

Concluding Remarks of Co-Chairs, OWG 7

General observations

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

As we get closer to next phase of our work, and especially during the past several days, we have been hearing more and more concrete proposals for goals and targets. We did hear many suggestions for goals and targets in earlier sessions, but I think it is safe to say that, as the critical phase approaches, the proposals have become sharper. In the past few days we have heard very specific proposals from different quarters on goals and targets for sustainable cities, sustainable transport, sustainable consumption and production, disaster risk reduction and climate change.

Sustainable cities and human settlements, sustainable transport

We have heard repeatedly – from many quarters – that we are in the urban century and that our goals must reflect this. Many voices have been raised in favour of an urban SDG, but that does not seem to be, as yet, a consensus view. The question we must ask is: how precisely could an urban SDG help tip the balance decisively from unsustainable towards sustainable urbanization processes and cities around the world? How can we inspire Mayors and local governments? We have heard that the fora which bring together local authorities have unequivocally called for a goal on cities and human settlements.

Of course it is not just the mayors who make cities sustainable. An urban goal would need to catalyze all relevant actors, from national governments to regional and local authorities to the private sector and civil society.

Cities belong to larger regions with multiple ties to peri-urban and rural areas, and the SDGs should aim at balanced territorial development. Ideally, people, knowledge, income, goods and services flow in both directions, enriching both. Well-functioning transport and other infrastructure links make this possible.

Because of infrastructure's critical importance to both rural and urban economies, some have suggested a goal on sustainable infrastructure.

In a globalized world, rural-urban linkages are not only local. Diners in New York's Chinatown eat rice from Viet Nam, chickens in China are raised on soybeans grown in Argentina, and chocolatiers in Brussels source cacao from Ghana. Such global rural-urban linkages also need to be mutually beneficial. Sustainable consumption and production, perhaps facilitated by a target on sustainable supply chains, would yield such mutual benefits. Reductions in food losses along supply chains from farmer to retailer, as well as reductions in food waste by consumers, especially in developed countries, are both urgently needed.

The cross-cutting nature of sustainable cities and human settlements was repeatedly stressed, necessitating a holistic approach addressing such interlinked issues as poverty eradication, job creation, sustainable transportation, water and sanitation, climate change and disaster risk reduction, health, education, governance and participatory decision-making.

Combating social exclusion was emphasized as an integral part of sustainable urbanization. Thus goals and targets should strive to overcome the social, economic and physical restrictions facing women and girls, and vulnerable and marginalized groups, and ensure their access to decent jobs and safe, affordable and sustainable forms of basic services.

Key factors contributing to sustainable cities and urban development include forward-looking, effective and inclusive urban design and land-use planning processes, including providing secure land tenure and effective protection of public spaces; housing and spatial planning to promote social inclusion, including of disadvantaged communities; sound finances to support provision of affordable and accessible public services and to provide social protection where needed; policies that promote economic dynamism, small-business formation and formal sector job creation, to name a few.

Cities are large consumers of energy and materials. While they can achieve agglomeration economies, making more affordable networked infrastructure services such as water and sanitation, electricity, ICT, public transport, they also

concentrate pollution and waste and, because they are the home to a large share of the wealthy and middle classes, have relatively high resource use per capita.

It was underlined that transportation is crucial for sustainable development, including of cities. Mobility of people and goods is a vital service. The importance of its inclusion in SDGs was well recognized, with many calling for it to be included at the level of targets under other goals.

Many called for the SDGs to ensure access to safe, affordable and environmental friendly forms of transportation for all. Three approaches to sustainable transportation were discussed: avoid unnecessary transport with smarter land use planning and improved access to ICT; shift to more effective modes by provision of attractive mass public transportation systems, rail and waterway freight modes and safe, convenient non-motorized transport facilities where appropriate; improve environmental performance of existing forms of transport with innovation and more sustainable fuel choices.

Cities are often incubators of innovation. The challenge is how to harness that innovation potential to support sustainable consumption, production and lifestyles, sustainable modes of transport, equitable provision of opportunities and social inclusion, as opposed to simply dissipating it in opaque “financial engineering”.

Many cities are already leading innovation in addressing sustainability challenges, partnering with one another and sharing ideas and experience. Innovative global partnerships have emerged in recent years, including to work together to advance city-level action on climate change – both shrinking cities’ carbon footprints and building their resilience.

Sustainable consumption and production (including chemicals and waste)

The cross-cutting nature of SCP was well recognized. Some delegations strongly advocated a stand-alone goal on SCP, while others favoured the incorporation of SCP under relevant goals in areas such as energy, water and sanitation, food and agriculture, health and cities.

Several possible targets on SCP and resource productivity have been proposed, including: to double the shares of renewable sources in the energy mix by 2030, to restore agricultural productivity of 1/3 of severely degraded abandoned land by 2030, to reduce the share of overexploited ocean fish stocks by 20%.

Targets were also proposed on decoupling of resource use from economic growth, possibly with a relative decoupling (intensity) target for developing countries and an absolute decoupling target for developed ones. A cap on per capita energy consumption, as proposed by a few delegations, would be one variant of a decoupling target.

On sustainable consumption, many emphasized the need to change consumption patterns – through a combination of measures including awareness raising, consumer information, and appropriate pricing and regulation – beginning with energy and resource intensive patterns of wealthy consumers. Non-discriminatory sustainable procurement policies and criteria were also cited as an important instrument, one that could build markets for sustainable products and might lend itself to a target. Standards of energy efficiency in buildings and other energy-using infrastructure and products were also mentioned.

On sustainable production, actions that could potentially lend themselves to targets include increasing the numbers of products and services with sustainability standards and labelling and increasing company reporting on sustainability performance.

The Rio+20 decision to adopt the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production (10YFP) was widely lauded and many called for early and generous contributions to its trust fund to enable timely implementation.

A mix of policies will be needed to promote SCP, including fiscal instruments like taxes and product charges and subsidy reform, education and awareness raising, voluntary certification schemes, public procurement, and regulations, standards and legislation.

Many stressed the need to take a life-cycle approach in addressing SCP, considering that the consumption patterns of rich consumers can have multiple impacts around the globe following the lines of supply chains back to source.

Design of products is critical to life-cycle management of impacts and encouraging recycling and reuse. One expert challenged the prevailing mindset that refers to goods as consumables when what we really consume are their services – like transport – and that refers to end-of-life assessment when what we need to be thinking about is endless re-use. In his words, efficient will not be sufficient, given rapid economic growth, so we will need to make major adjustments to consumption patterns and lifestyles.

Inequality was raised as a driver for certain societal values that encourage unsustainable consumption patterns. Some stressed that sustainable lifestyles must be based on a different way of inhabiting this planet in harmony with nature.

It was recalled that extant agreements that address SCP call on developed countries to lead in shifting towards sustainable consumption and production, but it was also observed that it is easier to convince citizens in developed countries to do so if they are confident that developing countries will follow. In fact, it was noted by some that developing countries are already among the leaders in areas like renewable energy.

Regarding chemicals and waste, several noted that strong linkages exist between sound chemicals management and other sustainable development issues, including health. The poor and vulnerable are the first victims of harmful chemicals.

Reference was made to the need to reaffirm commitments to relevant Conventions relating to chemicals and waste. Also mentioned was the need to build capacities, as many developing countries, including LDCs and SIDS, lack capacity to manage chemicals and waste sustainably. SAICM (the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management) was cited favourably as an effective vehicle for international multi-stakeholder cooperation, and the SAICM 2020 target was proposed as a reference point for any possible SDG target relating to chemicals. Mention was also made of the need to extend SAICM's life beyond 2020.

Climate change and disaster risk reduction

The urgency of action on climate change and disaster risk reduction was widely acknowledged, and for a number of countries climate change represents an existential threat.

Climate change poses a real and imminent threat to sustainable development, putting at risk development gains of recent decades and, among other things, threatening food security, intensifying water scarcity and flooding as well as sea-level rise. The exposure of SIDS, LDCs – including those in Africa – as well as other countries to the impacts of climate change was highlighted. Several underlined that the poorest are most at risk from disasters, and disasters deepen their poverty.

There was wide support for addressing climate change as a cross-cutting issue in the SDG framework, without a stand-alone goal, and while respecting the negotiating role of the UNFCCC. In this regard, several called for the principle of CBDR to be reflected in the relevant targets; however, the view was also expressed that CBDR has evolved over time.

Several supported targets that reflect the challenges of addressing climate change in key areas and that are consistent with commitments under the UNFCCC, including resilient infrastructure, protecting forests, sustainable cities, sustainable energy, food security, and SCP.

Some favoured inclusion of the below 2°C warming target; others considered that this target could not be referenced in isolation from the UNFCCC context. The need to consider means of implementation was noted.

The inter-connected nature of risks posed by climate change and natural disasters was recognized. Strong actions on climate change mitigation and adaptation are among the most effective means of reducing disaster risks. Without such actions, the frequency and intensity of, and the vulnerability to, disasters will only intensify in coming years and decades.

Disaster losses have major and growing impacts on lives and economies, but tools to address them are available, in particular the Hyogo Framework for

Action. Mention was made of the need for an ambitious second Hyogo Framework for Action and that SDGs should reinforce efforts on disaster risk reduction under that Framework.

Proposals were made for targets on disaster risk reduction, including to reduce by a significant degree the severity of impacts as measured for example by loss of lives and economic losses.

It was stressed that we must think and act through *managing systems* to reduce disaster risks and build resilience. One expert referred to the need to consider three dimensions of risk mitigation: risk prevention through development pathways that minimise risk generation; risk reduction; and fostering resilience by improving the ability to deal with shocks.

There is a need for a range of solutions, including access to technology and early warning systems for disaster management, and enhanced stakeholder capacities at all levels. The role of good governance and incorporation of lessons learned from indigenous knowledge was also recognized.

Thank you for your continued enthusiasm and commitment.