



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

April 25, 2014

Excellency,

Further to my letter of 14 January, 2014 regarding the High-level Events and Thematic Debates for the resumed part of this 68th Session, I take this opportunity to kindly remind that the High-Level Event of the General Assembly on the "Contributions of North-South, South-South, Triangular Cooperation, and ICT for Development to the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda" will be held on 21 and 22 May, 2014 in the Economic and Social Council Chamber.

The event will include a full one-day plenary session on 21 May, commencing with an opening segment from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., followed by a general debate from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. It will also include two interactive multi-stakeholder panel discussions on 22 May, from 10:00 to 1:00 p.m. and from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00. The closing session will take place from 5:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

I have the pleasure to inform that the Background Note for the High-level Event on the "Contributions of North-South, South-South, Triangular Cooperation, and ICT for Development to the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda" is now available on my website at <http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/68/events/>

A Programme providing additional details on the High-level Event will be made available to Member States in due course.

Information on the inscription of Member States to the list of speakers for the general debate on 21 May will be announced in the Journal of the United Nations in due course.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "John W. Ashe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

John W. Ashe

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

**Background Note
General Assembly High-level Event on the**

**“Contributions of North-South, South-South, Triangular Cooperation, and ICT for
Development to the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda”**

21 and 22 of May, 2014, ECOSOC Chamber

The Post-2015 Development Agenda is envisaged as the most far-reaching and comprehensive development-related endeavour ever undertaken by the United Nations in its entire history. It will require contributions and commitment from a range of actors, both government and non-governmental, all of the United Nations system, including the International Financial Institutions, as well as other international and regional organizations. Enhanced coordination and cooperation among these various actors need to be further advanced to strengthen the synergies between global policies and national realities.

New levels of support, collaboration and partnership will be needed from all stakeholders. Technology and knowledge transfer, financing and innovative means of implementation will be critical parts of the new development agenda, which will require active and constructive collaboration among all actors, based on mutual trust and respect. Its successful implementation will need global cooperation in the form of multi-stakeholder partnerships among governments, the private sector and civil society.

South-South and Triangular Cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to North-South Cooperation, which will remain the primary form of cooperation between countries of the North and South. The principles of South-South Cooperation have been defined in the Nairobi Outcome document of the UN High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation and further elaborated through relevant General Assembly resolutions. South-South and Triangular Cooperation vary greatly in approaches and modalities, yet their importance have increased manifold since the year 2000 and, beyond 2015, are expected to be an important auxiliary tool for catalysing implementation efforts amongst developing countries.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and broadband play a key role in giving people voice and access to information, knowledge, education, access to basic public services and supporting the development of new skills and employment opportunities. Indeed, today, ICTs are promoting the achievement of all three pillars of sustainable development: social development; economic development; and environmental protection. ICTs are critical enablers for development and play a vital role in empowering people and helping them make more informed decisions, thereby enabling all three pillars of sustainable development. Since 2000, there has been a massive expansion in access to ICTs. However, Internet connections and access to broadband networks continue to show a pervasive digital divide between urban and rural areas within each country and across communities and social groups, as well as between developed and developing countries. As the impact of ICTs grows, persistent disparities in access to and use of ICTs may create an additional exclusion barrier among individuals and groups who do not have

access to ICTs, instead of empowering them.

In the Rio+20 outcome document “The Future We Want”, Member States recognized the need to make progress in implementing previous commitments to accelerate progress in closing development gaps between developed and developing countries, and to seize and create opportunities to achieve sustainable development through economic growth and diversification, social development and environmental protection. To this end, they underscored the continued need for an enabling environment at the national and international levels, as well as continued and strengthened international cooperation, particularly in the areas of finance, debt, trade and technology transfer, as mutually agreed, and innovation and entrepreneurship, capacity building, transparency and accountability. Member States also recognized the diversification of actors and stakeholders engaged in the pursuit of sustainable development.

The Outcome Document of the Special Event to Follow-Up Efforts to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals (held on 25 September 2013 at the UN Headquarters in New York) underscored the central role of a renewed global partnership for sustainable development and the need to honour previous developmental commitments. Development cooperation beyond 2015 will have to increase and continue to support developing countries, with a special emphasis in poor and vulnerable communities facing the greatest sustainable development challenges.

Panel discussion 1: How can all forms of cooperation, namely North-South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, be strengthened to promote economic growth, employment and decent work for all?

In the Rio+20 outcome document “The Future We Want”, Member States recognized that poverty eradication, full and productive employment and decent work for all, and social integration and protection are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, and that enabling environments to promote these needs to be created at all levels. Cooperation and international solidarity can play a catalytic role in promoting economic growth, employment and decent work for all.

Poverty eradication in all its multi-dimensional forms remains the overriding priority and a necessary condition for sustainable development. Poverty eradication requires integrating the three core dimensions of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental - to achieve people-centred development. This coherent approach must draw on the lessons learned from the implementation of the MDGs and the continued impacts of the global crisis, inequality, and environmental degradation, to ensure that social and economic development follow a sustainable trajectory.

Discussions should focus on identifying ways to implement policies that eradicate absolute poverty; reduce relative poverty; provide social protection and social protection floors as relevant to reduce vulnerabilities of the poor; provide access to property and productive assets; address inequalities at both national and international levels; pursue

sustained and inclusive economic growth; develop and use evidence-based, high quality, timely, disaggregated data and impartial, internationally established methods for evaluating progress; and on identifying ways to ensure the appropriate and necessary means of implementation.

Achieving sustained and inclusive economic growth for sustainable development remains the surest means of eradicating poverty and attaining shared prosperity. Inclusive, job-rich growth is a prerequisite for reducing poverty. Given the jobless recovery underway, inclusive growth and employment need to be at the centre of the new development framework. At the same time, growth should be pursued in ways that brings beneficial environmental and social impacts. Discussions should focus on identifying ways to implement policies that enhance macroeconomic policy coordination; foster conducive regulatory and fiscal systems to promote sustainable development; encourage structural transformation towards higher productivity sectors and activities; substantially improve energy and resource productivity of economic activities; promote entrepreneurship, small and medium scale enterprises, and innovation; create productive, well-paid jobs; promote investments in infrastructure such as roads, railways, ports, electricity, and communications; strengthen productive capacities in all countries with a particular focus on LDCs, including through technological upgrading and value addition; promote an open, rules-based, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system; promote trade facilitation and preferential market access for LDCs; ensure debt sustainability; and that facilitate international technology cooperation and technology transfer, especially with respect to environmentally sound technologies.

Sustainable development should provide employment and decent jobs for all those seeking work. High unemployment and rising inequality continue to remain among key challenges for many countries in eradicating poverty. Employment and decent work are the key routes out of poverty as well as an important concern for sustainable development. Unemployment is expected to remain at elevated levels for many years. The creation of decent work will thus continue to be a major challenge for almost all countries well beyond 2015. Discussions should focus on identifying ways to implement policies that promote full employment through macroeconomic policy; address youth unemployment through strategies aimed at providing young people with access to decent and productive work; facilitate the participation of women in the labour force; provide social security and protection, including for those retired from the labour force, persons with disabilities, the unemployed, children and youth, and older persons; eliminate gender-based and other forms of labour market discrimination including against persons with disabilities and older persons; encourage transition from informal sector to formal sector employment; promote non-farm employment opportunities in rural areas; ensure decent wages aligned with productivity; support small- and medium-sized enterprises; increase access to credit to the youth, women and other vulnerable groups; promote appropriate job-rich technology applications; promote job-rich sustainable tourism; train and re-skill displaced workers; and that protect the rights of migrant workers and displaced persons in compliance with the norms and standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Issues for consideration/Guiding questions:

- Given that the overarching objective of the post-2015 development agenda is the eradication of poverty, how should the various forms of international cooperation be strengthened to contribute to the achievement of sustained and inclusive economic growth?
- How can cooperation be tailored in such a way that its best utilized to help countries develop inclusive and robust economies and societies that provide employment and decent jobs for all?
- Can domestic resource mobilization, increased and smarter aid, domestic private finance and external private finance be part of the foundations of a renewed global partnership for development?
- How can sustained and inclusive national and international economic growth support improved domestic resource mobilization and management?
- How can the means of implementation of the post 2015 development agenda be strengthened by further progress on development-supportive trade reforms within an open, rules-based multilateral trading system?
- How can the post-2015 development agenda give special attention to the needs of countries in special situations, African countries, LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS? What are the opportunities and challenges facing middle income countries? What changes are needed in the various components of the UN development system to better support national development efforts?
- How can South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation play a complementary role in a global partnership for development beyond 2015, including in the areas of economic development, industrialization, infrastructure development and food security?

Panel discussion 2: How can all forms of cooperation, namely North-South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, as well as ICT for development, be utilized to achieve effective means of implementation for the post-2015 development agenda?

In the Rio+20 outcome document “The Future We Want”, Member States reaffirmed that the means of implementation identified in Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development are indispensable for achieving full and effective translation of sustainable development commitments into tangible sustainable development outcomes. They reiterated that each country has primary responsibility for its own economic and social development and that the role of national policies, domestic

resources and development strategies cannot be overemphasized. Member States also reaffirmed that developing countries need additional resources for sustainable development. They recognized the need for significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources and effective use of financing, in order to promote sustainable development. Member States also recognized that improved participation of civil society depends upon, inter alia, strengthening access to information, building civil society capacity as well as an enabling environment, and that information and communication technology (ICT) is facilitating the flow of information between governments and the public. In this regard, it is essential to work toward improved access to ICT, especially broadband network and services, and bridge the digital divide, recognizing the contribution of international cooperation in this regard.

The means of implementation are an integral component in achieving sustainable development, including trade, financing for sustainable development, capacity building, and development and transfer of environmentally sound technologies. In this regard, global partnership for development has been emphasized as key to unlocking the full potential of sustainable development initiatives. While developing countries still require external support for their domestic sustainable development programmes, their own domestic actions are equally crucial. Special consideration should be given to the needs of countries in special situations, African countries, LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS as well as specific challenges facing the middle-income countries. International development cooperation through a strengthened global partnership for sustainable development is critical.

Countries will need to make every effort to mobilize domestic resources, yet at the same time, there is a vital role, and need, for donor countries to meet their Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments, including through the provision of reliable and timely financial resources. While the fulfilment of all ODA commitments remains critical, it is clear that the financing needs will far outpace public sector resources in many countries. The good news is that estimated financing needs represent only a relatively small portion of global savings. The broader challenge, though, lies in promoting a financial system that can stimulate the reallocation of a small percentage of global savings toward sustainable development.

New and innovative sources of financing will be needed to supplement traditional ODA, and South-South and Triangular Cooperation must be further enhanced as a complement to North-South Cooperation, in order to provide greater opportunities for sustained economic growth. In this sense, the expansion of South-South cooperation is a welcome development. It should not be seen, however, as a substitute for traditional aid flows, but rather as complementary financing and technical resources for development, including because South-South cooperation follows a different rationale, with an emphasis on national ownership, non-conditionality and demand-driven assistance.

Information and communication technologies have the potential to provide new solutions to development challenges, particularly in the context of globalization, and can foster sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development,

competitiveness, access to information and knowledge, poverty eradication and social inclusion that will help expedite the integration of all countries, especially developing countries (in particular the least developed ones), into the global economy. Broadband access networks are rapidly increasing, especially in developed countries. ICTs are a major driver of economic growth, as well as improved productivity, reduced transaction costs and job creation

There are concerns, however, about the growing digital divide in the availability, affordability, quality of access and use of broadband between high-income countries and other regions, with the least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries lagging far behind the rest of the world. The existence of a gender divide as part of the digital divide is also worrisome. While over three quarters of people in the developed world now have access to the internet, more than two thirds of people in the developing world still do not. Globally, 90% of the 1.1 billion households not connected to the Internet are in the developing world. In the developed world, fixed and mobile broadband penetration rates at the beginning of 2014 stood at 27.2% and 74.8% respectively. In the developing world, they stood at 6.1% and 19.8%. These are powerful numbers, but they also demonstrate the extraordinary opportunities that lie ahead.

Governments have a key role to play in the effective use of ICTs in their design of public policies and in the provision of public services responsive to national needs and priorities, including on the basis of a multi-stakeholder approach, to support national development efforts. The important role played by private sector, civil society and technical communities in information and communication technologies are also of the utmost importance. In this sense, in addition to financing by the public sector, financing of information and communication technologies infrastructure by the private sector has come to play a crucial role in all countries.

Discussions should focus on identifying ways to implement policies that promote further progress on development-supportive trade reforms within an open, rules-based multilateral trading system; ensure recommitment by developed countries to meet ODA targets on an agreed timetable; enhance accountability in development cooperation based on agreed principles; mobilize additional financial resources from multiple sources such as remittances, foreign direct investment, institutional and other long-term investors and innovative financing; reduce the transaction costs of remittances; enhancing scientific and technological cooperation involving developing countries and technology transfer to developing countries; strengthen capacity building efforts for developing countries and knowledge sharing and technical cooperation among all countries through North-South, South-South and Triangular cooperation; strengthen capacities for tax-collection, reducing tax evasion; strengthen systems of domestic savings; reduce illicit financial flows; improve efficiency of public spending, reduce corruption and the waste of financial resources; improve access to ICT, especially to broadband network and services; and that contribute to bridge the digital divide.

Issues for consideration/Guiding questions:

- How can the various forms of international cooperation enhance the means of implementation, including trade, financing for sustainable development, capacity building, and development and transfer of environmentally sound technologies?
- What mechanisms are available both nationally and internationally to help increase and improve the effectiveness of official development assistance and its impact in lifting people from extreme poverty, improve health-care, education and food security?
- How can the achievement of existing goals and targets on ICT for development, such as the international commitment to significantly increase access to telecommunication services and strive to provide 100 per cent access to the Internet by 2020 to Least Developed Countries contribute to the post-2015 development agenda?
- How can the post 2015 development agenda integrate the notion of resilience and which specific instruments and forms of cooperation, including through the implementation of the Hyogo Framework of Action for Disaster Risk Reduction, can help safeguard hard-earned development gains?