

Summary of the Expert Group Meeting on the Role of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in the Post-2015 Development Framework,

UN Headquarters, New York

30 April – 1 May 2014

The expert group meeting on the role of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in the post-2015 development framework was held over one day and a half at the UN Headquarters in New York. It was organized by the Division for Sustainable Development of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The meeting was attended by Member States, UN system and major groups and other stakeholders.

The meeting was opened by H.E. Mr. Martin Sajdik, President of ECOSOC, who underlined that the high-level political forum needs to become “a dedicated platform for advancing sustainable development through review, recommendations and guidance that have a real impact at country level, but also of the whole UN family”. He also underlined the need to equip the forum to perform its mandated functions in the context of the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The President also stressed that the success of the forum will depend on its impact on the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, agenda-setting, strengthening the science-policy interface, bolstering more evidence-based policies, and most of all, on the implementation of the sustainable development goals. He underlined that “the question is how to achieve this and make the forum really a new entity for a new era of development”.

Mr. Thomas Gass, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs reminded the meeting that the forum is a new platform, but is building on the 20-year experience of the Commission on Sustainable Development. It has its origins in many years of efforts at all levels to advance sustainable development. He emphasized that we are all engaged one way or another in the processes launched at Rio+20. We all want to see how best they will feed into the post-2015 development agenda. Once this agenda is adopted with sustainable development goals at its core, the forum will promote and review implementation as mandated by its founding resolution.

Ms. Marion Barthelemy, Chief of Intergovernmental Support and Interagency Branch(DSD/DESA) stated that the purpose of the meeting was to generate new ideas, build understanding in some areas, and examine some specific issues in greater details. Talking about the programme of the meeting, she said that the programme of the meeting has been structured around four main dimensions of the forum. (Three Is and one R): implementation, integration, inclusiveness and review and monitoring.

The meeting discussed these issues in the course of five plenary sessions and two break-out groups.

These are the key messages that emanated from the meeting¹.

The HLPF is at the heart of the monitoring and evaluation of the post-2015 development agenda as a home of the SDGs. Monitoring and review of implementation should apply to all, both developed

¹ This should be read in conjunction with key message bullets posted separately.

and developing countries, as well as to all stakeholders. The forum's reviews should be simple and avoid overburdening countries. Monitoring should be a regular process, rather than only a few days of meetings. Lessons could be learned from other review processes, such as in the area of trade. We must use the transition period of 2014 and 2015 to lay down the groundwork for the future work of the HLPF, so that by 2016 it is clear how the forum should organize its work thematically and how it should conduct its reviews of implementation.

The HLPF should be a decision making body to advance sustainable development. It was suggested that the forum might work in subcommittees and should have a robust preparatory process. It was also proposed to create an advisory body to support the work of HLPF. The UN system could help support the forum through a lead agency system as was done for CSD. Such a body could comprise of, among others, major groups.

On integration of three dimensions of sustainable development, ownership should be with national governments, and reflected in national SD reports. In the HLPF, Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) could be an important vehicle to integrate all dimensions. The report should have a bottom-up approach and reflect the voice of people, while avoiding putting more burden on countries. National sustainable development councils can promote integrated policy making and enhance accountability and inclusiveness. They should be actively engaged in the work of the forum.

Agenda-setting for the forum is very important as it will be instrumental in attracting all relevant stakeholders from the economic, social and environmental areas. The forum's agenda needs to be relevant and in the service of advancing sustainable development and the post-2015 development agenda.

The HLPF needs to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in its work and that ownership is felt by all. It is important to identify the relevant state and non-state actors for economic, social, and environmental dimensions on each topic so as, to showcase good practices. This could also create a more permanent network of people interested to provide inputs to the forum on any given topic

The science-policy interface could be an important input of the HLPF to the post-2015 process. Some suggested establishing a panel working on collecting scientific data and analyses area by area and country by country. Use could be made of the Scientific Advisory Board created by the Secretary-General.