

SETTING OUR COMMON GOALS

Major Groups Recommendations for Multi-Stakeholder Engagement with the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals

OVERVIEW

As part of the Rio+20 Conference follow up, governments stated that they would establish the 30 member inter-governmental Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by September 2012. Member States will nominate representatives from the five United Nations regional groups, with the aim of achieving fair, equitable, and balanced geographic representation. In addition, paragraph 248 of *The Future We Want*, instructs the United Nations “to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on sustainable development goals that is open to all stakeholders”.

Thus, in order to adhere to the requirements of *The Future We Want* and maximize its effectiveness, the OWG needs to ensure that it has recognized, effective and ongoing engagement of stakeholders.

Therefore, we, the nine Major Groups established in 1992 for the Rio process on sustainable development, offer recommendations on how to ensure that the deliberations of the OWG will draw on broad multi-stakeholder input and expertise thus ensuring that the SDG processes and decisions are “inclusive and transparent”.

This paper builds on the central role the Major Groups played in Rio+20 processes and is being submitted to DESA in the spirit of our continued engagement in this area. This paper will also be sent to the President of the UN General Assembly and to the Permanent Representative of the Brazilian Mission to the UN for information.

As decisions on the modalities and governance of decision-making processes (such as the OWG) will begin in earnest in October 2012, this note offers recommendations on how multi-stakeholder engagement can ensure that the SDG processes and decisions are “inclusive and transparent” as Rio+20 called for.

Finally, we offer these recommendations in recognition that civil society and other stakeholders’ “Major Groups” will need to be involved in designing, implementing and evaluating sustainability, and therefore have a stake in developing the SDGs. This requires the full and fair facilitation and representation of multi-stakeholder input to the OWG and other relevant processes for the post-2015 development agenda.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

We recommend that a multi-stakeholder advisory group on sustainable development goals (MAG) be established to work with the intergovernmental Open Working Group (OWG) on developing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

OBJECTIVE AND COMPOSITION

The objective of the MAG would be to draw on the best and widest possible advice, experience, expertise and input, to ensure linkages with major groups,

including NGOs and the private sector, as well as different other stakeholders at regional, sub-regional and local levels and to ensure a continuing and open exchange of information.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

To achieve the objective, we recommend that the composition of the MAG should be based on the Agenda 21 nine Major Groups, with an understanding that they would also consult with and draw on input provided by other groups as reflected in Paragraph 43 of the Rio+20 Outcome Document. The composition of the MAG should aim at North-South as well as gender balance and should be reviewed regularly.

The MAG should take into account lessons learnt from other stakeholder constructs available within the UN family. Such constructs are found within, inter alia, UNOCHA, UNAIDS, SAICM, the ILO, the Aarhus Convention as well as FAO's Committee on World Food Security (CFS). The nine Major Groups structure will be used to develop modalities for a broadly inclusive and representative structure as well as enhanced accountability to go with the enhanced responsibility.

BASIC FUNCTIONS

Once established, the MAG will develop a full list of modalities and terms of reference. However, at the outset and to institute its working relations with the OWG, the MAG should be established on some basic functions.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

We recommend that the basic functions of the MAG should enable it to:

- *Access all documents and drafts under negotiation by the OWG in a timely manner;*
- *Comment on any draft reports of the OWG, and receive an official response on the comments;*
- *Comment on the draft agenda of the next meeting of the OWG and suggest further agenda items;*
- *Have dedicated time periods during OWG meetings when MAG representatives can dialogue with the OWG on key issues;*
- *Have regular meetings with OWG representatives (e.g. the co-chairs/bureau); and*
- *Have expert advisory seats on any potential sub-working/thematic groups of the OWG to advise and draw on stakeholder views and expertise on specific topics, as well as provide technical inputs to any specific requests the OWG may have.*

Ultimately, the aim of the MAG is to involve broad stakeholder participation at every level which will result in better informed and more thoroughly deliberated decisions being taken. If fully implemented, stakeholders will take greater ownership of the outcomes and be more active in the delivery of policy on the ground, optimally in partnership with governments, intergovernmental organizations, and other actors..

Given the fact that the SDGs must be global in nature and universal in application, it is essential that wide and diverse opinions and viewpoints are a part of their development.

Summary of Recommendations

1. We recommend that a multi-stakeholder advisory group on sustainable development goals (MAG) be established to work with the intergovernmental Open Working Group (OWG) on developing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. We recommend that the composition of the MAG should be based on the Agenda 21 nine Major Groups with an understanding that they will also consult with and draw on input provided by other groups, as reflected in Paragraph 43 of the Rio+20 Outcome Document. The composition of the MAG should aim at North – South and gender balance and should be reviewed regularly.
3. We recommend that the basic functions of the MAG should enable it to:
 - Access all documents and drafts under negotiation by the OWG in a timely manner;
 - Comment on any draft reports of the OWG, and receive an official response on the comments;
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 - Have dedicated time periods during OWG meetings when MAG representatives can dialogue with the OWG on key issues;
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 - Have expert advisory seats on any potential sub-working/ thematic groups of the OWG to advise and draw on stakeholder views and expertise on specific topics, as well as provide technical inputs to any specific requests the OWG may have.