

**FIFTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OPEN WORKING
GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
25-27 November 2013 – Conference Room 3 (Conference Building)**

Co-Chair's meetings with the Major Groups and other Stakeholders

The Co-chairs and Member States of the Open Working Group continued the interaction with the stakeholders started in the earlier sessions and organized three hour-long morning meetings with the Major Groups and other stakeholders during the fifth session. Panelists and speakers were agreed upon by a steering committee consisting of Major Groups and other stakeholders.

On the cluster of Sustained and inclusive economic growth, macroeconomic policy questions (including international trade, international financial system and external debt sustainability), infrastructure development and industrialization, several speakers highlighted that Economic growth and economic development are not synonymous, and inequality can be a barrier for growth. Many raised the importance of redistribution as the most effective way to poverty eradication and sustainable development. Tackling inequality was proposed as a theme for a stand-alone SDG and also as an underlying principle for other themes and targets.

The role of the state in macroeconomic governance should be thought through when discussing the SDGs. Many speakers argued that the state should take a more proactive role and mentioned that finance should serve the economy not drive it. The need for adequate policy space was highlighted in order to make sure that states can flexibly react to the needs of their citizens and the environment. Likewise the importance of honoring existing commitments.

Macroeconomic policies cannot be looked at as a separate issue from social policies, and in this regard several speakers mentioned the need to take into account gender specific implications. One example concerned the austerity policies following the financial crisis in several countries that sometimes impose additional informal care work on women who in turn cannot fully participate in the work force.

The SDGs should help countries to shift away from the prevalent "race to the bottom" paradigm in which efforts to attract foreign direct investments result in lowered tax revenues, weakened environmental and labour requirements, and human rights violations.

Economic development requires sound foundations. Universal access to education and health services, access to financial services, new technologies and affordable bank loans, gender equality and more equal distribution of resources can all support economic development. A stable and predictable operating environment is a prerequisite for private sector investments. Good governance should be promoted and corruption tackled at all levels in both private and public sectors.

Measuring the right issues matters. The business sector has already started and should continue the process of "accounting more than money". Also at the societal level

countries should measure and give more importance especially to the undervalued sectors of societies, such as care work.

Speakers highlighted that raising tax revenues remains the right and responsibility of each state but this requires international cooperation in order to tackle tax evasion and illicit financial flows. Corporate country-by-country reporting was proposed as a way to curb transfer mispricing.

The need to reform international, especially financial, institutions was mentioned by many. The question how the Open Working Group proposals could send signals to states and multilateral institutions to become sensitive to the needs of people was raised.

Investments in infrastructure are vital for economic growth, and accessibility and affordability of the services provided should be taken into consideration already when planning these investments. Popular public-private-partnerships are a valued option for financing infrastructure but a wide funding mix, suitable for each project, should be utilized.

When addressing energy issues, many speakers raised the need for a stand-alone goal on sustainable energy, a topic neglected in the MDGs. Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All Initiative was noted by many as a good starting point with its three-tiered approach on access, efficiency and renewables, and additional targets were proposed for example for the energy-water-food-health nexus, women and sustainable energy and enabling environment, since energy can either aggravate or alleviate many problems.

Speakers noted the several interlinkages between climate change and energy issues and mentioned that without solutions to climate change there can be no irreversible poverty eradication. The post-2015 agenda and the UNFCCC discussions should be mutually reinforcing. When rebuilding after natural disasters it is important to rebuild not only resilient but also climate-smart infrastructure to support mitigation efforts.

The just transition needed towards sustainable energy was remarked by many. It will be of utmost importance to ensure that "miners can turn into renewable energy engineers", that the current workers will be provided with the new skills needed to minimize social costs of the transformation towards sustainable energy production.

When addressing access issues many noted that participatory processes are required to assess what kind of services the end-users truly find most useful. Providing access and increasing the amount of renewable energy should be seen as issues supporting each other; small scale, decentralized off-grid and mini grid options of renewable energy were raised as solutions for sustainable rural energy production and access.

Several speakers highlighted that women pay the price of traditional, biomass-based energy systems, since they often collect and carry the fuel and suffer the health consequences of cooking smoke and small-particle pollution and often also hazardous combustion by-products. At the same time though it was remarked that sustainable development should not in this regard be only about cleaner cook stoves for women but about true gender equality and shared responsibilities and household chores.