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**Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the  
Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of  
the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the United  
Nations Conference on Sustainable Development  
Report of the Secretary-General**

***Summary***

The present report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 67/203, provides an update on the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and on the implementation of resolution 67/203. It highlights the role of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in reviewing the overall follow-up to Rio+20 and more generally, progress in sustainable development as well as new and emerging issues.

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\* A/68/150

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## **I. Introduction**

1. This report provides information on the progress made in implementing resolution 67/203 of the General Assembly.
2. The resolution called in particular for coherence, synergetic and mutual support among follow-up processes to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). The report is issued at the time when various processes launched at Rio+20 are on-going in particular the Open Working Group (OWG) to elaborate a set of Sustainable Development Goals. There is also an ambitious process of reflection and consultations on the post-2015 UN development agenda. Moving forward, there is need to ensure greater coherence and mutual support among these various processes within the broader framework of the post-2015 development agenda.
3. This report should be read in conjunction with other reports submitted to the General Assembly on sustainable development.

## **II. Follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)**

4. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) was held from 20 – 22 June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It occurred twenty years after the first Rio Conference – the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).
5. It was the largest United Nations Conference ever, and gathered not only world leaders but also an impressive number of non-state actors including representatives of

the nine Major groups created in UNCED as well as foundations and philanthropic organizations, academia and others.

6. The outcome document of Rio+20, “The Future We Want,”<sup>1</sup> launched several intergovernmental processes, which are at various stages of progress.<sup>2</sup>

***Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)***

7. On 22 January 2013, the General Assembly established the Open Working Group (OWG) on SDGs and welcomed its membership.<sup>3</sup> To date, the OWG has held four sessions under the co-chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Macharia Kamau (Kenya) and H.E. Ambassador Csaba Körösi (Hungary). It will hold further four sessions, and aims to complete the stock-taking and information-gathering phase of its work in February 2014. Thereafter, the OWG is expected to begin preparing its proposal for SDGs for the consideration of the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly.
8. The first session of the OWG consisted of a broad exchange of views. At the second session, the Group considered two issues, “Conceptualizing the SDGs” and “Poverty eradication”. At the third session, the Group considered the following issues: Food security and nutrition, Sustainable agriculture, Desertification, land degradation and drought; as well as Water and sanitation. The fourth meeting of the OWG focussed on: Employment and decent work for all; Social protection; Education and culture, with youth as a cross-cutting issue; as well as on “Health,

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted by the General Assembly through resolution 66/288 of 27 July 2012

<sup>2</sup> It needs to be borne in mind that this report is submitted well in advance to its discussion in the General Assembly to allow sufficient time for its editing and translation (mid-August 2013)

<sup>3</sup> GA decision 67/555

Population dynamics.” The group will hold another five sessions until February 2014.<sup>4</sup>

9. The following main ideas are emerging from the work of the OWG thus far:
- the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the point of departure to develop SDGs. Completing the unfinished business of the MDGs on poverty eradication and other important social objectives must figure centrally in the post-2015 agenda. At the same time, the SDGs must be more ambitious and must be at the centre of a transformational agenda;
  - the SDGs should reinforce and build upon international commitments in the economic, social and environmental fields undertaken at UN conferences and summits and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development;
  - poverty eradication is multidimensional and remains the overarching objective of the international community. It needs to be central to a proposal on SDGs;
  - the SDGs must be universal and applicable to all countries, which means that they must be flexible enough to have ownership of countries at different levels of development and with different national priorities. They will need a strong bottom-up engagement through broad consultations in their formulation. The voices of the poor and vulnerable especially need to be heard;
  - a global dashboard of goals and targets could be a way of reflecting common but differentiated responsibilities and adjusting the goals to national circumstances;

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<sup>4</sup> For programme of work see <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1778Pow2805.pdf>

- the SDGs will need to draw on strategies and approaches to sustainable development that exploit effectively the critical interrelationships and key “drivers” of change and support it with appropriate means of implementation. . The sustainable development agenda has to be supported by transformative change and shifts in order to realize our vision of sustainable poverty eradication and universal human development that nurture respect for human dignity, protect our planet and to promote harmony with nature for the well-being and happiness of present and future generations.

***Institutional framework for sustainable development: HLPF***

10. Another critical outcome of the Rio+20 Conference was the establishment of a universal intergovernmental high-level political forum to follow up on the implementation of sustainable development.
11. The General Assembly decided on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) on 9 July 2013.<sup>5</sup>
12. The HLPF will be a hybrid process: it will meet (i) every four years for two days under the auspices of the General Assembly at the level of Heads of State and Government and (ii) every year under the auspices of ECOSOC for eight days including a three-day ministerial segment within the framework of the substantive session of ECOSOC. It will replace the Annual Ministerial Review in 2016. The forum’s meetings will result in negotiated declarations.

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<sup>5</sup> A/RES/67/290

13. The first inaugural meeting of the HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly will take place at the level Heads of State and Government on 24 September 2013, while the first meeting of the HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC, including three days at ministerial level, will take place in 2014.
14. All meetings of the HLPF will provide for the full and effective participation of all Member States of the United Nations and States members of specialized agencies. The General Assembly encouraged broad participation of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, and other relevant intergovernmental organizations, including the World Trade Organization. It also decided on modalities to enhance the participation and consultative role of major groups and other stakeholders.
15. The General Assembly mandated the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) to support the forum in close cooperation with all relevant entities of the United Nations system, including funds and programmes, multilateral financial and trade institutions, the Rio conventions and other relevant treaty bodies and international organizations within their respective mandates. The expanded Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (ECESA plus with its 51 members)<sup>6</sup> will be used to engage the UN system and other entities in supporting the work of the forum.

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<sup>6</sup> ECESA Plus: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/unsystem.html>

16. The functions that the GA envisioned for the forum encompass those highlighted in the Rio+20 outcome document<sup>7</sup>. The forum will have a thematic focus “reflecting the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, in line with the thematic focus of the ECOSOC activities and consistent with the post-2015 development agenda”.<sup>8</sup> It will also discuss specific sustainable development challenges of LDCs, SIDS, LLDC and Africa as well as sustainable development challenges faced by middle-income countries.
17. The forum, under the auspices of ECOSOC, will also conduct regular reviews of implementation of sustainable development commitments by countries and UN entities, starting in 2016. Those reviews will replace the National Voluntary Presentations held in the context of the Annual Ministerial Reviews of ECOSOC, building on the experiences and lessons learned in this context<sup>9</sup>. The forum will also take into account the work of the DCF.

***Strengthening the science-policy interface***

18. Among the functions of the forum is strengthening the science-policy interface and enhancing evidence-based decision-making at all levels. As recognized at Rio+20, the documentation prepared for the forum must enable it to fulfil this role. In 2014, the forum will consider the scope and methodology of a global sustainable development report, based on a proposal of the Secretary-General reflecting the

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<sup>7</sup> A/RES/66/288 paragraph 85

<sup>8</sup> A/RES/67/290

<sup>9</sup> For more details *ibid*

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views from Member States and relevant UN entities, including the Committee on Development Policy.

19. This year, the UN has produced a pilot version of what a Global Sustainable Development Report could look like in order to facilitate the discussion and decision of Member States and other stakeholders.
20. The report maps existing sustainable development assessments and related processes and provides science digests of issues not contained in assessments. It highlights emerging issues identified by scientists. It also contains policy issues for consideration<sup>10</sup>.

***Intergovernmental committee of experts on sustainable development financing***

21. At Rio+20, Heads of State and Government also decided to establish an intergovernmental process under the auspices of the General Assembly, to “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 to facilitate the mobilization of resources and their effective use in achieving sustainable development objectives”<sup>11</sup>.
22. An intergovernmental committee, comprising 30 experts nominated by regional groups, with equitable geographical representation, has been tasked to implement this process, concluding its work by 2014. The committee was established on 21

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<sup>10</sup> For more information on the Global Sustainable Development Report please consult <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1621>

<sup>11</sup> A/66/288

June 2013 with the adoption of General Assembly decision 67/559 which defines the membership of the committee. The first session of the committee will be held from 28 to 30 August 2013 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Member States and other interested parties will be briefed on the work of the committee as requested in resolution A/RES/67/203.

23. The committee is expected to draw on technical support from DESA and the United Nations system and to conduct its work in an open and broad consultation with relevant international and regional financial institutions and other relevant stakeholders.

*Options for facilitating the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies*

24. Regarding the recommendations of Rio+20 and the GA on technology facilitation, four Workshops were convened by the President of the 67<sup>th</sup> GA Session in April and May 2013. They allowed drawing from the knowledge and perspectives of over twenty thinkers and practitioners from academia, research institutions and non-governmental organisations. The Secretary-General's report on "Options for facilitating the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies" gives recommendations for way forward<sup>12</sup>. The Workshops allowed participants to better appreciate the range of opinions on the subject at hand and the complexity of issues that have to be well understood

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<sup>12</sup> Secretary-General's report A/68/...

before further action can receive consensual support. Numerous issues are likely to benefit from a continued substantive dialogue.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Sustainable Consumption and Production***

25. Rio+20 reaffirmed that sustainable consumption and production patterns are essential requirements for sustainable development, as established in the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. It also reaffirmed the commitments to phase out harmful and inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption and undermine sustainable development. Governments also strengthened their commitment to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production by adopting the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP) elaborated at the nineteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).
26. The Rio+20 decision<sup>14</sup> provides the vision, functions, organizational structure, means of implementation and criteria for programme design. The functions of the 10YFP include facilitating access to support and financing in particular for developing countries, awareness raising, information sharing and fostering innovation and new ideas. The 10YFP also provides an initial, non-exhaustive list of five programmes covering consumer information, sustainable lifestyles and

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. for more information

<sup>14</sup> A/Conf.216/5 and further General Assembly resolution A/RES/66/288 endorsing the outcome of Rio+20 “The future We Want”

education, sustainable public procurement, sustainable buildings and construction, and sustainable tourism, including ecotourism.

27. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), within its current mandate, was requested to serve as the secretariat of the 10YFP, and invited to establish a voluntary trust fund to support implementation of the Framework, in particular its programmes and initiatives. At its sixty-seventh session, the General Assembly decided on the composition and nomination process of a 10-member board with two members from each regional group<sup>15</sup>. Nominations for the board have been received from all regional groupings. The GA designated ECOSOC as the *ad interim* Member State body to receive reports from the board and the secretariat for the Framework.
28. National focal points are being nominated by Member States to ensure close coordination and engagement with the 10YFP. An interagency coordination group was established in May 2013 to support the implementation of the 10YFP. It will be co-chaired for the first 2-year cycle by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) jointly with UNEP.
29. The General Assembly in its elaboration of the formal and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, decided that the Forum can provide recommendations to the board of the 10YFP, as well as UNEP as secretariat of the 10YFP, taking into account their reports.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> A/RES/67/203,

<sup>16</sup> A/RES/67/290

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### ***Partnerships and Voluntary Commitments***

30. Renewed commitment to revitalize partnerships came as an important part of the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference together with voluntary commitments that emphasized outcomes rather than their composition.
31. Partnerships and voluntary commitments are not a substitute for Government responsibilities and intergovernmentally agreed commitments; they are intended to strengthen implementation by involving those relevant stakeholders that can make a contribution to sustainable development.
32. The SD in Action Registry on the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform compiles voluntary commitments registered at Rio+20 and CSD registered Partnerships from WSSD. They include various topics, such as energy, water, sustainable transport, waste management, sustainable cities, mining, sustainable tourism, and so on. The Rio+20 voluntary commitments seek to be SMART - Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Resource-based, and Time-bound.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Third International Conference on small island developing States (SIDS)***

33. At Rio+20, Member States reaffirmed the special case of SIDS for sustainable development. They called for the Third International Conference on SIDS to be convened in 2014. The independent state of Samoa made the gracious offer to host the Conference and the General Assembly decided<sup>18</sup> to hold the Conference from 1-

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<sup>17</sup> Special report on the SD in Action Newsletter, Issue 1 – July 2013

<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/930Report%20on%20Voluntary%20Commitments%20and%20Partnerships.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> A/67/558

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4 September 2014, to be preceded if necessary by a final session of preparatory activities from 28-30 August 2014.

34. In November 2012, the Secretary-General appointed the Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs to serve as the Secretary-General of the Conference. The Secretariat is housed in DESA with the involvement of all the relevant parts of the United Nations system.
35. The preparations ongoing in 2013 are SIDS-led and are guided by the General Assembly resolution<sup>19</sup> outlining the basic objectives of the conference, namely to:
- (a) assess the progress and gaps in the implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, (b) to seek renewed political commitment for the same, (c) to identify new and emerging challenges and opportunities and ways to address them—including through collaborative partnership—and (d) to identify SIDS priorities in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.
36. The preparations are being done at all levels: national, regional and global. At the national level DESA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported local consultancy for national SIDS reports, where possible, country consultations on the post-2015 development agenda were also taken into account in the national preparatory process for the Conference. All completed reports of the national consultations are available at the Conference website<sup>20</sup>. Regional overview

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<sup>19</sup> A/RES/67/207

<sup>20</sup> [www.sids2014.org](http://www.sids2014.org)

synthesis reports will be prepared on the basis of the national reports from the SIDS of each region.

37. Regional meetings were held in all three SIDS regions<sup>21</sup> in July 2013. The regional meetings were structured around the four objectives enumerated above, with regional variations and depending on the host country preferences. These outcomes fed into the interregional report that will be the basis for the interregional meeting that will take place in Barbados from 26-28 August 2013<sup>22</sup>.
38. The global preparatory process is expected to be launched at the end of 2013<sup>23</sup>, while the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly will define further modalities of the Conference by December 2013.
39. The substance of the four preparatory meetings revolves about the four major objectives of the Conference mentioned above. The main messages include:
  - There is a strong commitment by SIDS to taking full ownership of sustainable development, eradicating poverty, building resilience, and delivering quality outcomes;
  - There is a need for a transformational strategy to ensure acceleration of achievement of the MDGs and to integrate priority sustainable development issues into the post-2015 development agenda;
  - There is a need for an effective HLPF that addresses the SIDS priorities, including an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

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<sup>21</sup> Caribbean; Pacific; and [Africa](#), [Indian Ocean](#), [Mediterranean](#) and [South China Sea](#) (AIMS)

<sup>22</sup> For these reports and further updated developments see [www.sids2014.org](http://www.sids2014.org)

<sup>23</sup> A/RES/67/207

40. As host country, Samoa has expressed a desire to bring partnerships into sharp focus as an additional key outcome of the Conference— which would entail announcing new partnerships at the Conference but also featuring ongoing partnerships that can be held up as best practices. ECESA Plus and DESA have been encouraging efforts within the UN system to spearhead initiatives to strengthen existing SIDS partnerships notably in five concrete thematic areas of particular importance to SIDS: climate change, oceans and seas, waste management, sustainable tourism and natural disaster resilience (COWTD).

***Intergenerational solidarity***

41. The outcome document of Rio+20 underlines the need for promoting intergenerational solidarity for the achievement of sustainable development, taking into account the needs of future generations. The Secretary-General has produced a report on this topic, including the related conceptual framework and institutional arrangements, for the consideration by the General Assembly at its 68<sup>th</sup> session.<sup>24</sup>

42. DSD/DESA organized in May 2013 an expert panel on intergenerational solidarity aimed at providing an opportunity to exchange views among stakeholders on the topic of intergenerational solidarity and future generations, including conceptual framework and institutional arrangements, with a view to informing continued consideration of this topic.

43. The main issues raised were the following:

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<sup>24</sup> See Secretary-General's report on Intergenerational solidarity A/68/...

- Concerns for future generations need to be included into the decision-making processes at all levels;
- A framework for intergenerational solidarity has to start with a set of shared values and principles that are clear and flexible enough to be acceptable to different cultures and political norms;
- Access to education and health are one of the determining factors for the development of future generations and investments need to be increased in this area;
- There is a need to include young generation in the decision-making processes and the HLPF could set an example.

***Mainstreaming of sustainable development into the UN system***

44. The Rio+20 Conference called for “the further mainstreaming of the three dimensions of sustainable development throughout the UN system”, and asked the Secretary-General to report through ECOSOC to the General Assembly on progress made in this regard<sup>25</sup>.
45. This report was discussed in ECOSOC on 18 July 2013. It shows how the UN system has accumulated experience in supporting integrated approaches to economic, social and environmental dimensions. At the same time, it recognizes that mainstreaming sustainable development remains a complex endeavour that implies rethinking the way the UN conceives its analytical and operational work and its support to intergovernmental processes.

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<sup>25</sup> A/68/79-E/2013/69

46. Studies have shown that Governments attach great importance to the support of the UN in the area of sustainable development. Within individual UN system organizations, strategic plans are an important tool for driving the integration of the three dimensions into policies and operations. The governing bodies of a number of organizations are currently developing new strategic plans, which should be the occasion to align the objectives and activities of organizations not only with the QCPR but also with sustainable development.
47. The UN Development Group has also a key role to provide guidance on integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development through the UN Development Assistance frameworks where in place.
48. Only if UN system organizations work closely together at all levels, including in cooperation with World Bank and IMF, can they support sustainable development. Regional commissions and the regional UNDG teams remain key players at regional level, as are the Regional Coordination Mechanisms.
49. At international level, a wealth of interagency mechanisms help UN organizations to work together to support policy coherence and integrated approaches. Thus the UN Environment Management Group has developed an “environment and social sustainability framework”. The HLPF could build on these initial efforts to present a framework for further mainstreaming sustainable development into the UN system, which would benefit the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

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### **III. Coherence and coordination of the follow-up processes in the context of post-2015 development agenda**

50. This section reviews how the different tracks of the follow-up to Rio+20 come together in the context of post-2015 development agenda and explores how the HLPF and the United Nations system could best serve as an umbrella for all these various endeavours.
51. Sustainable development along with poverty eradication is now firmly recognized as the overarching objective of development for the period post-2015 underpinning all development work.<sup>26</sup> Its principles will be encompassed in the set of universal sustainable development goals that Member States will adopt in 2015.
52. The challenges in the coming months and years will be three-fold. First, there has to be a strong consistency of messages and directions across all the UN processes. Second, synergies have to be found among processes so that they are fully supportive of each other. Third, a critical challenge will be to achieve in practice the ambitious goal set up in Rio+20 to strengthen the institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD). Because of its broad functions to provide leadership and review progress in implementation of sustainable development commitments, the HLPF has a critical role to play in achieving these three objectives. In particular, the HLPF will be the legitimate forum to discuss and

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<sup>26</sup> See e.g. A new Global Partnership: Eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development, Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the post-2015 development agenda, United Nations. See also “Delivering the Future we Want”, report of the UN task team on the post-2015 development agenda, June 2012 as well as resolution A/RES/67/290 on format and modalities of HLPF

coordinate the ongoing post Rio+20 processes until they all reach their conclusion in 2015. Beyond 2015, it should address the follow-up on post-2015 development agenda, which will have sustainable development as an underpinning principle along with its strong focus on poverty eradication and a set of SDGs at its core.

53. Regarding the United Nations system, in August 2012, immediately after the Rio+20 Conference, the Secretary-General wrote<sup>27</sup> to all the United Nations system Principals inviting them to work together to implement Rio+20 decisions and shared a matrix for following up on the mandates. This implementation matrix serves as an accountability framework as well as a working tool to promote and monitor progress. It is being updated regularly to reflect progress and new initiatives<sup>28</sup>.
54. In the post Rio+20 phase, the UN system continues to remain engaged through CEB and its subsidiary bodies as well as ECESA Plus. Ad hoc inter-agency mechanisms have been set up to support the work of the Open Working Group on the SDGs<sup>29</sup> as well as the Expert committee on sustainable development financing.<sup>30</sup>

### ***The role of the HLPF in strengthening the IFSD***

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<sup>27</sup> Letter by the UN Secretary-General:

<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1138SG%20Letter%20and%20Rio%20Implementation%20Matrix%20-%202002%20August%202012%20First%20Version.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/unsystem.html>

<sup>29</sup> UN Technical Support Team: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549>

<sup>30</sup> UN Task Team: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1557>

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55. The Rio+20 conference created the HLPF with the explicit purpose of strengthening the institutional framework for sustainable development. The functions of the HLPF, as defined in paragraph 85 of the Rio+20 outcome document, and elaborated in the General Assembly resolution A/RES/67/290 potentially encompass an ambitious agenda that would contribute to the advancement of sustainable development, including in the United Nations system. The challenge will be to give shape to these functions in a way that strengthens the IFSD as a whole, and serves the objectives supported by the various functions in a concrete and value-adding way.
56. Establishing a strong HLPF should go in tandem with strengthening the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council so that their own agendas are not fragmented and allow an integrated consideration of sustainable development. The HLPF together with a revitalized GA and a strengthened ECOSOC should be part of the strengthened governance for sustainable development. Sustainable development should become the guiding principle of the work of all UN bodies, and those bodies should work in partnership to advance sustainable development. This could be facilitated if the GA and ECOSOC focus on the report of the forum and its policy decisions and recommendations. The forum could also help to promote the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, by providing a solid framework for considering the three dimensions of the sustainable development goals as well as by its ability to address new issues and react to immediate challenges that might arise.

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57. The General Assembly stressed that the forum should provide a dynamic platform for regular dialogue and for stocktaking and agenda-setting to advance sustainable development and enumerates other functions<sup>31</sup>.
58. However, the resolution does not fully define how the various functions can be mobilized to achieve the objectives outlined above and to contribute to the success of the other Rio+20 follow-up processes. This sub-section aims to do this, focusing on functions that are less explored in the above mentioned resolution
59. Given that the HLPF builds on the CSD, it can effectively use lessons learned from twenty years of practice with CSD to advance and strengthen its work. This report makes use of the lessons reviewed in the recent Secretary-General's report<sup>32</sup>.
60. The first function outlined by the Rio+20 outcome documents is to provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development. Lessons from the experience of the CSD show that the existence of a clear institutional home for sustainable development in the United Nations system has played a critical role in furthering the reach and acceptance of the concept from 1992 to 2012.
61. The HLPF has a critical agenda-setting role to play. The CSD, played an important role in setting the international agenda on sustainable development. Its role as incubator and catalyst for intergovernmental discussions on emerging topics resulted in the setting up of intergovernmental processes giving recommendations

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<sup>31</sup> For more information see A/RES/67/290

<sup>32</sup> Secretary-General's report on lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development, 2013, United Nations A/67/757

through ECOSOC to the General Assembly, including on forests, chemicals, energy and oceans.<sup>33</sup> This role should be preserved, as it was specific to CSD and the HLPF is the most practical and legitimate place in the UN system to host such discussions. Lessons from CSD show that in order for this agenda-setting function to be most effective, the HLPF has to be able to attract high-level decision-makers representing the different dimensions of sustainable development. Ensuring that this remains the case beyond the initial sessions of the forum should be a priority. Another area where creative solutions will need to be found is how the forum can mobilize UN system organizations, including the Bretton Woods Institutions and other intergovernmental organizations, including the WTO, to contribute to its work, as mandated by the GA<sup>34</sup>.

62. The CSD has also been the only place where implementation of the outcomes of global conferences on SIDS has been monitored and reviewed. Support provided to the SIDS will have to continue, including through providing Secretariat support to the 3<sup>rd</sup> international conference on SIDS, but also through continued provision of analytical and technical support to build capacities of the SIDS countries and their ability to network with each other. This mandate has been strengthened in the HLPF resolution as it underlines the need to discuss the specific sustainable development challenges of most vulnerable countries, including SIDS, with the aim of enhancing engagement and implementing commitments and recognizes the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> GA resolution 67/290 OP.17

specific challenges facing the middle-income countries to achieve sustainable development.<sup>35</sup>

63. Lastly, DSD/DESA, acting on recommendations of the CSD, served as initial home for expert processes that have later transformed into fully-fledged initiatives, including on sustainable consumption and production, sustainable procurement and environmental management accounting. The forum could continue to provide impetus to nascent processes that are the forefront of sustainability practice.
64. Functions (b) and (g) outlined in paragraph 85 of the Rio+20 outcome document<sup>36</sup> relate to the need for the forum to enhance integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in a holistic and cross-sectoral manner at all levels, and in the work of the UN system. This has previously been perhaps the most elusive goal, at all levels. Integration faces many obstacles. The main one is that institutional settings at national, regional and international levels continue to be organized along sectoral lines. Over the years, many institutional arrangements have been tried in order to better coordinate decision-making and implementation across sectors. At the international level, those have included a United Nations Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) with a system of task managers, as well as attempts to increase the role of the Regional Commissions in increasing regional implementation of Agenda 21. The perception is that mixed results have been achieved so far. The challenge for the future of the HLPF will thus be to find integrated approaches to the three dimensions of

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<sup>35</sup> A/RES/67/290

<sup>36</sup> A/RES/66/288

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sustainable development in policies and activities both in international policy-making and in the work of the UN system. Also critical will be the practical provisions that will be put in place in ECOSOC regarding the Council's role in achieving integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development as mandated in Rio+20.

65. In this regard, the Secretary-General's report mentioned above<sup>37</sup> identifies ways for the United Nations system to further mainstream sustainable development. It underlines that important preconditions for this to happen are commitments at the highest level of the United Nations system bolstered by clear and coherent intergovernmental guidance. Such guidance should come in particular through the HLPF given its role in guiding the work of United Nations intergovernmental bodies and organizations. This would help Member States to send a unified message to United Nations system organizations, including through their respective governing bodies.
66. A dimension that will need to be explored is how to improve the links between global, regional and national policy processes for sustainable development. This was a weakness of the CSD which, although it was visible soon after the establishment of the Commission was never satisfactorily addressed. Decisions taken at the CSD did not trickle down to the regional and especially the national level. The reasons for this included the perception by national policy circles that CSD was an environmental forum fueled by a lack of participation of non-

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<sup>37</sup> A/68/79-E/2013/69

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environment agencies and ministries in the preparatory process for CSD<sup>38</sup>. From the bottom-up, national and regional preparatory processes did not significantly contribute to the global discussions taking place at CSD, except on special occasions such as the preparations for WSSD and UNCED where national inputs were the basis for global negotiation.

67. The forum will inherit this issue from the CSD. In particular, inputs from regional and national levels need to be given an appropriate space in the forum. They should be reflected in the forum's policy decisions. This would increase the ownership of these decisions leading to improved implementation.
68. Based on past experience, this would likely require a combination of measures to:
- (i) create a robust preparatory process for the sessions of the forum, including capacity-building for countries to prepare submissions based on national reviews of implementation and of national sustainable development-related strategies;
  - (ii) a stronger focus from the secretariat of the forum on monitoring of implementation at all levels, including through tighter collaboration with the regional commissions in strengthening sustainable development as an overarching framework for the work of the regional commissions;
  - (iii) conduct robust regional processes to prepare the forum's meetings under the auspices of ECOSOC, geared to discussing issues specific to each region and contributing to global policy outcomes by developing recommendations for the forum; as well as ensure that global policy decisions are relevant to regional and national levels;
  - (iv) support implementation at national and

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<sup>38</sup> A/67/757

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regional levels; and (vi) enhance inter-regional cooperation where appropriate, for example through interregional dialogues in the forum, building also on regional dialogues conducted at ECOSOC.

69. Monitoring and reviewing progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments contained in Agenda 21 and in the outcomes of subsequent international conferences, including means of implementation, has always been a central role of CSD. This was done through: dedicated annual reports of the Secretary-General for the Second Committee; the Secretary-General's thematic reports on the themes of the CSD, focusing on review and policy in sequence; and specific projects such as the reviews of implementation of Agenda 21 and the Rio Principles prepared by the DSD/DESA for Rio+20.<sup>39</sup> The Rio+20 outcome document and Resolution 67/290 reaffirm that the forum should play such a role. This role will be even more critical after 2015 as the need arises to monitor and review the implementation of SDGs. The monitoring of commitments related to means of implementation, which was a weakness in the past, will also need to be strengthened.
70. An important challenge for the forum will be to sustain and deepen the engagement of Major Groups and other stakeholders, a domain in which the CSD was a pioneer and standard-setter in the United Nations. Major Groups have provided invaluable inputs to intergovernmental work on sustainable development. For example, most

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<sup>39</sup> Sustainable Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: review of implementation of Agenda 21, UN-DESA, 2012; Sustainable Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: review of implementation of the Rio Principles, UN-DESA, 2012. These two reports were part of a project co-funded by the European Commission.

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of the salient novelties contained in the Rio+20 outcome were initially proposed or supported by Major Groups. Resolution A/RES/68/290 retained the modalities for civil society engagement of the CSD for the forum.

71. Another dimension of the forum's work will be to define how it relates to voluntary, multi-stakeholder partnerships for the achievement and implementation of sustainable development. While partnerships ("type II partnerships") were officially recognized at WSSD and Rio+20 generated a significant number of voluntary commitments, the place of such commitments in the institutional framework for sustainable development remains to be fully understood and developed. Important issues include the status of these commitments along more traditional types of commitments; their monitoring; and the accountability of those who made them.
72. Enhancing science-policy interface was not a function that was explicitly included in the mandate of CSD in 1992, but has been emphasized in both the Rio+20 outcome document and in resolution 67/290. It responds to the evidence that a comprehensive assessment across the various dimensions of sustainable development is currently not delivered by the existing United Nations institutional framework. This goes well beyond channeling some scientific inputs into the intergovernmental process, as was done at CSD through thematic reports produced by the SG and interaction of delegates with the Scientific and Technology community at the CSD sessions. Fulfilling this mandate will be a complex task and will require increased resources, as it involves analysis of hundreds of sectoral

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assessments and on-going coordination of this work with many agencies of the UN system.

73. Item (1) of paragraph 85 of the outcome document of the Rio+20<sup>40</sup> calls for the forum to enhance evidence-based decision-making at all levels and contribute to strengthening ongoing capacity-building for data collection and analysis in developing countries. This is a function that CSD used to assume, along with other UN and non-UN institutions, for example the UN Statistics Division. In particular, CSD both produced normative work and promoted capacity-building on sustainable development indicators and on the design and implementation of national sustainable development strategies. There is still an important gap in capacity in developing countries for building and implementing systems of sustainable development indicators. This translates into lack of systematic monitoring and a disconnect between national realities and international work. The forum would have a strong role to play in order to help developing countries in this regard. This would also mean strengthening support to help developing countries use the forum to their benefit and inject national and regional realities into its work.
74. CSD also supported technical and policy work at the national level through technical cooperation, in particular for water and energy as well as SIDS, often in collaboration with various UN agencies with sectoral mandates. The value added of the forum compared to the CSD could be to bring an integrated perspective to such work.

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<sup>40</sup> A/RES/66/288

75. In summary, the Rio+20 outcome document lists twelve functions for the forum which are also reflected in different ways in the resolution A/RES/67/290. All functions, especially those that are new compared to the CSD, require substantive support. Based on this brief overview, and given the objective stated in Rio+20 to strengthen the IFSD through the creation of the forum, it seems clear that the forum should receive adequate support and resources if it is to perform these functions. It would be also essential to realize the purpose of the institutional reform that Member States envisioned at Rio+20.

***How the Forum will provide a home for building synergies among Rio+20 follow-up processes***

76. In addition to discharging its agreed functions on a regular basis, the forum will have a critical role to play in the coming two years to ensure that all the ongoing processes that were set in motion at Rio+20, reviewed above, contribute in a coherent and efficient way to the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda. This sub-section examines how these processes fit into the forum, and looks at the synergies that need to be achieved across these processes.

**Sustainable Development Goals**

77. It is widely acknowledged, both inside and outside the United Nations system, that the SDGs will provide the new reference framework for development and development cooperation post-2015. This represents a significant clarification from an immediately post-Rio+20 situation, where it was not clear how the SDGs would relate to potential successor goals to the MDGs. This clarification offers the

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potential, for the first time, to have a unified framework for development and development cooperation under the SDGs, which brings together the so far estranged streams of traditional development cooperation and international cooperation for sustainable development. It also implies a re-conceptualization of development cooperation, in particular linked with the universality of the SDGs.

78. While the elaboration of the SDGs is done through its own dedicated intergovernmental process, the OWG, linking the SDGs with other work streams, has already appeared as a necessity within that process. During the discussions of the OWG many Member States have mentioned the imperative of clarifying the means of implementation aspect of the SDGs. Many have expressed the need for consistence and synergies between the work of the OWG and that of the intergovernmental expert committee on financing for sustainable development. As these two streams of work progress, coordination through Member States will be critical. The Secretariat of the forum, which supports both processes, can also facilitate such coordination.
79. After the SDGs are adopted, it is to be expected that they will serve as the global reference for assessing progress on development and development cooperation issues, in the same manner as the MDGs became the reference point for monitoring success on development issues linked with the Goals. There will therefore be a critical monitoring function associated with the SDGs. This role could be played by the forum, supported by annual reports integrating the various contribution of the UN system as a whole. In addition, there will be a role for the international

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community in building capacity of Member States to build appropriate statistical systems to be able to monitor progress on the SDGs and the targets that will be adopted by countries in relation to the SDGs.

80. In order for the SDGs to really take hold, it will be critical to link the SDGs to national strategies, goals and targets. The HLPF can provide guidance to the UN and other efforts to design national development strategies and plans so that those take an integrated approach to economic, social and environmental dimensions. This could possibly be linked with capacity building on sustainable development indicators.
81. Technology, another dimension of the means of implementation for sustainable development, is currently being discussed in the post Rio+20 context through the lens of the General Assembly discussions on a technology facilitation mechanism. Going forward, it will be important to enable these discussions to fully support the SDGs, which can be done by the HLPF.

#### Intergovernmental committee of experts on sustainable development financing

82. The work of the intergovernmental expert Committee on sustainable development financing provides a timely opportunity to re-examine the role of financing for sustainable development in a changed post-2015 and post-Rio+20 context. In this regard, three aspects will be critical: (i) providing options to devise a financing framework for a renewed partnership for sustainable development post 2015; (ii) providing solid foundations for the financing of SDGs; and (iii) linking the financing discussions for the post-2015 development agenda to the existing

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discussions on financing for development in follow-up to the Monterrey and Doha conferences as well as with ECOSOC's Development Cooperation Forum.

83. The CSD had a mandate to consider the adequacy of funding and mechanisms for achieving sustainable development as well as commitments in the area of technology transfer<sup>41</sup>. However, its value added and impact in this area remained limited. The adequacy of financing for meeting the needs and the requirements and commitments identified in Agenda 21 has remained a contentious issue during the whole 21 years since the Earth Summit.
84. Given the importance of financing issues in the overall discussions on sustainable development, it will be critical that the forum finds a way to enable meaningful discussions and progress in this area. This is all the more important as a unified framework for development post-2015 would require bringing together the so far disjointed discussions on *inter alia* traditional development financing, climate finance, and biodiversity finance. Such discussion would fit in the agenda-setting function of the HLPF. Thus, the objective would be to provide consistency and coherence to discussion taking place in various thematic fora, while respecting their respective mandates.
85. In the context where the SDGs will provide the overarching goals and targets for international development cooperation, it will be critical to clarify issues related to means of implementation for the SDGs. As discussed above, this request has been articulated repeatedly in the discussions of the OWG. A sustainable development

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<sup>41</sup> A/RES/47/191

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financing strategy should provide concrete proposals relating to the financing of the SDGs going forward. While the SDGs will likely be agreed after the intergovernmental committee of experts finishes its work, this should not preclude work from the committee on thematic areas that are likely to be included in the SDGs, as well as concrete proposal in terms of mobilization of resources for agreed development objectives. After the committee concludes its work, the forum will have a critical role to play in monitoring and reviewing the means of implementation linked with SDGs, and in providing guidance as to how to improve them.

86. Lastly, within the context of a unified sustainable development cooperation framework, the forum can have an important role in ensuring the interface between the discussions on the means of implementation for the sustainable development agenda and the financing for development (FFD) process as the follow-up to the Monterrey and Doha conferences. The 2008 Doha Declaration on Financing for Development called for reinvigorating the global partnership for development in order to effectively address the full range of financing for development challenges facing the world, including additional costs of climate change mitigation and adaptation and damage to the Earth's environment. However, some of those areas have their own dedicated process under the UN, often in the form of independent Conventions. Member states, through resolutions of ECOSOC and the General Assembly, have stressed the need to reinforce coherence and coordination and to

avoid duplication of efforts between the work of the intergovernmental committee on sustainable development financing and the financing for development process.

#### Other Rio+20 follow-up processes

87. Other processes mandated in Rio will also have to be part of the scope of discussions at the forum. This includes the 10-year framework of programme on sustainable consumption and production (10YFP) and the discussions on intergenerational solidarity.
88. Regarding the 10YFP, resolution 67/290 gives a role to the forum to provide guidance to the board of the 10YFP and to UNEP. This should be only one component of regular discussions in the forum of sustainable production and consumption (SCP) as one of the three overarching goals of sustainable development identified at WSSD. Clear lack of progress on that dimension since 1992 and the critical importance of SCP to enable the achievement of SDGs across the board in the future militate for a strong presence of SCP on the forum's agenda, beyond the review of activities of the UN system in that area.
89. Regarding intergenerational solidarity, two main angles have been examined by the UN system in the past. The first of these relates to issues of intergenerational distribution of income and transfers. It covers aspects such as safety nets for older and younger generation, the creation and viability of pension systems in particular as they link with demographic change and other related topics. This aspect is well covered in social and economic fora in the UN. The second aspect is more specific

to sustainable development, and is in fact a defining dimension of the sustainable development approach. It concerns the rights of future generations to inherit from current generations an Earth that will enable them to satisfy their needs, as highlighted in the Bruntland report definition of sustainable development and in the Rio Principles. This concern directly links with the way the interests of future generations are represented in the legal systems at all levels. On this issue, the forum can continue to play the role of convener of discussions, further reviewing progress and allowing the international community to share lessons learned and reflect on solutions.

#### **IV Conclusions and recommendations**

90. The report shows that progress has been achieved to follow up on Rio+20. Particularly noteworthy are the work of the OWG on SDGs and the creation of the high-level political forum on sustainable development as well as the establishment of the intergovernmental committee of experts on sustainable development financing. The report highlights that the HLPF will have a critical responsibility to keep the implementation of sustainable development commitment under review, and be the main platform for ensuring coherence and coordination within the post-2015 development agenda. Thus, it is recommended that the General Assembly:

- a) Call on Governments, organizations of the United Nations system including the Bretton Woods institutions, and other relevant intergovernmental organizations,

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including the World Trade Organization and major groups and other relevant stakeholders to:

- a. fully engage in and support the work of the forum;
- b. Make HLPF a dedicated platform for implementation of sustainable development commitments redoubling their efforts to maintain a strong focus on implementation at all levels, including sharing of experiences;
- c. Ascertain that HLPF ensures follow-up to the Rio+20 processes and their outcomes, by bringing cohesion and complementarity among them especially in the context of the post-2015 development agenda;
- d. Enhance integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development; engaging with the economic, social and environment policymaking communities more intensively and in a more integrative way;
- e. Maintain a focused, relevant and flexible agenda that will engage actors from all three dimensions of sustainable development and monitor progress;
- f. Propose possible themes and areas including new and emerging issues for discussion at the HLPF;
- g. Maintain a robust preparation process, with support from a stronger United Nations inter-agency process;
- h. Encourage and strengthen partnerships, initiatives and voluntary commitments;
- i. Ensure meaningful engagement of Major Groups and other relevant stakeholders;

- j. Invite the forum itself to determine how best it can deliver on these objectives through the choice of its thematic focus and by ensuring that its policy guidance draws from solid reviews of implementation, notably implementation at national level and by the UN system, as well as scientific and other evidence.
- k. Call on the UN system to make further efforts to integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions in its work. The Secretary-General should continue reporting on progress in this regard to the HLPF, including by proposing a roadmap and detailed recommendations on how the UN system could make rapid advances in this regard.