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Draft concept note for consultations by the President of ECOSOC
Preparing for the 2014 high-level political forum on sustainable development

BACKGROUND

1. World leaders established the high-level political forum on sustainable development in June 2012, at the Rio+20 Conference.
2. The General Assembly, when it agreed on the format and organizational aspects of the forum in July 2013, decided that the forum, “consistent with its universal intergovernmental character, shall provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development, follow up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments, enhance the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in a holistic and cross-sectoral manner at all levels and have a focused, dynamic and action-oriented agenda, ensuring the appropriate consideration of new and emerging sustainable development challenges”¹.
3. GA resolution 67/290 stipulates that the meetings of the forum under the auspices of ECOSOC “shall follow up and review progress in the

¹ A/RES/67/290 OP.2

implementation of all the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields, as well as their respective means of implementation, improve cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system on sustainable development programmes and policies, promote the sharing of best practices and experiences relating to the implementation of sustainable development and, on a voluntary basis, facilitate sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, and promote system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies". The GA also defined ambitious modalities for major groups and other stakeholders to participate in the forum².

4. The GA also decided that the forum would be convened under the auspices of the General Assembly (every four years) and ECOSOC (every year).
5. Under the auspices of ECOSOC, the President of ECOSOC is to convene the meetings of the forum annually for "a period of eight days, including a three-day ministerial segment to be held in the framework of the substantive session of the Council"³. These meetings are to "build on and subsequently replace the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) as of 2016". The outcome of the forum meeting will be

² A/RES/67/290 OP. 14-16

³ A/RES/67/290 OP 7 a

a “negotiated ministerial declaration for inclusion in the report of the Council to the General Assembly”⁴/5.

6. In September 2013, the General Assembly decided on a broad ranging reform of ECOSOC. It specified that the annual high-level segment of ECOSOC will be convened in July and will “include the three ministerial days of the high-level political forum on sustainable development as provided for in General Assembly resolution 67/290.”⁵
7. On 24 September 2013, the President of the General Assembly convened the inaugural meeting of the high-level political forum (under the auspices of the General Assembly) at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, in accordance with resolution 67/290 of 9 July 2013.
8. The overall theme of the inaugural meeting was “Building the future we want: from Rio+20 to the post-2015 development agenda”. The meeting consisted of an opening ceremony and of three Leaders’ Dialogues entitled: high-level political forum – from vision to action; Global partnerships for development to create jobs and improve sustainable lifestyles; and, Mapping the way forward for eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development. Heads of State and Government and other high ranking officials including Ministers, Observers, Members of Major Groups and other stakeholders, as well

⁴ A/RES/67/290, OP.7g

⁵ A/RES/68/1

as high-level representatives of the organizations of the United Nations system, from the social, economic and environmental fields, including the Bretton Woods institutions and other relevant intergovernmental organizations attended and actively participated in the first meeting of the forum.

I. INTRODUCTION

8. A robust, visible and effective high-level political forum will help to keep sustainable development high on the international agenda and to promote the implementation of sustainable development commitments at all levels.
9. Together, the forum and a strengthened ECOSOC can promote a model of international governance guided by sustainable development.
10. The forum under ECOSOC's auspices is expected to meet at ministerial level in July 2014 during the high-level segment of ECOSOC. Its five "non ministerial" days will also be held in 2014.
11. There is thus a certain urgency to start preparing for the forum. As mandated by the GA, the President of ECOSOC convenes the forum.

He is to coordinate with the bureaux of ECOSOC and of the GA 2nd and 3rd committee in this process⁶.

12. To maximize the contribution of the forum, it is important to understand what it can bring compared to other similar platforms. This is notably the enthusiastic and structured engagement of civil society at large in the area of sustainable development; the forum's multi-sectoral approach to development; its ability to take a long term view; its mandate to increase the science-policy interface as well as its central role in following the post-2015 agenda and the SDGs once it replaces the AMR in 2016. These characteristics must inspire the way we prepare for the forum.

13. The following aspects need to be addressed:

II. THEMES

14. The GA decided that the forum shall have a thematic focus "reflecting the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, in line with the thematic focus of the activities of the Council and consistent with the post-2015 development agenda".⁷

⁶ Resolution A/RES/67/290 OP 22. *Requests* the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Economic and Social Council to coordinate with the Bureau of the Council and with the bureaux of the relevant committees of the Assembly to organize the activities of the forum so as to benefit from the inputs and advice of the United Nations system, the major groups and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate;

⁷ GA Resolution 67/290 OP. 7(c).

15. The forum can play a central role in the institutional framework of sustainable development and in the future review and follow-up of the post-2015 development agenda including. As of 2016, it will accordingly organize its work around the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals. 2014 and 2015 are transition years. They are also critical years when the forum must establish itself as an effective UN platform on sustainable development able to promote and review implementation of the SDGs and the post 2015 development agenda.
16. The theme(s) of the forum should be attractive to the environmental community but also to the economic and social ones –to ministers as well as to the “movers and shakers”. It should also allow the forum to produce concrete deliverables. It should relate to issues that top the international agenda.
17. The section entitled “Mapping the Way Forward” of the President’s Summary of the inaugural Session of the High Level Political Forum highlighted the call by world leaders for a coherent approach that integrates in a balanced manner the three dimensions of sustainable development. It also highlighted that ambitious post-2015 development agenda must go hand-in-hand with high ambitions for a renewed and strengthened global partnership for development to address financing, technology and capacity building needs.

The high-level political forum at the ministerial level has an important role to play in providing the political leadership needed for a strong

post-2015 agenda that will advance sustainable development in an integrated and universal manner and achieve poverty eradication.

At the moment, the development of the post-2015 development agenda is what captures the attention of the international community. The President of ECOSOC has consulted the Bureau of the Council, the President of the General Assembly and the bureaux of the Second and Third Committees of the GA and would like to recommend the following -theme: “Achieving the MDGs and charting the way for an ambitious transformative post-2015 development agenda”.

18. This theme would be in line with the theme of the AMR in 2014 - “addressing ongoing and emerging challenges for meeting the MDGs and for sustaining development gains in the future”.
19. As defined in its mandate, the forum will devote highlighted attention to the particular vulnerabilities and challenges of Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States and Landlocked Countries and reaffirmed the commitment to devote greater attention to these challenges in the future work of the high-level political forum.

III. DATES OF THE MEETINGS:

20. According to GA resolution 68/1, the three ministerial days of the forum must be convened during the week of the high-level segment of ECOSOC. The dates projected for the high-level segment of

ECOSOC in 2014 are from 7 to 11 July. In preparing the programme for that week, it is important to bear in mind that the Forum is a universal space convened under ECOSOC.

21. The “non-ministerial days” of the forum under the auspices of ECOSOC could be convened from 30 June to 3 July 2014. Since this is a four-day week, the President would like to recommend that the Forum meet from 6 – 9 pm on 30 June and 1 July. The Secretariat is exploring the availability of conference services.
22. Informal negotiations on the one ministerial declaration of the forum and high level segment of ECOSOC will need to be held early on, starting in the second half of May.

IV. PREPARATORY PROCESS:

23. An efficient preparatory process is key to ensuring that the forum’s discussions and outcomes are informed by country realities and scientific analysis; and that its outcomes are broadly owned. This will maximize the impact of the guidance of the forum. Preparations, notably those related to the national implementation reviews to be conducted by the forum as of 2016, should also generate policy changes in and by themselves.
24. Preparations should be multi-stakeholder. Regional Commissions but also the UN system, international financial institutions and regional development banks, WTO, and the business sector must also be

brought on board. Preparations for the second meeting of the forum in 2014 could include notably regional meetings convened by the Regional Commissions as mandated in resolution 67/290⁸. The Secretariat has started consulting the Regional Commissions on whether and when they could hold such meetings.

V. Next steps:

25. With the concurrence of the President of the General Assembly, and in the interest of coordination and transparency based on the above mentioned mandate, the President of ECOSOC will convene the members of the ECOSOC bureau and of the bureaux of the Second and Third Committees of the Assembly to a first joint informal coordination meeting to discuss the proposed date and theme for the Forum for 2014. The ECOSOC President will further undertake informal consultations open to all the members of the forum.
26. The agenda and proposed work programme of the forum will be adopted by the forum on the first day of its meeting.

⁸ A/RES/67/290 OP.13