



# HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

## Issue Briefs

### 1. *From Rio+20 to post-2015: towards an integrated and universal development agenda*

#### Background

In the Outcome document of the Special event to follow up efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals held on 25 September 2013, the Member States decided to launch a process of intergovernmental negotiations at the beginning of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly which will lead to the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda.

At the Rio+20 Conference the Member States agreed that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should be coherent with and integrated into the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. Several other work streams are also leading towards the post-2015 development agenda, including the work of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing, the structured dialogues on a technology facilitation mechanism, and the third financing for development conference.

#### *Working towards an integrated post-2015 development agenda*

The outcome of the Special event to follow up efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals requests the UN Secretary-General to prepare by the end of 2014 a synthesis report that would integrate elements from these different streams, to facilitate intergovernmental negotiations. This issues brief addresses integration of these different work streams and the work of different development actors and does not address the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, which is dealt with in HLPF Issue Brief 5.

#### *General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals*

At the Rio+20 Conference the Member States decided to launch a process to develop a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) and to establish an intergovernmental Open Working Group (OWG) that will present its proposals on SDGs to the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. The OWG aims to provide a set of ambitious goals and targets that enjoy broad political support, integrate all three dimensions of sustainable development, are universally applicable, concise, measurable, easy to communicate, and limited in number. This set of transformative goals at the core of the post-2015 development agenda must also be supported by an accountability framework and fit-for-purpose means of implementation.

## ***Secretary-General's High-level Panel***

In July 2012, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the 27 members of a High-level Panel to advise on the post-2015 development framework. The Panel's report, submitted to the Secretary-General on 30 May 2013, outlined five transformational shifts, applicable to both developed and developing countries alike. It also provided an example of how new goals and measurable targets could be framed in relation to these shifts, building on the MDGs and the Rio+20 Conference.

## ***Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing***

The Rio+20 Conference also decided to establish an intergovernmental committee that would assess financing needs, consider the effectiveness, consistency and synergies of existing instruments and frameworks, and evaluate additional initiatives, with a view to preparing a report proposing options on an effective sustainable development financing strategy. The Committee, comprising 30 experts nominated by regional groups, with equitable geographical representation, was established in June 2013 and will conclude its work in 2014. The report of the Committee will provide an input into the means of implementation discussion and feed into the Secretary-General's synthesis report.

## ***Technology facilitation mechanism***

The Rio+20 Conference requested the "relevant United Nations agencies to identify options for a facilitation mechanism that promotes the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies". The Secretary-General issued his report on options for a facilitation mechanism in September 2012 and a second report in September 2013.

The General Assembly has continued to discuss options, including in a series of four structured dialogues currently underway on possible arrangements for a facilitation mechanism, which will result in a summary with recommendations by the President of the General Assembly. This too will feed into the Secretary-General's synthesis report.

## ***Third international conference on financing for development***

Member States have decided that the third international conference on financing for development will be held in Addis Ababa, from 13 to 16 July 2015. The Conference and its outcome will without a doubt be a building block for the implementation strategy for the SDGs, in much the same vein as the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development in 2002 was for the MDGs.

## ***United Nations Development Group consultations, regional consultations and civil society engagement***

In 2013, almost two million people engaged in sharing their priorities for the future development agenda through an initiative organized by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) in 88 countries, and through 11 thematic consultations and a global survey MY World. The results of these consultations were brought together in the report *A Million Voices: The World We Want*. In March 2014 the UNGD announced additional dialogues on Implementation of the post-2015 development agenda in 50 countries.

The United Nations Regional Commissions also led broad, multi-stakeholder regional consultations to seek the views of member States and other stakeholders on priorities for the post 2015 development agenda. These

consultations contributed to convergence and strengthened regional voices in the inter-governmental negotiation process on the SDGs.

Most of the work strands leading towards an integrated post-2015 agenda, such as the Secretary-General's High-level Panel and the Open Working Group on SDGs, have included extensive consultations, hearings and sessions with civil society in their programmes of work. Continued engagement will be crucial for the successful formulation and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda and this unprecedented inclusiveness should be upheld and strengthened also in the High-level Political Forum.

## *Bringing the post-2015 work streams together*

Weaving together the several strands leading towards an integrated post-2015 development agenda poses a number of challenges, including the differing timelines of the processes. However, it is certain that in formulating the agenda the whole has potential to be larger than the sum of its parts. The Secretary-General's synthesis report will play an important role in setting the stage for the intergovernmental negotiations leading up to the adoption of the new development agenda in 2015. The incremental approach in producing the inputs to this agenda could be seen as an advantage in trying to achieve such a multifaceted and all-encompassing intergovernmental undertaking.

## *Integrating elements from other intergovernmental processes*

In order to achieve a truly holistic post-2015 development agenda, the intergovernmental process needs to take into consideration and capitalize on other parallel processes, such as the negotiations of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), the review process of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Beyond 2014, and the successor of the Hyogo Framework for Action, to name just a few.

Even though the post-2015 negotiations must not pre-empt any of the other intergovernmental processes, there is a need to include all relevant elements of these issues into the emerging agenda, be it as ambitious goals and targets, as means of implementation, or by giving them the emphasis they deserve in other forms. If the post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs at its core aim to define the main contours of the UN's strategy over the coming years, they cannot shy away from some of the most pressing threats to humanity without losing credibility in the eyes of citizens around the world.

## *Coordinated and coherent implementation*

For twenty years, the international community has aspired to integrate the three dimensions of sustainability, but no country has yet achieved this. In striving to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, development actors have been working intensively around the world, but often in silos, on interlinked problems. These efforts have produced many significant results, saved human lives and raised the quality of life for millions of people. At the same time, valuable synergies have gone unrealized.

The new post-2015 development agenda has the opportunity to bring the development actors working towards the MDGs together with the wider communities working on social inclusion, human rights, economic growth, and environmental sustainability to support the implementation of the SDGs. Integration should also happen at the level of the UN system where all relevant actors should within their mandates strive to include SDGs in



their planning, identify gaps and potential for synergies in cooperation, and revise their coordination mechanisms when needed, to ensure that they are fit for purpose. The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development with its convening power holds strong potential for fostering such integration through holistic agenda-setting and in its review of progress towards the achievement of the SDGs.

## Universality

The SDGs are meant to be universal. Their universality has two important dimensions. First, they should hold out the prospect for social and economic advancement of all people while ensuring environmental sustainability, leaving no one behind – no one poor, no one undernourished, no one without safe drinking water, electricity, and access to education and health care. The second, equally important dimension of universality is the shared responsibilities of all countries and actors to achieve sustainable development.

We know now from climate change science, as well as other sustainability science, that what citizens of developed countries do in terms of their own consumption and production patterns has implications far beyond their borders, affecting climate, resource availability and thus livelihoods and living conditions even in the poorest countries. We are all interdependent, not only through globalization but through our sharing of the global commons, and so achieving sustainable development in one place is inseparably linked to achieving it elsewhere.

Thus, we cannot any longer – if we ever could -- speak of a development agenda for poor countries without talking simultaneously of sustainable development writ large, with equitably shared and differentiated responsibilities of all countries for managing humankind's relationship to the Earth and its life-supporting ecosystems. Without that, eradicating poverty irreversibly and advancing universal human development will simply not be possible.

## Programme of the dialogue

The dialogue will consist of panellists who will introduce the topic and discussants who will comment on the panellists' remarks, addressing all three dimensions of sustainable development.

### Objective of the dialogue and guiding questions

The objective of the dialogue is to consider how different work strands and actors should come together to define an integrated post-2015 development agenda and how the issue of universality should be addressed in the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda.

- How should the different work strands that contribute to the post-2015 agenda be brought together?
- How can the HLPF together with UN entities foster integrated implementation and monitoring of progress towards the SDGs?
- How can universality and an equitable sharing of responsibilities for achieving sustainable development, both among and within countries, be best addressed in the post-2015 agenda?

