

Concluding Remarks of Co-Chairs
6th Session of Open Working Group on
Sustainable Development Goals
Friday, 13 December 2013

Excellencies, colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We are now in the home stretch of our marathon stock-taking exercise. We have had another very stimulating and productive week of discussions on vital topics. We must keep focused for another two weeks in the new year, even as we are all beginning to consider how we're going to bring this incredible wealth of ideas and proposals together into a concise, aspirational set of goals and targets that we can all support.

Let us briefly review what we have achieved this week, the key messages we have heard and the outlines of areas of emerging consensus.

Means of implementation (financing, science and technology, knowledge-sharing and capacity building); Global partnership for achieving sustainable development

The first topic we discussed was Means of implementation (MOI). There is general agreement, we think, that we cannot set ambitious goals without carefully considering how they are to be achieved – what it will take in terms of political will, financing, technology, capacity building and partnerships, policies and institutions.

There was frequent reference to MDG8, on the global partnership for development, and how we should build and improve upon it. We are engaged in a common project to eradicate poverty, achieve universal human development and dignity, and live in harmony with nature for our own sake and that of future generations. This calls for enhanced cooperation and solidarity – a moral imperative.

A strengthened, more robust Global Partnership is required for the implementation of the SDGs. The partnership should be equitable, inclusive, with mutual accountability and a fair sharing of responsibilities.

The Rio principles, which were reaffirmed at Rio+20, should guide the partnership, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. These principles will be building blocks of durable and effective partnerships.

To achieve our goals, we will need to mobilize financial resources from multiple sources. Still, ODA was broadly seen as continuing to play a critical role in supporting development, particularly but not only in LDCs, given the imperative of completing the MDG agenda. Reaffirming the 0.7% ODA commitment and the 0.15-0.2% LDC ODA commitment, possibly with a firm timeline for achievement, is seen as the start, but we heard LDCs argue that the LDC ODA share is not adequate and should be revisited. The effectiveness agenda should continue to guide us for optimal ODA utilization.

We also heard many calls for defining means of implementation for each of the goals proposed. There was recognition of the value of building multistakeholder partnerships -- including governments, civil society, and the private sector -- around different goals, based on what many view as the successful experience of the MDGs and associated initiatives in the areas of energy, maternal and child mortality, nutrition and hunger.

We were reminded that, in any event, we need to ensure flexibility in our strategies and action plans to achieve the goals, so we can adjust as we learn along the way.

Specifically, on financing for sustainable development, we are all glad to see the intergovernmental Expert Committee's work is progressing well and we look forward to continued close communication and coordination with that important, closely linked process.

All agreed, as per the Monterrey Consensus, that domestic resource mobilization is key for financing development, yet it was widely acknowledged that many developing countries, especially LDCs, need international support to strengthen domestic capacities, including in tax collection and administration and the management of natural resource revenues, and international cooperation is essential to curtail illicit financial flows including through trade mis-pricing.

We heard that public and private finance are both necessary and perform complementary functions. Public finance and policies can play a

catalytic role, creating an enabling environment to mobilize private finance and direct private investment to activities that create jobs and innovations, boost productivity and incomes, and promote sustainable development. To ensure this, a solid regulatory and policy framework is needed, which calls for strengthened government capacities, that is, effective governance.

Small and medium sized enterprises have a particularly important role in job creation, and measures to promote financial inclusion can not only empower the poor but foster entrepreneurship and inclusive economic growth.

At the same time, large corporations – both national and multinational – must play a leadership role in developing new, sustainable business models and setting high standards of business conduct that respect human rights and mainstream social and environmental performance into corporate accounting. Corporate transparency is as important as government transparency to enhancing accountability.

We have heard frequent mention of the concept of co-responsibility of all stakeholders: that is, that we must all work together -- including in innovative partnerships – to address our common sustainable development challenges and achieve our common goals. We have also heard that we need an accountability mechanism for all.

Regarding the international enabling environment, we were reminded of the importance of trade as a driver of growth and are encouraged by the recent WTO agreement on the Bali package including trade facilitation. There was also an interesting discussion on labour mobility and how its enhancement – in which WTO would have an important role – could help in the global spread of knowledge and technologies.

Debt sustainability was repeatedly mentioned as a concern that needs to be addressed, as debt relief initiatives have not fully relieved heavy debt burdens that put a drag on development. There was reference to greater access to grant and concessional finance for countries in special situations and middle-income countries, as well as a call for an effective sovereign debt workout mechanism.

One clear – and absolutely critical – message we have heard these past days is how fundamental science, technology and innovation (STI) are to

achieving a set of SDGs. We now have the opportunity to concretize the contribution of STI in a goal or more likely targets.

Among the specific proposals we have heard:

- put all publicly funded research in the international public domain;
- systematically engage developing country, including LDC, scientists in international research collaborations;
- build scientific and technological capabilities in all countries through a range of investments, including in scientific and technical education;
- consider setting a target for STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) investments as a share of GDP;
- facilitate international technology transfer through:
 - an enabling environment for technology-related trade and investment flows;
 - the new technology bank and supporting mechanism for LDCs (we heard calls for its early operationalisation);
 - and many advocated a technology facilitation mechanism.

It was stressed that all countries – including LDCs -- aspire not only to be able to adapt and apply technologies for sustainable development, but also to contribute to innovation and the development of new technologies both for their own development and for the common good. Local and indigenous knowledge has important contributions to make in this regard. As the indigenous people’s representative said so well: we would like to share our knowledge and our dreams together.

Can we devise targets that capture the most essential ingredients for enhancing national innovation capacities?

Many referred to the importance of information and communications technologies to development, the multiple innovative applications to date, and the enormous untapped possibilities. One of those possibilities is to put ICT to better use to enhance monitoring and accountability. There was frequent mention of the need to strengthen data and statistical capabilities in developing countries as an essential requirement for measuring progress towards the SDGs.

The Istanbul Programme of Action contains the following target: “significantly increase access to telecommunication services and strive to

provide 100 per cent access to the Internet by 2020". Couldn't we adopt that as a universal target?

Let me conclude the summary of MOI with South-South cooperation, which is growing in importance – a very positive trend. At the same time, we recognize that it complements and does not replace North-South cooperation. Triangular cooperation has also been used inter alia to support training and capacity building and could usefully be scaled up.

Needs of countries in special situations, African countries, LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS as well as specific challenges facing the middle-income countries

A universal post-2015 agenda must not only engage all countries in actions to achieve our common goals, but must also benefit all countries and all people.

Yet, we know that certain groups of countries face serious structural impediments and that, to ensure that they are able to share equally in the benefits of sustainable development, they will need continued international support. We have heard multiple expressions of such support.

Countries in special situations have generally lagged behind others in efforts to achieve the MDGs. Even if some such countries have made social and economic progress in recent years, progress is fragile. As we have heard, vulnerability is a risk to sustainability.

So our goals must address key vulnerabilities and help build resilience. Robust, inclusive and sustainable economic growth needs to be promoted in all countries. The question is: what can unlock and sustain growth in countries in special situations?

While we all can agree certain basic principles of sound economic management, there is no single recipe for addressing vulnerabilities. Still, we know that certain types of intervention can go a long way. Among the most important is investing in education and skills development.

One manifestation of common structural impediments is these countries' weak connectivity to the global economy, as reflected for example in their small share in world trade. The IPoA contains a quantified target in this regard: aiming to double the share of least developed countries' exports in global exports by 2020, including by broadening least developed countries'

export base. Could we think of comparable targets for global economic integration of land-locked countries and SIDS, who are also remote from markets and face high transport costs?

Many countries in special situations – as well as other countries -- are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and this is confirmed by a *physical vulnerability to climate change* measure presented by one expert. Thus they have stressed the importance building resilience and international support for adaptation measures, along with forceful actions to address the causes of climate change.

Least developed countries (LDCs): The Istanbul Programme of Action remains a touchstone for post-2015, and we heard these past days expressions of strong commitment to its implementation. That includes building productive capacities across the economies of LDCs as well as supporting infrastructure. Continued enhancement of international market access for LDCs can provide a critical growth stimulus. In this regard, special and differential treatment was stressed, including duty- and quota-free market access.

African countries: The African countries, a significant number of whom are LDCs, share many priorities in common with LDCs. Among the priorities we have heard from African countries are: eradicating poverty and hunger and finishing the MDG agenda; building up productive sectors through infrastructure investment and connectivity; industrialization, diversification and structural transformation to generate employment and broaden the tax base; a more favourable integration into the global economy and deeper economic integration among African countries; and mobilizing domestic resources to enhance access to social services and investments in education and training. Africa stressed the importance of building economic and social resilience, and placed emphasis on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

Small island developing states (SIDS): SIDS are disadvantaged by small size and remoteness from markets, high exposure to environmental risks as well as other factors. Among their high priorities are stronger international action to tackle climate change and the sustainable management and use of oceans, on which SIDS depend heavily for their well-being and for which they support a stand-alone SDG. Many were hard hit by the global financial crisis, have unsustainable debt burdens, and face increasing risks and even existential threats associated with climate change and ocean acidification. Heavy

dependence on imported fuels and heavy health burdens notably from non-communicable diseases are also major SIDS concerns. Their expectation is that both the 3rd international SIDS conference, to be held in Samoa, and the Secretary-General's Climate Change Summit next September will yield strong action-oriented outcomes.

Land-locked developing countries (LLDCs): The LLDCs look forward to the 10-year review conference of the Almaty Programme of Action. They have called for international assistance in alleviating the high costs and uncertainties of market access, including through a trade facilitation agreement. Many are also highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and face the prospect of worsening desertification, land degradation and drought.

Middle income countries: It was noted that roughly two-thirds of the world's extreme poor are still to be found in these countries. Inequality was highlighted as a prominent concern which hampers efforts at poverty eradication. Many referred to the middle-income trap, wherein countries find it difficult to build the innovative capacities, human capital, and strong institutions to climb technology ladders and transition to high-income status.

Human rights, the right to development, global governance

Human rights and fundamental freedoms are essential for everyone on the planet to lead a life of dignity. Human rights are universal and multi-dimensional, encompassing civil, political, social, economic, environmental and cultural rights. Human rights are cross-cutting and must be mainstreamed. The rights of women are centrally important in all domains.

The right to development must be clearly and centrally reflected in the post-2015 framework, with full implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development, putting people at the centre of development with poverty eradication at its core.

There is need to ensure that the human rights of the most vulnerable and marginalized are upheld, including indigenous peoples, to eliminate all forms of discrimination, including against women and girls, and to promote economic and legal empowerment of the poor and of women.

Good governance based on human rights, rule of law, access to justice and to information, transparency and accountability is a prerequisite for sustainable development.

There is a need to strengthen policy coherence between development policies and human rights and to ensure that business globally respects fundamental human rights.

Strengthened global collective action is needed to guarantee human rights and the right to development. Global governance arrangements should promote the equal chances for development of all people, and mobilize collective action to protect and manage global commons and public goods.

The reform of the international financial and economic architecture should continue to promote inclusiveness and adequate representation of developing countries.

An effective United Nations system, as cornerstone of multilateral governance, must play a central role in achieving sustainable development, including ensuring effective monitoring of progress and accountability of all stakeholders through the high-level political forum.

Concluding observations

We've heard the refrain that the world has changed since 2000 and, for this reason, the SDGs must be different from the MDGs. We know some of the important ways in which it has changed ... many very positive – notably spectacular if uneven progress with poverty eradication and social development ... but others highly negative – notably the worsening threats posed by climate change, land degradation and ocean acidification, to name but a few manifestations of the unbearable pressures human activities are placing on our finite and fragile planet.

In the next two sessions, we are going to focus – hopefully with laser precision – not on describing these threats and challenges but on proposing solutions and translating those into manageable goals and targets. We will be talking about urbanization, a fact of our future, and how to turn that into an

opportunity for building sustainable, model cities of the future with modern, sustainable transport systems, affordable and sustainable housing, and decent social services and jobs for all seeking them. We will be talking about sustainable consumption and production and how to grab this bull by the horns. And we thought the topics this week were tough!

Thanks for your continued commitment, enthusiasm, and seriousness of purpose. We do have an historic opportunity at hand – to translate “the future we want” into goals and targets toward which we all commit to work together.