

16 January 2015

Remarks from the scientific community on the UN Secretary General's Synthesis Report

The Science and Technology Major Group welcomes the UN Secretary General's synthesis report. It provides a strong basis for defining a Post-2015 Development Agenda **that integrates people-centered social and economic objectives with stewardship of our global environment.**

We particularly welcome the emphasis on:

- a truly universal, integrated and transformational agenda
- calls for an **evidence-based** approach for realizing sustainable development
- the development of alternative measures of progress, beyond GDP
- a rigorous and participatory review and monitoring framework
- a data revolution

On means of implementation

The scientific community especially welcome the inclusion of paragraphs 118-126 on Technology, Science and Innovation in the SG report. However, whilst we fully agree that technology development and transfer, can a vital role for sustainable development, the **crucial importance of knowledge from science as part of the solution** to the sustainability challenge, alongside technology, policies and coordinated action from all sectors should be better recognised. Science helps to identify critical inter-linkages, synergies and trade-offs between the different dimensions of sustainable development, assess progress made, test solutions, identify emerging risks.

To be truly evidence-based and innovation-driven, the Post-2015 Development Agenda needs to be grounded on data and science.

*From science perspective, importance of having **measurable targets and scientifically rigorous indicators***

The SG report also points to areas where further collaborative work is needed. In particular:

In paragraphs 136 – 139 of the Synthesis Report, it is acknowledged that the SDG targets need to be consolidated. This is particularly true as regards the need to define **measurable targets and scientifically rigorous indicators.**

The International Council for Science has convened a broad interdisciplinary group of experts tasked to prepare a "**Review of Targets for the Sustainable Development Goals**". This independent scientific review is a unique tool for negotiators and stakeholders providing science-based recommendations to consolidate the goals and targets, and prepare for their implementation. The report will be made public by the end of January.

*Importance to operationalize global partnership by develop concrete mechanisms for collaboration and capture good will and expertise from civil society – one example is the transdisciplinary research programme Future Earth. Future Earth provides a global platform for scientists to **co-design and co-produce** knowledge with policy-makers and stakeholders on the global sustainability challenges to address questions such as: what are possible pathways to achieve the SDGs? and what are the key drivers and enablers that can foster transformational change?*

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Synergies with other intergovernmental processes - Finally, we would like to support strong linkages between the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the post-2015 Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and the new international agreement on climate change negotiated under the UNFCCC. **The three agendas depends on each other to succeed.** Science has greatly contributed to develop a better understanding of the fundamental connections between economic development, social justice and environmental protection and wishes to continue to work in partnership with policy-makers and civil society to accelerate our transformation towards sustainable development. The development of integrated monitoring framework for these processes is an important opportunity to make this interface.

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Session on Means of implementation and global partnership for development

The scientific and technological community Major Group is pleased to see the emphasis put on the need for securing means of implementation that are commensurate with the challenge of bringing about transformation to sustainable development in all countries.

However, the scientific community would like to stress that the **SG report does not sufficiently recognize that new knowledge from science is a vital part of the solution to the sustainability challenges** we face. Whilst we fully agree that technology development and transfer, both recognized in the Secretary General's report and the OWG outcome document, play a vital role – the strong relationship between scientific research and knowledge, development and innovative technologies has not been recognized.

Knowledge from across the natural and social sciences is needed to identify, validate and monitor new socially, economically and environmentally appropriate technologies and to introduce new sustainable economic models. Science can play a role in promoting a holistic and integrated approach by identifying critical inter-linkages, synergies and trade-offs between the different dimensions of sustainable development. We welcome that the Synthesis Report includes a chapter on Technology, Science and Innovation (paragraphs 118 – 126) but we note again that its focus is primarily on technology development and transfer.

Paragraph 119 rightly stresses the need to strengthen investment on research and development or public goods to support innovation. We would like to stress that innovation is a cumulative social process that depends on knowledge. We would therefore call for a recognition to invest not only in sound technologies but also in research directed at understanding fundamental issues, and at accelerating transformation towards sustainable development and scientific cooperation for the development and sharing of knowledge.

Cooperation is an efficient way to close the capacity gap, and the roles and modalities for cooperation between policy-makers, scientific institutions, business, civil society should be further specified as we move forward with the definition of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

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Session on Follow up and Review

Monitoring and review is essential for effective and accountable governance, and to steer successful implementation on commitments for sustainable development. A set of robust, science-based indicators will be a key in this respect and the science community stands ready to assist with the development of indicators and the associated monitoring framework. The post-2015 development Agenda and in particular the SDGs poses a number of important scientific questions, including:

This will call on integrated research to continue developing indicators and metrics, as well as promoting access to disaggregated data and capacity to use.