

**SEVENTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OPEN WORKING GROUP ON  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

6-10 January 2014, 9:00-10:00, Trusteeship Council (Conference Building)

**Co-Chair's meetings with the Major Groups and other Stakeholders**

The Co-chairs and Member States of the Open Working Group continued the interaction with the stakeholders and organized five hour-long morning meetings with the Major Groups and other stakeholders during the seventh session.

The first morning session addressed the first theme of the session of the OWG: Sustainable cities and human settlements, sustainable transport. It was noted that cities have approximately 40% of global population and consume about 75% of natural resources. Therefore there can be no sustainable development without sustainable cities and human settlements, which are closely related to sustainable consumption and production, decent jobs, transportation, energy, water and sanitation, waste management, and so on.

Sustainable urbanization requires collaboration at all levels, including local governments, civil society, private and public sectors. SDGs should send a clear signal to mobilize all stakeholders. Several speakers supported a stand-alone goal on sustainable urbanization.

It was emphasized that a possible SDG on sustainable urbanization needs to be localized and demand-driven, applicable to all, building on the experience of Local Agenda 21, implemented with participatory, inclusive and transparent governance. Appropriate institutions must be put in place. Networks of local authorities are helpful. Measurements should be developed to disaggregate and show where the real impacts lie, at various levels. Some emphasized that sustainable urbanization should be treated as a process, rather than treating cities as location – a process involving dynamic interchange between rural and urban areas.

It is important to address the needs of the urban poor and to implement social protection floors to ensure access to basic services so as to enable equitable human development for all.

On the second day of the session the speakers addressed the issue of sustainable transportation. The speakers noted that transportation was neglected in the design of the MDGs, but it can play a large role as an enabler for the SDGs. Sustainable, accessible, reliable and safe transportation has been known to lessen road accidents and fatalities, air pollution and related health effects, and carbon emissions. Accessible transportation to market and work places and schools provides job possibilities and raises school enrolment rates especially for girls.

Technology development and policy development go hand in hand. Great opportunities exist with even current technologies in for example fuel efficiency for new vehicles that would slow emissions from the ever increasing global vehicle fleet. Also new types of

collaborative transport use such as car and bike sharing and peer-to-peer rentals should be encouraged.

It was noted that transport is about connections and how these can be achieved most efficiently, but it has to be seen from the human dimension. How can all citizens, including people with disabilities, women, children and elderly, be given equitable access to affordable transportation? How do we ensure that economic benefits are not deemed more important than health costs? It was also raised that sustainable transportation is not only an issue of urban areas and it should be looked at local (including rural), regional (including rural-urban links), national and global level with a system-wide approach.

On the third day of the session speakers focused on sustainable consumption and production. The speakers highlighted that sustainable consumption and production needs to be relevant for 7 billion people. We need to make sure that everyone can consume enough, not too much, and live good lives within the limits of Earth's resources and carrying capacity.

Many stated that without a change in consumption patterns SDGs on areas such as food, energy, water, oceans and biodiversity will not make a lasting change. The speakers noted that, even though efficiency measures are extremely important and should be implemented in various sectors, there is a need for transformative change in thinking from minimizing the negatives to reaching for the positive options. In this regard for example, instead of concentrating only on the most efficient ways of meat production, we should also be looking to more environmentally sustainable as well as healthy diets.

Speakers noted that corporate sustainability reporting should be made obligatory especially for large, multinational enterprises. Related to this, eco-labelling of products was mentioned as one way to induce behavioural change in consumption patterns.

On chemicals it was noted that the issue deserves wider analysis than banning use of hazardous chemicals by binding conventions since chemicals affect issues such as health, food security and land use, sustainable cities, sustainable extractive industries, governance and indigenous people's rights. At the same time it must be remembered that sound use of chemicals for uses such as new medicines, water purification and housing provides new solutions to sustainable development challenges.

On the fourth day the meeting addressed climate change which was marked as the worst challenge of our times. Several speakers noted that climate change already threatens the progress made to implement the MDGs and that it is clear that without addressing climate change SDGs cannot be met.

Even though the SDGs are not supposed to interfere with or substitute for the negotiations under UNFCCC, there was a strong plea to include climate change in the SDGs either as a stand-alone goal or in the targets. This could be done for example under goals on energy, food, water, cities, growth and jobs, and resilience. It was noted that since climate change is

one of the biggest threats to sustainability, not including it in the SDGs in one way or another would send the wrong signal to the world.

Many highlighted that a binding climate agreement under UNFCCC is essential in order to achieve the 2 degree target, but that actions to address climate change catalysed by the SDGs would be important to bridge the critical gap between 2015 and 2020 when commitments under a new UNFCCC are expected to take effect.

It was noted that a lot can be done for both climate mitigation and adaptation at the city level where good progress has already been taking place. In this regard a strong goal on sustainable cities or urbanization with a climate component was called for.

Many speakers also called for climate-proofing of the SDGs, so that each and every goal and target would be designed in such a way that they would contribute to climate change mitigation and/or adaptation, or at least would not cause adverse effects.

Women, and especially poor rural women, carry a disproportionate burden of climate change's negative impacts and also natural disasters in the form of higher rates of mortality, loss of land and property and also sexual assaults and human trafficking in disaster areas, and their vulnerability should be taken into consideration in policy planning.

On the last day of the session the meeting addressed disaster risk reduction. It was highlighted that even though we cannot eliminate all risks there are a range of available tools for calculating these risks. After this it is a political decision to decide what levels of avoidable risks should be tolerated.

The science and technology to make development less risky for the poor and vulnerable is there, but it is not being put to use on the necessary scale. Some advocated for a disaster risk reduction target to address this issue. Such a target could aim to reduce the number of people killed, missing, injured and suffering health impacts and disabilities due to disasters, and to build resilience of communities. It was also noted that issues such as animal protection in disasters should be addressed since it has a direct impact on economic wellbeing in post-disaster situations.

It was noted that disaster risk reduction often focuses only on technical infrastructure questions even though addressing the root causes of risks such as climate change and building resilience through holistic disaster risk planning, land-use planning, communication and educational programmes, good local governance and social security nets would provide more sustainable results.

Speakers highlighted that local risks need also local solutions. Much can be learned from long-term local level practices with risk management and from indigenous-knowledge. Disaster risk reduction must be tailored to local contexts, be pro-poor and gender-sensitive, and be subject to inclusive decision-making.