendered considerable discussion. While there is indeed a broad spectrum of activities and initiatives concerning the UN development agenda after 2015, there seems to be consensus on a common objective – a single unified, ambitious and coherent agenda.

- 1. What specific steps can be taken to ensure that the SDGs are coherent with and integrated into the UN development agenda beyond 2015?*
- 2. How can the SDGs take forward the unfinished business of the MDGs?*

Integration of the three dimensions and creating universal goals

Sustainable development seeks to achieve, in a balanced manner, economic development, social development and environmental protection. The Rio+20 Outcome document states that the SDGs should address and incorporate in a balanced way all three dimensions of sustainable development and their interlinkages.

At the same time the SDGs should, as defined in the Rio Outcome document, be global in nature and universally applicable to all countries while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development.

- 3. How might the SDGs strive to balance the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development? Should the balance be achieved within each goal or in the overall composition of the set of goals?*
- 4. How can the SDGs be at the same time universal in nature but take into account different national realities of the Member States?*

Framing the SDGs

The Rio+20 outcome document provides that the SDGs should be limited in number, while integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development and contributing to the implementation of all major summits. They should address and be focused on priority areas for the achievement of sustainable development, guided by the Rio +20 outcome document.

The challenge when framing the SDGs is how to do justice to the rich and varied sustainable development agenda through concise goals that are limited in number. On the one hand, this will involve selecting goals that address challenges of the highest political as well as scientific priority. On the other, it will be necessary to reflect on how it may be possible to cluster numerous related sectors and themes into concise goals that are also action oriented – that is, that do not become so broad and general as to lack concreteness and quantifiability.

- 5. How can the multiple challenges of sustainable development be distilled and compressed into a short set of aspirational goals?*

Structure of meeting

The panel will consist of the following four members:

- Representative of the Secretary-General's High-level panel on the post-2015 development agenda
- Representative of civil society
- Representative of the scientific community
- Representative of a think-tank/policy community

Each of the panellists will give a short presentation, after which ample time for an interactive dialogue between the panel and the meeting participants will be reserved.