

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

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**Remarks**  
**High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**  
**HLPF Ministerial Dialogue on “Charting pathways to the future we want”**  
**Key Messages from the prototype Global Sustainable Development Report**  
**9 July 2014, Trusteeship Council**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege to be here with all of you today.

The Rio+20 outcome document wisely called for a Global Sustainable Development Report as one of the instruments of the high-level political forum to strengthen the science-policy interface.

Last week, I presented a Prototype Global Sustainable Development Report to this forum. The Prototype Report is based on inputs from scientific communities and from 21 UN entities. It illustrates a range of potential content and approaches for future editions of the Report. And it demonstrates various models of engagement of scientists from around the world in support of the high-level political forum.

I see the Prototype Report as a first step in what I hope will be a fruitful and inclusive conversation between scientists and decision-makers on sustainable development. The UN debate is in need of solid scientific advice based on assessments that are credible, relevant and legitimate.

Last week’s discussions on scope and methodology of a global sustainable development report were encouraging and enlightening. I believe many of you have been waiting for this discussion.

I encourage you to have a closer look at the Prototype Report and provide us with your feedback.

Chapter 4 of the Prototype Report looks at visions, scenarios and future pathways toward sustainable development. In fact, it provides some answers to the guiding questions of today’s session. I would like to highlight selected messages from this Chapter.

*First, what are potential consequences of continuing like in the past?*

Continuing like in the past does not mean inaction. Instead, it assumes continued, incremental improvements in reaction to perceived crises. Of course, no one really knows what precise path the world will take in the next two generations. But there is scientific consensus on key

issues and the broad direction of global trends. Based on this, the majority – but not all – scientists are concerned about the long-term trend outlook.

If we continue along our present course, the world in 2050 will likely be one of excessive material consumption by 6 billion people in both “North” and “South” which may come at the expense of another 3 billion people living in abject poverty. Some argue that global consumption by its sheer scale in such a US\$300 trillion economy will have transgressed the majority of “planetary boundaries”, eventually leading to global collapse. However, let us be optimistic and leave aside this possibility for the moment. The result for 2050 will be a more crowded world with reduced but widespread poverty and hunger; one billion people still lacking access to basic services; billions excluded from otherwise improved global health; an energy-hungry, fossil-fuelled world; a “thirsty” world with two-thirds of the world population under water stress; a global economy repeatedly wracked by price shocks and supply disruptions; further deterioration of urban air quality; fewer tropical forests; global collapse of ocean fisheries; accelerated increase in GHG emissions and global warming; continued loss of biodiversity; large-scale human interference with the phosphorus and nitrogen cycles; and a resurgence of resource-related conflicts.

It is not all gloom and doom, though. By 2050, we may have almost achieved universal primary and secondary education. A global middle class will have emerged, and world average GDP per capita will have tripled to a level similar to OECD countries today. Billions will have acquired access to basic services. There will be fewer deaths from indoor air pollution. Urbanization would reach 70 per cent which implies an increase of 2.8 billion people in urban areas. This will require the building of 400 million megacities in and around existing cities.

*Second, what could we potentially achieve, if we achieved a global sustainability transition by 2050?*

The challenge is to eliminate poverty and hunger; feed, nurture, house, and educate more than nine billion people; and preserve the Earth’s basic life support systems. The Report sketches a future sustainable development pathway which was derived from scenarios prepared by leading modelling teams. The pathway leads to a world that would be more sustainable in important environmental, economic and social dimensions. It promises a decent quality of life for all people.

We could expect a world in 2050 where hunger and poverty have been effectively eliminated; a world with universal access to improved water sources and basic sanitation, to electricity and modern cooking fuels; a world with universal primary and secondary education; a world with catch-up development everywhere and GDP per capita differences among countries similar to OECD ranges today; a world with much greater energy efficiencies and energy conservation; a world with greatly reduced local air pollution, slowly reversed deforestation, and restored fish stocks; a world with global average temperature change limited to 2°C above pre-industrial levels. Biodiversity could possibly be stabilized at 2020 levels. Early adoption of new and high performing technologies by the richest people would greatly reduce pollution and resource pressures.

Yet, this world in 2050 would still have its share of problems and challenges. Billions of people would still be under water stress and flood risks will have worsened in many places as a result of climate change already underway. Chemicals would likely continue to pose serious threats

to human health. Human interference with the global phosphorus and nitrogen cycles would most likely continue to rise, despite great efforts.

*Third, what means of implementation are needed to achieve global sustainable development?*

Let me just highlight two of them – technology and financing.

We know it is technically feasible to improve global eco-efficiency by a factor of 4 or 5 by 2050. This would allow global wealth to be multiplied by 2 or more, while halving resource and energy use. To achieve such an ambitious global eco-efficiency goal, we need global cooperation. We need to work together to direct wisely the more than one trillion US dollars that are spent on research and development worldwide every year. The good news is that the research contribution of middle- and low-income countries more than doubled over the last 15 years. And continued gains in the education, skills and capabilities of billions of poor people in coming decades hold tremendous potential both to boost productivity and to help solve our global sustainability challenges.

Technology cooperation needs to be enhanced and the diffusion of such technologies accelerated. Technology transfer is happening too slowly to tackle the big sustainable development challenges. And technological capabilities in developing countries need to be substantially strengthened, if they are to partake actively of the major technological transformations that lie ahead.

Total global investment needs from different studies are on the order of tens to hundreds of billions of dollars per year in key areas. For example US\$20 to 200 billion per year are needed to achieve the MDGs and similar goals; US\$50 to 83 billion per year are needed to increase agricultural yields and feed everyone without expansion of agricultural land; US\$49 billion per year are required up to 2030 to provide universal access to modern energy service; US\$18 to 80 billion per year are needed for water and sanitation; US\$9 to 26 billion per year are needed for achieving ‘education for all’ in developing countries; US\$40 to 160 billion per year for forests; and US\$30 to 40 billion per year for oceans; infrastructure investment in developing countries needs to double from a current level of US\$0.8-0.9 trillion per year; and Least Developed Countries alone face a financing gap of US\$50 to 75 billion per year.

*Fourth, what does science tell us about the best policy choices for a sustainable future?*

Among the scenarios reviewed in the Prototype Report, there is a high level of agreement on overall scenario conclusions, but little agreement on specific policy suggestions.

There is agreement that there are numerous, feasible pathways towards sustainable development. Hence, there is no “must-have” list of policies.

Making progress in one dimension can lead to both synergies and trade-offs. Complex trade-offs related to the global commons need to be tackled globally. To support the discussion on integrated solutions, my Department cooperated with researchers at the Royal Institute of Technology in Sweden to develop an open-source global model of the climate-land-energy-water-materials-development nexus.

National planning and assessment continue to follow almost exclusively sectoral lines. To ignore inter-linkages between sectors and across national borders, however, has meant that success in one area or location has come at the expense of increasing problems elsewhere. The links among food, fuel, and climate crises are a case in point. The Prototype Report highlights a number of national and regional case studies that assess these inter-linkages. They show how scientific assessments can help identifying innovative and possibly better policy solutions.

There is no “best” solution or policy for sustainable development. Measures and policies need to be tailored to each situation and cluster of issues. Scientific input is needed to identify optimal policies. This is a great challenge for many developing countries which would benefit from capacity building support by the international community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the preparation of the Prototype Report, experts emphasized the importance of national and local inputs into the global conversation. This was also expressed in the *Dubrovnik Declaration on a regional perspective for a sustainable future*.

We hope to establish, with your guidance, a transparent and inclusive process to facilitate contributions by scientists and stakeholders from all countries and regions to the Global Sustainable Development Report.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are thousands of scientific assessments related to sustainable development. What has been lacking until now is a solid, accessible assessment of assessments. The recommendations of the Secretary General on options for the scope and methodology of a Global Sustainable Development Report are on the table. The options are based on written inputs by Member States, UN partners and other stakeholders.

Many of you suggested the Global Sustainable Development Report should build on existing assessments and bring together all relevant stakeholders. To this end, my Department stands ready to continue its efforts to mobilize inputs from scientists and the entire UN system in support of the high-level political forum and beyond.

I very much look forward to joining you in the discussions.

Thank you all.