

Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals holds first session

On 14-15 March 2013, the intergovernmental Open Working Group (OWG) on sustainable development goals (SDGs) called for in the Rio+20 Outcome Document convened its first meeting in the UN General Assembly Hall in New York.

The meeting commenced with opening remarks by General Assembly President Vuk Jeremić and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The Secretary-General stressed the urgency of the OWG's task.

"The MDGs have united the world and inspired action, Mr. Ban said. "We must do our utmost to focus attention and accelerate progress." He said that the focus of the Goals, the eradication of poverty and promotion of health, education, as well as economic and social development, would retain their prime importance and would need to be addressed in the sustainable development goals. "But the sustainable development goals must go further to integrate more comprehensively environmental sustainability, he pointed out, because, "Humanity is pressing hard against the planet's ecological boundaries."

He expressed the hope that the multiple strands of the post-2015 process would come together and culminate in 2015 in the adoption of a unified and coherent global agenda: "One balanced, aspirational set of sustainable development goals should lie at the core of such a development agenda."

The OWG is mandated to submit a report, containing a proposal for sustainable development goals for consideration and appropriate action to the 68th Session of the General Assembly, which would start in September 2013. By late 2014, General Assembly President Vuk Jeremić said, "Member States should be in a position to promulgate the Sustainable Development Goals--the single-most important element of the post-2015 agenda."

Various Member States expressed their views on different aspects of the OWG and SDGs. Many underlined that the process of developing SDGs should be an open and transparent one, and most stressed the importance of integrating the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Their statements can be found on the [Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform](#) (SDKP).

Representatives from major groups also took the floor, emphasizing that the Rio+20 Conference highlighted the importance of engaging all stakeholders and major groups in the sustainable development process going forward. Members of the OWG were called on to design multi-stakeholder mechanisms to ensure participation, transparency and accountability.

The meeting was webcast and a recording of it can be viewed on the [SDKP](#).