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Introduction of the Secretary-General's Initial Input to the Open Working Group

Distinguished Co-chairs, Excellencies, distinguished participants,

I want to start by congratulating the co-chairs on their election and I am pleased to introduce the Secretary-Generals initial input to the OWG, which has been prepared in consultation with Member States and contains suggestions on some key principles and criteria for developing a proposal for SDGs, in line with para. 249 of the Rio+20 outcome document.

I would like to also note the June 2012 report of the United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda, "Realizing the Future We Want for All which, together with the initial input from member states and the ongoing broader consultations on the post-2015 agenda, can help inform and guide the work ahead.

SDG priority areas

In the responses received from member States, the priorities highlighted in the MDG agenda (poverty eradication, food security, water and sanitation, education, and health) continue to feature prominently. At the same time, new priority areas are identified and underscored, such as energy, and the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development such as employment, means of implementation, sustainable consumption and production, climate change and management of natural resources Gender equality and empowerment features prominently as well.

Balancing the economic, social and environmental dimensions

Comments have suggested a number of ways in which the SDGs might strive to balance the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development

Some support the notion that all three dimensions should be reflected within each of the goals, for example, via targets that cover the three dimensions. The targets under the Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All have been cited as an example of how this could be done: with a social target ("universal access"), an economic one ("doubling efficiency of energy use") and an environmental one ("doubling share of renewable energy").

Others have noted the importance of overall balance, not necessarily In each and every goal. One way this could be achieved is to build upon the MDGs, expanding them to include stronger economic and environmental goals and targets Some have noted that *both* elaborating the MDGs *and* balancing the three dimensions within each goal would be preferable, since these two options are mutually reinforcing.

Overall, it will be important to strike the right balance between comprehensiveness and specificity, in order to avoid overloading or over-broadening the post-2015 development agenda and thereby undermining the specificity that has been a useful and important aspect of the MDGs.

SDGs at country level

The SDGs could have a very important influence on the process of defining national policies, contributing to increased coherence, and influencing the national budget allocations crmcal for successful implementation It has been observed that just as the MDGs have guided development cooperation, the SDGs could guide international cooperation on sustainable development.

Defining national targets for global, universally applicable goals

In considering how SDGs can be made practically relevant for each country, many agree that the particular national circumstances, capacities, priorities and level of development of each country must be carefully taken Into account, with particular reference made to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

Differentiation of universally applicable goals could be achieved at the target and indicator level, with each country defining its own relevant target and associated indicator values, possibly based on a menu.

Incorporating existing goals and targets

Many stated that the process of defining the SDGs should not be an occasion to re-negotiate agreed goals and targets, but it should address the gaps in existing goals and targets that have hindered the implementation of sustainable development to date

Many noted that that much has changed over the past 15 years. An array of crises--from finance to food to the increase in natural disasters--as well as opportunities stemming from increased access to technology and information, signal the need to formulate a new suite of goals and targets that build upon past efforts but are relevant for today's world.

Ensuring coherence with the post-2015 development agenda

Many respondents argued that the development of SDGs should be linked with the evolution of the post-2015 development agenda, to ensure that the two processes inform each other Most agreed that, at the end of the day, the processes to define the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda should converge on a coherent, unified post-2015 agenda with poverty eradication and sustainable development at its core

Assessing progress

Careful thought needs to be given to how to measure progress on the SDGs -to identify and select indicators that are fair in the way they treat different countries, easy to measure and easy to understand and explain Disaggregated data will be needed to capture inequalities in progress across different groups or regions This will require building up statistical capacines In countries to enable them to generate such data.

There will be need for a structured process of follow-up, to assess progress, redouble efforts if necessary, and work towards keeping on track In this initial input, Member States have already proposed various ways in which the High-level Political Forum could ensure that SDG progress IS monitored and assessed at regular frequencies.

Engaging all stakeholders

Paragraph 248 of the Rio+20 Outcome Document outlines an inclusive and participatory process for elaborating the SDGs through the OWG that is open to all stakeholders. There is broad agreement among Member States that civil society, academia and other relevant stakeholders should be fully engaged in consultations at national, sub-regional, regional and international levels as part of the process of defining the SDGs.

SDG principles

Underpinning the development of the SDGs, Member States recalled the fundamental place of the Rio Principles--including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities--and the principles contained In the Millennium Declaration, Agenda 21 and the JPOI.

New Global Partnership for Development

It was recognized that implementation of the SDGs will be more complex than that of the MDGs. The SDGs will encompass structural and systemic changes, articulate linkages, and involve difficult decisions around trade-offs. The SDGs are truly about a global partnership that involves actors that to date have operated largely in isolation within their respective sustainable development spheres. Effective integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development will be the hallmark of a successful future partnership.

The new cooperation framework should be effectively linked with the evolving institutional arrangements and outcomes of processes agreed at Rio+20, including a new financing strategy for sustainable development, consideration of options for a technology facilitation mechanism, a strengthened UNEP, and an effective monitoring and review process under the high-level political forum on sustainable development. It should guide and support the implementation of the SDGs, facilitating resource mobilization, partnerships and other forms of effective cooperation in pursuit of all agreed goals.

The Secretariat has created a website to manage information on the SDGs and the Open Working Group. The site can be accessed from the following web address sustainabledevelopment.un.org [on this site delegations can also access a password-protected site designed for sharing documentation related to the OWG]

With these ideas, generated by many of you for this initial input to the Open Working Group, I wish you all an inspired and fruitful discussion as we begin this very important process