

## **Summary - Second Session of the OWG on SDGs 17-19 April 2013**

The second session of the Open Working Group (OWG) of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) convened at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 17 to 19 April 2013. The purpose of the meeting was to conduct in-depth discussions on conceptualizing the SDGs and on poverty eradication. The 30-member OWG and other member States, as well as representatives of the UN System, Major Groups and other observers provided general statements, heard presentations by thematic keynote speakers and panellists, and participated in interactive discussions moderated by scientific experts. A draft Programme of Work was also presented by the Co-Chairs for the group's consideration.

On Wednesday morning, Co-Chair H.E. Mr. Macharia Kamau of Kenya provided opening remarks, recognizing with appreciation the work of his Co-Chair, H.E. Mr. Csaba Körösi of Hungary. He provided an overview of the meeting's focus on the topics of conceptualizing the SDGs and poverty eradication. Co-Chair Kamau invited the OWG to discuss how the SDGs could build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other existing goals; strive to be universal while providing meaningful, implementable and measurable goals for each country; achieve the ambitions of all countries while remaining realistic; and assure measurability of progress. On the topic of how the SDGs could support progress toward eradication of poverty and empower the weakest and most vulnerable, he asked the OWG to identify entry points such as good governance, equity, gender equality and women's empowerment, and human rights. He drew attention to the global consultations underway to gather the views of people around the world for a post-2105 development agenda as well as the potential value of inputs from the academic community in shaping a development framework with sustainable development at its core. He expressed hope that the discussion on conceptual issues could provide a basis for preparing the draft Programme of Work for the OWG, which would be circulated on Thursday for discussion on Friday. He reminded participants to bear in mind that the OWG was not yet in negotiation mode, and that the months ahead would be devoted to listening, understanding each other's views, and gathering information.

Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, introduced the issue brief on conceptual issues prepared by the UN Technical Support Team (TST)<sup>1</sup> as an official input to the meeting. The brief provides a stocktaking of agreed characteristics of the SDGs and an analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the MDGs; an overview of conceptual proposals for framing the SDGs; and suggestions on the way forward in addressing key questions, including how to balance the three dimensions of sustainable development and how universal goals could flexibly apply to all countries. He described a couple of options (not necessarily mutually exclusive): a common set of goals coupled with differentiated target levels and/or timelines for different countries; a common set of goals with a list of targets and indicators from which each

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<sup>1</sup> The Technical Support Team (TST) brings together the collective knowledge and expertise of around 40 UN entities, to address the conceptual issues that the OWG faces in agreeing on a set of SDGs. The TST is co-chaired by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) The referenced brief can be found at: .

country can select those that accord most closely with national priorities. He stressed that the SDGs and MDGs must be complementary, noting that the SDGs have potential to accelerate the work begun under the MDGs. He concluded that setting new goals should stimulate development of new data tools and that capacity building to support accurate, timely and disaggregated information and data for all countries would be critical for success.

### ***Interactive exchange of views on conceptualizing the SDGs***

During the interactive exchange of views, members of the OWG and others presented their conceptual ideas regarding the SDGs. They began to explore how the SDGs could build on the MDGs; incorporate other existing goals and targets; and construct universal goals that would be meaningful for every country. Many speakers praised the efforts of the TST in preparing the issue brief, while stressing that the work of the TST does not have any legal bearing on the conclusions of the OWG. Some stated that the discussions would benefit from the active support of the TST to future sessions.

Many members of the OWG supported a single set of common global goals. A number of speakers reaffirmed that the goals should be universally applicable to all countries, while taking into account countries' particular realities and national priorities. They also reaffirmed that the SDGs should be aspirational, action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, and limited in number. Others added that the goals should be flexible, practical, implementable, measurable, and with a single timeline. The process itself is expected to be inclusive and transparent, including active and open dialogues with civil society, and considering the contributions of the broadest possible range of stakeholders. Some speakers stressed the need for a strong science-policy interface.

Poverty eradication remains the overarching objective for sustainable development, and there was agreement that poverty eradication should be at the core of the SDG framework. Many stressed that proper attention should be given to the multidimensional nature of poverty. Some noted that poverty eradication and sustainable development are inextricably interlinked, and said both should be priorities.

Many reiterated that the Rio Principles should guide the formulation of the SDGs, with a number of speakers emphasizing principles addressing common but differentiated responsibilities and the need for a special focus on LDCs. There was broad agreement that the SDGs should build upon commitments already made, and should contribute to implementation of outcomes of all major summits in the economic, social and environmental fields. Several reiterated that the SDGs must be consistent with international law. It was also broadly recognized that defining SDGs would not present an occasion for negotiating or renegotiating existing agreements or treaties that are under the responsibility of other international fora and processes.

Some questioned how the SDGs would converge with the post-2015 process. It was noted that, while the SDGs are expected to be central to the post-2015 development agenda, they are not synonymous with that agenda. There was general agreement on the need to maximize the synergies of all relevant parallel processes and events, to avoid the mistake of working in silos, with speakers citing the report of the High Level Panel, the Special Event on the Review of MDGs, the High-Level Political Forum, and the Third International Conference on SIDS in

2014. Many described their vision of how the SDGs should engage a broader narrative of transformative change to realize a vision of sustainable poverty eradication and universal human development, respecting human dignity and protecting our planet, mother Earth, living in harmony with nature for the well-being and happiness of present and future generations. Various Member States called for recognizing the right to development for all, enabling peace and security, promoting justice and equality, reducing inequality, building resilience, and respecting planetary boundaries.

There was broad agreement that the SDGs should build on, learn from and strengthen the MDGs, and that current discussions must not divert effort from the MDGs' achievement. The MDGs were successful at making development strategies more results-oriented, mobilizing multiple actors and coordinating actions through a single agenda including clear and easy-to-communicate targets, and allowing for flexibility in implementation. However, some also stressed that the MDGs were weak in defining interlinkages among goals, neglected the three dimensions of sustainable development, and lacked the means of implementation necessary for even progress within and across countries. Some speakers highlighted the need for an SDG framework that would incorporate unrealized MDGs and broadly link to other existing goals and targets.

Numerous speakers called for a strengthened global partnership based on solidarity, emphasized that achieving global sustainable development is a shared responsibility, and underlined that developing countries' efforts must be complemented by efforts of developed countries. Some speakers suggested that developed countries should lead global action on changing patterns of consumption and production. A number of countries noted the particular challenges facing and the need for special consideration of LDCs and SIDS.

A common "global dashboard" of targets and indicators was envisioned and supported by several groups, with targets and indicators that could be tailored to national circumstances. Such a framework could be flexible to allow existing national targets and timetables to be incorporated; it could also allow countries to take on more ambitious targets over time, encouraging a "race to the top".

The question of how to balance the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development within the SDGs elicited mixed responses. While some envisioned that each SDG should integrate as far as possible the three dimensions of sustainable development and address them in a holistic and mutually reinforcing manner, others outlined how the goals might be grouped into three sets of goals addressing social, economic and environmental issues respectively. It was noted that a combination of goals – some three-dimensional, others more focused on a single dimension – could also be envisaged, with the ensemble of all goals and targets achieving the desired balance and integration. Several speakers emphasized that SDGs should not simply be outcome-oriented, but they should also address the root causes of problems or underlying structural constraints and the drivers of development. One speaker cautioned that the framework be kept simple to avoid lack of acceptance and implementation.

A wide range of social, economic and environmental priority areas were mentioned, including access to sustainable energy, water and sanitation, food security and sustainable agriculture,

climate change mitigation and adaptation, oceans, job creation and youth employment, productive capacity building, population dynamics, universal health coverage, conflict prevention and resolution, sustainable transport, and sustainable consumption and production patterns. Some also outlined enabling conditions that are cross-cutting in nature, such as access to markets and technology, education, community well-being and culture, financial development, trade, global governance, economic growth, improving income distribution, reducing inequality, empowerment of women and gender equality, elimination of violence, and human rights. Some speakers suggested a cluster approach to better identify synergies and linkages, most notably within the nexus among food, water and energy. Specific priority areas might have targets that address key interlinkages with other areas.

The importance of the means of implementation was repeatedly emphasized. Many recognized the need to give due consideration to means of implementation in relation to the SDGs, possibly in relation to each goal. Many suggested that each SDG be linked to an implementation mechanism, possibly a tailored partnership, and with specific time-bound targets for financing, trade, technology transfer and capacity building. Triangular cooperation, science and innovation were also mentioned as important means of implementation. Both global and regional initiatives to create enablers for sustainable development should be envisaged.

Some highlighted the need for new thinking on international cooperation beyond the traditional donor-recipient relationship, taking into account the growing importance of new actors. It was noted that means of implementation is about putting all resources, public or private, to good use. Others mentioned that knowledge from the regions and countries on what works well should be availed of.

Many statements anticipated the commencement of the work of the Committee of Experts on Financing for Sustainable Development and expressed hope that its work would contribute to discussions on means of implementation for the SDGs.

A number of speakers discussed the importance of tracking progress, periodic review, accountability and transparency in the SDG framework, and the need for capacity building and the development of new methodologies and tools to enable adequate measuring of indicators. The need for accurate statistics to enable adequate reflection of reality on the ground, including data collection at the local level and disaggregation to measure inequalities and distributional outcomes, was highlighted. Some speakers suggested consideration of a five-year review cycle.

Some mentioned the importance of improving integration and assuring sustainable development in all policy areas, including measurements that go beyond gross domestic product (GDP). Speakers also stressed the importance of reforming the international governance system so it can respond adequately to the sustainable development agenda and ensure that all countries' voices can be heard; in this context the crucial role of institution building for progress in the development agenda was also mentioned.

### *Panel discussion and interactive dialogue on conceptual aspects*

On Wednesday afternoon, a panel discussion on conceptualizing the SDGs and the SDG process was followed by an interactive exchange of views moderated by OWG Co-Chair H.E. Mr. Csaba Körösi.

Ms. Claire Melamed, Head of the Growth and Equity Unit of the Overseas Development Institute, said that the job of the OWG was partly one of prioritization. From the many issues that could potentially be included in the SDGs, the OWG would have to cut the agenda into something that is manageable, acceptable to society, garners traction internationally and nationally, and that can be successful. The SDGs should be constructed only after the question of “What is the problem that we want to solve with the SDGs?” could be answered. She said that the SDGs could serve three functions: 1) norm-setting, by providing a list of issues that are most important for the world to tackle together, that can float above other issues and provide guidance to the national level and other institutions; 2) coordinating global actions, whereby the SDGs will set priorities for public financial flows, focus on certain problems and organize global actions to solve them; and 3) measure actions and outcomes at national levels, to gauge whether actions are achieving their aims.

Professor Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Professor for International Affairs, New School, discussed global goals as a policy instrument, noting that the UN has set global goals since the 1960s, with the MDGs being by far the most successful. Goals can create incentives that various actors react to differently, and sometimes unexpectedly. She focused on the dilemmas of simplicity and of quantification in using global goals. While the simplicity of the MDGs was an asset, it came at a cost, since issues such as climate change, employment, and hunger were neglected or under-emphasized. Moreover, development is a transformative process in which it is difficult to differentiate between outcomes and means, whereas goals tend to be mostly outcome-focused. So, goals should be embedded in a narrative agenda.

The dilemma of quantification is that measurability is essential for global goals, yet one-size-fits-all time-bound targets are not realistic for every country. She cited the example of human rights norms where national differentiation is achieved through the concept of ‘progressive implementation’. Also, using global goals and targets at the national level for planning and programming purposes has led to bad economics, e.g., poor allocation of resources. Further, what is measurable is not necessarily what is valuable; conversely, valuable aspects of people-centred development are not readily measurable.

In the ensuing discussion, there was some agreement with Professor Fukuda-Parr’s critique of the simplicity of goals, including the poverty goal, with several groups noting the causes of poverty are not simply financial but may include health or environment-related factors. Professor Fukuda-Parr stressed the importance of quantification and using numbers to monitor progress, but cautioned against using them as blunt and undifferentiated instruments. Smart goals and targets are needed, and on the national level differentiation would be necessary. She also argued for much stronger inter-linkages with human rights norms and treaties, as these principles have already been agreed and are very relevant for poverty eradication. Global goals can generate momentum at national levels, as global standards and principles are championed by countries

and empower people within their own societies, creating social mobilization and space for dealing with inequalities and injustice.

The challenge of defining universality was debated. One speaker questioned whether the development of the SDGs should proceed only after the post-2015 agenda was clarified. Several agreed that capturing inter-linkages would require a focus on the problems that the SDGs would actually be trying to solve, with one speaker proposing that SDGs should stem from the MDGs, taking into account new challenges and inter-linkages, since this would be resource-efficient and would send the important signal that the MDGs are still relevant and achievable. Another pointed out that the MDGs had worked in the traditional logic of development, which emphasizes “developing countries doing things to become more developed”, with support by developed countries. With the SDGs however, a more transformative narrative is needed, which would also be about things that developed countries would need to do differently, such as changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. There was agreement on the importance of local data collection and the need to support countries in need of assistance.

There was an exchange on the function of the SDGs, with one speaker suggesting that they should not be seen as establishing priorities and the other responding: if the goals do not set priorities, why have them?

Ms. Melamed noted that SDGs could be viewed in one of three ways: i) as tackling all current problems (the ‘theory of everything’); ii), as gap fillers addressing issues not covered by MDGs and focusing primarily on environmental sustainability; iii) something in between, where SDGs would take over where MDGs left off, learn from and build on them, but also deal with the state of the world and the challenges of today and tomorrow. Some said the gap the SDGs are meant to address is one of integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and implementation of integrated solutions, with several groups stressing recognition of inter-linkages as a key feature of sustainable development. On the other hand, some cautioned against designing inter-linkages into all goals and targets, as this would diminish the power of simplicity.

Another form of interlinkage mentioned was interlinked actions – wherein one can think of goals being achieved through multiple channels of cooperation at multiple levels from the local to the global, including ODA, partnerships, and other forms of international cooperation as well as domestic policies and actions.

It was noted that conceptualizing the SDGs was not an exact science but ultimately a political endeavour reflecting what is possible or, as one suggested, the highest common ambition; however, science has an important role to play in informing decisions, in looking at trends in terms of progress, and in identifying the processes or actions that could bring the biggest payoffs. The subjective perceptions of poverty-afflicted people on their most pressing problems also matter and should inform the SDGs; the global consultations may shed light on these. More science is needed on the selection of indicators and targets, disaggregated data, and effective monitoring. Numerical targets present a challenge since they can lead to results-oriented management, which encourages silo-thinking rather than long-term systemic change. Brazil’s zero-hunger program was highlighted as a good example of a complex multiple strategy program that has achieved real results.

Co-Chair Körösi concluded the day by observing with appreciation that the common ground of understanding within the group had widened.

### ***Moderated discussion on conceptual aspects of SDGs***

On Thursday morning, Co-Chair Kamau moderated a continued discussion on conceptual issues.

Many countries reiterated the Rio+20 outcome's call for goals that are universally applicable to all countries while maintaining the flexibility to be adapted to different national circumstances. The terms "dashboard", "menu", "recipes" were used by different countries, reflecting the notions of choice and differentiation, with the concept of a "dashboard" garnering particular interest.

Many countries stressed that the SDGs are about integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development, with poverty eradication the overarching objective and building upon the MDGs. Some said that a focus on poverty eradication needs to be complemented by consideration of inequalities.

A number of countries called for greater clarity on how the SDGs and the other post-2015 discussions will converge. Some made the case that the SDGs must provide the framework for sustainability in all areas of development and must therefore be central to the post-2015 agenda.

One delegation noted the need for an overall development aspiration, suggesting that should be human well-being and happiness, and noting that all three dimensions of sustainable development can sit comfortably under such an aspiration. This aspiration, moreover, is universally shared by developing and developed countries alike.

Many countries stressed the need for a global partnership that would promote an environment favorable to development, and said that aspirational global goals should be adaptable to each country. Many reiterated the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and the idea that each goal be tied to specific means of implementation.

It was suggested that global partnerships must be mutually beneficial, including technology transfer and capacity building to enable countries to address their own development needs, including health and nutrition in pursuit of the MDGs. Several called for access to universal health care, including issues such as non-communicable diseases; education for all including basic goals that are more comprehensive and include secondary education. Some called for reform of the current international financial system.

Several speakers supported clustering of themes, noting that many themes are cross-cutting by nature and best addressed in an integrated way. One country observed that concentration on thematic issues ignored the overarching threat of exceeding the planet's limits and natural capacities, and said concepts such as natural capital and planetary boundaries could make an important contribution to the SDGs through emphasis on monitoring and early warning systems

for immediate policy action. Several others recognized possible synergies between the SDGs and SIDS in the context of the Third International Conference on SIDS in 2014.

Almost all agreed on the need to frame goals in simple terms, with one noting that it is easier now to reach people at grassroots levels through social media and these technologies should be used to transmit “tweetable” goals with indicators to support them.

One speaker noted that Rio Principle 3 highlights intergenerational solidarity, stating that youth must be at the core of SDGs and economic prosperity cannot be a substitute for social cohesion. Another said that gender equality is a priority and should be addressed not only throughout the SDGs but also in its own right.

A number of countries stressed that peace and security, strong institutions, good governance, and human rights deserve consideration in the SDGs.

There was agreement on the need to help countries establish baselines for measuring progress. Strengthening the capacity of national, regional and international organizations to adequately measure data and go beyond GDP was highlighted. A number of countries spoke to the need for an accountability mechanism for progress on the SDGs, which one said must not remain an abstract concept and which others said should ensure multistakeholder engagement.

### ***Moderated discussion***

Marc Levy, Deputy Director of Columbia University’s Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN), moderated the continuation of interactive exchanges by the group. To guide the OWG’s thinking he briefly summarized some of the high-level challenges collectively facing the international community. He noted tension between wanting to preserve the MDG strategy, which was incremental and rooted in traditional development strategies, and building a more transformational agenda to address current and future threats to human well-being. Also, while the MDGs were one-size-fits-all, we are now aiming for goals that are multi-layered and will apply differently at national and local levels while collectively mobilizing action, and we don’t yet know how to do this effectively. Data collection and monitoring will require more foresight to define measurement needs and build capacities to meet them. What is the theory of change informing the SDGs? Is it transformational or incremental? The SDGs need to build on a deep understanding of human aspirations and constraints. They could serve as guideposts along sustainable development pathways, with each society designing actions to move along its desired pathway towards the shared goals.

Progress towards the SDGs will call for a longer time horizon, most likely, than the MDGs. The 15-year time horizon of the MDGs was uniquely long at the time and did unleash new creativity to achieve longer-term goals. The SDGs should aim for even longer time horizons—possibly including 30-year goals—to achieve the systemic changes needed. With an extended timeframe, however, progress toward longer-term goals should be monitored in the shorter-term through interim benchmarks. Several speakers underlined that long-term goals must be able to anticipate that our rapidly changing world will present unexpected challenges and new developments, both



positive and negative, and there is thus a need to balance the desire for specificity with some flexibility in the framework to be able to adapt over time.

During this discussion, agreement emerged among the members of the OWG on a number of conceptual points. Holistic, longer-term perspectives are needed to address the multidimensional nature of poverty and achieve the structural change and transformation that the SDGs should embody. Yet the “unfinished business” of the MDGs should not be abandoned in favour of the new and captivating concept of SDGs; neither should the JPOI or existing national programmes and plans be neglected. As one country put it, the MDGs were about the urgency of ending extreme poverty, and we know how to do it – and must do it. The SDGs, on the other hand, are about structural change in the economic, social, and environmental fields, and we don’t know very well how to do it. The SDGs, in this sense, present an unprecedented opportunity for all countries, as none has successfully achieved sustainable development.

Many recognized the need to go beyond the limited concept of GDP to include valuation of natural, social and human capital and incorporate multidisciplinary science perspectives. Several countries spoke about the need for the SDGs to respect the constraints and preferences of different societies and acknowledge different development pathways, policies and strategies. From the perspective of the scientific community, Mr. Levy noted the critical dynamic is in the bottom-up search for pathways to balance aspirations and constraints. A menu of policy choices could be customized at the national level to meet needs of each country, and global mechanisms should ensure that we don’t exceed global limits. In this regard, a number of speakers called for climate change to be a central focus of the SDGs.

The paradox of dramatically increasing developmental ambitions in a time when investment in development is on the decline was noted with concern, and a more pluralistic process with coordinated and transformational action including engagement of the private sector and NGOs was recommended. One speaker noted that the private sector supports initiatives on sustainable energy for all and that the High-level Panel includes representatives of the private sector. Others emphasized that technology was in the hands of the private sector not the governments, so the private sector needed to be engaged in pursuing the SDGs.

Addressing questions on the need for new institutions and structures to support the transformational shift to SDGs, Mr. Levy drew a parallel with the creation of the UN Trusteeship Council in 1945 to ensure accountability in the shift toward decolonization. Co-Chair Kamau added that the MDGs prompted the creation of the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS, the Global Fund for Malaria, as well as other institutions and partnerships to support their implementation.

### ***Keynote address and panel discussion on Poverty eradication***

On Thursday afternoon, Co-Chair Körösi introduced the topic of poverty eradication. Abhijit Banerjee, Professor of International Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, provided the keynote speech, stating that the OWG has the potential to make an enormous difference in future poverty eradication efforts. He recalled how the MDGs came to be, noting

they were revolutionary in their specificity, targeted and narrow nature and, though the reactions were not initially all positive, the MDGs eventually changed the vocabulary of development. The focus was on outcomes, not inputs or outputs, and this allowed countries to tailor their approaches. The MDGs have been successful in framing the conversation on poverty eradication and development. The format of the MDGs was specific, measurable, easy to grasp and communicate; but there needs to be more thought on the qualitative and country-specific outcomes of each goal.

Mr. Olav Kjørven, Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Bureau for Development Policy at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), presented the UN Technical Support Team's (TST) Issue Brief on Poverty Eradication. He stressed that poverty eradication means that no one—regardless of physical location, gender, age, health, disability status, or ethnic identity—is poor at any time over his or her life, and that this is maintained across generations. He referred to the UNDG-facilitated consultations that are being undertaken around the world, which have reaffirmed the relevance of poverty reduction efforts, along with other MDGs related to health, education and gender. There is considerable variation across regions and countries in the rates of progress, especially rapid declines for example in Asia, and slower rates in sub-Saharan Africa, or for countries in special circumstances such as LDCs, SIDS and those affected by conflict. Poverty is multidimensional, with income alone presenting only a partial picture. These additional dimensions include hunger, food and nutrition insecurity; lack of access to basic, quality services such as health care, education, water and sanitation, and energy; a lack of empowerment and civic participation; lack of personal security; and others. Several of these dimensions, especially for the poor, are closely related to the environment. Economic growth is necessary but not sufficient. Policies and interventions matter in translating growth into poverty reduction..

Ms. Eva Jespersen, Deputy Director of UNDP's Human Development Report Office, was invited to moderate the panel discussion featuring Mr. Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Assistant Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Ms. Sabina Alkire, Director of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI).

Mr. Jomo Kwame Sundaram recalled how the poverty eradication goal was established, including some of the controversy attached to measuring poverty as living on less than one dollar (US) per day. Poverty has been halved, but there has been a great deal of debate as to whether the progress achieved was due to targeted policies or to general growth. It will be important to consider the issue of poverty as directly linked to the issue of hunger. At the same time, there has been a notable difference between the achievements in poverty and hunger reductions which have lagged. In fact, the hunger line may underestimate the hunger problem, as it presumes chronic hunger (for a year or more), based on calorie intake alone (not micronutrients) and a sedentary lifestyle (not typical among the poor). He noted that progress on reducing hunger has slowed since 2006 for a number of reasons, including the global food price spike and volatility, financial crisis, and various supply shocks and environmental constraints including climate change. There has been a reduced role of governments in food production and distribution. The question of inequality also needs to be addressed, as well as the establishment of a social protection floor, since we should expect the higher food prices to remain.

Ms. Sabina Alkire also emphasized the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, presenting a multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) that measures other aspects of material well-being besides control over assets but also captures such aspects of poverty as health and education. The index, derived from household survey data, can measure for the same household deprivation in multiple dimensions. The source of the data also makes possible fine-grained decomposition of poverty by gender, ethnicity, region, rural-urban location and other relevant groupings. This type of measure can then be compiled to obtain a national trend over time. The richness of the underlying data means that the MPI can be tailored to national circumstances and used to inform national policy setting. A Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2.0 that would enable comparisons across countries, both developed and developing countries, on some standard measures could be imagined as a complement to national MPIs. Measurements are only as good as their data, and timely data collection deserves a separate discussion.

The presentations were followed by an interactive discussion among panelists and member States, moderated by Ms. Eva Jespersen.

There was an emerging sense of convergence around the theme of poverty as multi-dimensional and the need for the SDGs to approach this in a holistic and integrated manner across the three dimensions of sustainable development. Some speakers suggested that, in a framework that balances the three dimensions of sustainable development, we should view poverty eradication in relation to those dimensions – for example, in terms of access to essential social goods and services (health, education), access to economic opportunities and productive assets, and access to natural assets and their beneficial functions.

Many noted the close link between poverty and inequality – not only in terms of income but in access to education and assets, to vital services and to political voice.

At the core of the discussion was agreement on the need for a paradigm shift to bring about structural changes to address the root causes of poverty that will lead to poverty eradication.

Many agreed that poverty goes beyond economic poverty and income indicators. Some mentioned increased opportunity, acceptable living standards, the need for increased capacity strengthening, and ability of people to cope with shocks. Many also agreed that the ‘qualitative’ aspects of poverty eradication and all other goals should be integrated in the SDGs, for example in quality of education, quality of food, and quality of health.

Poverty eradication is linked with other goals. It is especially interdependent with food security and hunger elimination, which many speakers agreed were “two sides of the same coin”. Structural reasons behind the recent steep increase in food prices prompted discussions on addressing price volatility, sustainable food production and the impact of climate change on future food prices. The close relationship between the food price crisis and the financial crisis was also highlighted.

Some speakers emphasised the specific vulnerability of poor people living in both rural and urban areas. Extreme poor in rural areas, who have difficulties accessing resources, are finding

their situation worsening rather than improving. However, in some cases urban poverty can be more severe because of the limited possibilities of accessing food.

The poor are noticeably dependent on environmental resources. They derive the most benefits from environmental resources, although their ecological footprint is relatively small. They will also be the most affected by climate change. A number of speakers also referenced the need to address unsustainable consumption and production patterns around the world so that poor people do not pay the price for the lifestyles of people elsewhere in the world.

Some called for review of the role of developed world subsidies as policy tools and their impact on market protectionism.

The group began to discuss the benefits of having one overarching goal on poverty eradication, integrating poverty eradication targets in every goal as a crosscutting issue, or some combination of both.

There was mention of the need to start the discussion on the goals, indicators and targets from the standpoint of the desired outcome in order to stimulate action. There was acknowledgement of the demands placed by the MDGs on countries to collect, compile and analyse data for the measurement of progress made. There needs to be a global effort to enhance countries' capacities to monitor and evaluate progress.

Some also mentioned the need to link up national effort to the global level to ensure that goals truly lead to reduction of poverty, but one also said that countries are the true owners of the process. Support grew for the proposed "dashboard of targets and indicators" that could allow countries to choose different indicators for the issues most relevant to them.

Partnerships are crucial, and are more than just donor-recipient relationships. One speaker stressed that partnerships need to be based on the exchange of wisdom and "know how", the possibility to partake in decision-making, and access to technology and services. Global partnerships need to innovate to take into account the shifts in global distribution of power, and this does not need to wait for reforms of the international institutional structure to occur.

A number of speakers stated that SDGs must be people-centred and have a human-rights focus. Women's empowerment is crucial since poverty cannot be reduced without increasing gender equality. For example, increasing women's access and rights to land could improve agricultural productivity.

Countries shared experiences and provided concrete examples of ways that they are addressing poverty in their own context. One has tested the idea of "social clearance", where community support is sought for certain development policies, such as mining, which would have strong implications at the local level. Another mentioned its multi-dimensional measure of poverty that is flexible, reflects income as one among several indicators of well being, and recognizes that human beings have social, economic and environmental rights. Many others added that the OWG would benefit from further sharing of national experiences.

On Friday, Co-Chair Kamau reflected positively on the previous dialogue that placed poverty at the heart of the sustainable development agenda. He opened the floor for the group to present their formal statements.

Many in the group commended the TST for the brief on poverty eradication. One group highlighted the need to accelerate actions on the MDGs in the final 1000 days. Economic growth needs to be sustainable, inclusive, and create opportunities for all groups of society and especially the most vulnerable, as well as to reduce inequalities in and between countries, Global partnership is crucial, especially with reference to global trade and investment rules to address constraints of developing countries and efforts to reform international financial institutions. Developing country governments need to have adequate leeway to align global guidance to national contexts and to define their own development strategies. Poverty eradication requires collaboration of all parties, to address it in all its manifestations.

Addressing the multi-dimensional nature of poverty was identified as a particular challenge for LDCs, in particular the ability to provide access to basic services such as water and sanitation. The LDCs are noticeably lagging behind in the achievement of MDG1. These countries asserted that priority-setting should be informed by recognition of the systemic nature of vulnerabilities and constraints faced by LDCs, and their limited capacity to deal with challenges on their own. Others noted that MDGs were credited for mobilizing resources and similarly, looking ahead, SDGs need to be used as a springboard for addressing the challenges faced by countries in conflict and in special development status, such as LDCs and SIDS.

There was increasing agreement that the OWG needs to go beyond rudimentary measurements and address the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and its inter-linkages to achieve a true paradigm shift for the SDGs. There is also a need to go from an “access” measurement to one focused on “quality of access”. Additional views on how to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development and whether to consider poverty eradication as a stand-alone goal or a crosscutting issue were heard. Some speakers acknowledged that the MDGs continue to be an essential tool for national planning, and said the discussion on SDGs should take this a step forward. Others pointed to the fact that progress on the MDGs has only been made in certain groups and countries, requiring that previously agreed ODA goals be met.

Means of implementation was again highlighted by some as a crosscutting issue that should be included in each set of goals, with the view that without the appropriate resources the SDGs could not be achieved. The importance of technology transfer and capacity building was reiterated in this context. Many mentioned that a just, fair and transparent international trade and financial system will provide a strong global enabling environment for national governments to progress towards poverty eradication.

There was reference made to the ongoing thematic consultations and the need to reflect on their results to identify possible building blocks of the SDGs and post-2015 agenda. Some appealed for a view in which poverty eradication is essential but not enough – for an agenda that goes beyond minima and aims at sustained improvements in human well-being in all countries.

Social protection was regarded as the backbone of a wider set of policy measures to ensure livelihoods of women, employment and decent jobs. Ensuring youth participation in the design of the SDGs, including attention to the quality of their education, was highlighted. The centrality of human rights in the SDGs, especially for women and girls, was also mentioned, including the need to redistribute assets, encourage sexual and reproductive rights and services, and end violence.

Several speakers noted that even those countries that have made good progress in eradicating extreme poverty may have large vulnerable populations. There is a risk that many people with incomes just above the poverty line could fall back into poverty as result of various shocks, not least from natural disasters and climate change. Thus, building resilience and ability to withstand shocks, disasters, and emergencies is also a key priority for many.

Some spoke of the importance of the private sector to attainment of SDGs and the need to engage corporations in the agenda through enhanced corporate social responsibility and partnerships.

Co-Chair Kamau noted the emerging consensus to place poverty eradication as the overarching goal of the SDGs. As important as that is, he suggested that poverty eradication could be seen as the starting point of the post-2015 agenda, which should aim at even greater ambition – namely, the transformative change needed to put all countries on a truly sustainable development path, one that secures the irreversibility of social and economic development gains, the well-being of both present and future generations.

### ***Concluding Remarks by the OWG Co-Chairs and discussion on the Programme of Work***

The OWG Co-Chairs presented their views on the overall outcome of the discussions they had heard during the meeting of the OWG, summarizing the most important key points.<sup>2</sup>

They then turned the group's attention to the draft Programme of Work for the OWG, including meeting dates and topics for the upcoming six sessions that are scheduled from May 2013 through February 2014, and invited comments.

There were many comments on the proposed clustering of priority areas. Some called for inclusion of issues of governance, equity, human rights including the right to development, conflict prevention, post-conflict countries, middle income countries, culture, migration, youth employment, and science.

Other suggestions commented on the *de facto* clustering of issues made necessary by the fitting of many priority areas into a limited number of sessions. They expressed a range of views on what should be clustered with what.

Many expressed their understanding that the selection of issues would remain flexible and, on that basis, agreed to the proposed programme. It was also generally understood that the proposed

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<sup>2</sup> Concluding remarks by the Co-Chairs can be found at: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1742130419%20Concluding%20Summary%20for%20Co-Chairs.pdf>

structure and grouping of issues in the programme should not pre-judge the nature and scope of goals.

Some proposed that means of implementation be addressed in each session, others said it could be shifted to a later session to align with discussion in the Expert Group on Financing for Sustainable Development.

The Co-Chairs agreed to modify the programme so that the third session from 22-24 May would address food security and nutrition, sustainable agriculture, desertification, land degradation, and drought, and water, and sanitation. The fourth session from 17-19 June would address health, population dynamics, employment and decent work for all, social protection, youth and education and culture.

They also agreed to revise the programme of work for the remaining stocktaking sessions.