

## Intergovernmental Negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

### STATEMENT BY LUXEMBOURG

#### ON BEHALF OF 15 MEMBER STATES OF THE GROUP OF FRIENDS ON CHILDREN AND SDGs<sup>1</sup> ON THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILD-FOCUSED INDICATORS AND DATA

Monsieur le co-facilitateur,

Merci de me donner la parole. J'ai l'honneur de prononcer une déclaration au nom de 15 Etats membres du Groupe d'amis sur les Enfants et les Objectifs de développement durable. La version complète de notre déclaration avec la liste des Etats membres qui s'y associent sera communiquée au Secrétariat pour publication sur le site internet de nos négociations, cela nous permettra d'économiser du temps.

Mr. Co-Facilitator,

In the English language, there is a common turn of phrase called "the litmus test." Its scientific origins were to test if a given liquid was "acidic" or "basic" -- but what it has come to mean, colloquially, is an "early warning" -- to check if a given issue is going in the right direction or the wrong one.

The well-being of children, girls as well as boys, is the "litmus test" for the health and future well-being of our societies and the planet. How our children are faring – in terms of their health and nutrition, their welfare and education, the environment in which they grow up -- is a direct predictor of what the future will look like, and whether that future is bright or bleak. It is therefore critical that the well-being of children is systematically tracked by indicators that not only give an accurate picture of the life of a child today...but also provide a window into the future for all of us.

Moreover, a global set of indicators will help to reinforce the universal nature of this new framework – it is indeed equally important to understand a child's experience with violence, discrimination or lack of access to quality education in the highest income country as it is in the lowest.

The MDGs have yielded many lessons that we can apply to the new sustainable development goals. They have taught us that global targets can play a key role in galvanizing efforts to improve the situation of children and that a small number of high quality indicators will be the backbone for monitoring progress at local, national, regional and global levels.

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<sup>1</sup> Belgium, Bulgaria, Colombia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Republic of Korea and Sweden

Perhaps the fundamental lesson of the MDGs is that macro-level progress and national averages can often mask troubling trends or stagnating progress when you look beneath those averages. Disaggregated data – by age, sex, wealth, location, disability status and other dimensions of inequality -- are particularly important for monitoring progress among different income and social groups. It is through disaggregated data that we will be able to unearth inequalities and deprivation across all goals and targets so that certain people, including children, are not rendered invisible or left behind in the march forward of progress.

Disaggregated data, however, is not enough on its own. There must be an explicit prioritization on the progressive reduction of inequalities over time as part of the SDGs follow-up and review framework. Reaching universal or absolute targets for all social groups will require paying special attention to the most disadvantaged groups – and prioritizing them first, rather than leaving them for last. Tools and methodologies exist to measure if we are closing these gaps, and to ensure that we are progressing through levelling up, rather than levelling down. This expert knowledge should also be used and applied through the accountability mechanisms established.

We live in a very different world than we did 15 years ago when the MDGs were first crafted...and in turn, it will be a very different world 15 years from now, when the SDG time horizon is ending. One of the great achievements of the first 15 years of this new millennium is the exponential growth of information and technology resources. We have seen a revolution in the availability and quality of data for children. Innovation must be used to fuel the continuation of this “data revolution” for development -- and children and young people are at the forefront of this revolution.

What this means is that collection and use of different types of data will be critical to monitoring progress on the new SDGs. Household surveys; real-time monitoring systems; people-led feedback initiatives; perception data; and big data analytics are some of the tools that must be employed for SDG monitoring.

At the center of monitoring progress will be the need to increase investment and capacity for collection and analysis of data at the national and sub-national level, including through national household surveys, censuses and systems for civil registration and collection of vital statistics (including births, marriages and deaths). We will need to build on the databases established during the MDG era and develop new indicators which reflect the increased ambition of the SDG targets. We also need to agree on robust methods for regular collection, aggregation and reporting of data for children to inform policy and investment decisions at different levels.

We must also recognize that existing data collection mechanisms may not be sufficient for all data needs, and will need to be supplemented through other innovative forms of data

collection. Of particular note for children and young people most at risk are those that do not live in “households.” Girls and boys live in refugee camps, in children’s homes, on the streets and in institutions and other substandard forms of alternative care such as prisons. They are not counted by official statistics and thus languish outside of the reach of government social protection programmes and schooling. Mainstream surveys do not capture the reality of these children, who are the most vulnerable and at risk.

Inclusive people-led participatory monitoring can complement traditional data collection methods and mitigate some of the gaps. A recent global meeting held in Lima, Peru, for example, has noted that people-led monitoring can change the dynamics and direction of accountability and bring in new voices and ideas about what is working, where and why. And -- if things are not working -- what is needed to change course.

Furthermore, people's participation is not only a means, but an end in itself. Responsible collaboration between people and their governments in monitoring progress can promote social inclusion and help shift harmful biases and discriminatory practices. It also promotes informed development decision-making, resulting in programs and initiatives that are more effective, efficient and have better results.

Finally, we recognize that we have a tremendous challenge in balancing the need for a manageable list of global SDG indicators while at the same time ensuring that there are not critical gaps. In many cases, indicators will need to be multi-dimensional...meaning that a single indicator will indicate progress or lack thereof on a number of different targets.

Child-focused indicators often fit this bill. The issue of preventable newborn and child deaths, for example, is a window into a world of extreme poverty, where there is not adequate access to safe water or nutritional food sources, where there may be exposure to vaccine preventable disease or toxic levels of indoor air pollution caused by unsafe and unsustainable energy practices that include the use of wood, coal and kerosene used for cooking and energy. Moreover, the indicators should help track the many differences between girls and boys.

Mr. Co-Facilitator,

In conclusion, we need not look further than the words of one of the world’s greatest leaders, Nelson Mandela, for direction on this issue: “There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.” Let us keep these words in mind as we deliberate on those indicators that will truly reveal who we are and where we are going in making progress towards the world we want.

Thank you.