



**Remarks**

**by**

**H.E. Ambassador John W. Ashe**

**President of the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations**

**General Assembly**

**New York**

**22 September 2013**

**Advancing Regional Recommendations on Post-2015 Development**

**Agenda: A Dialogue between Civil Society, Governments and UN**

**Representatives**

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Honourable Ministers,  
Deputy Secretary General,  
Executive Secretary of ECLAC,  
Assistant-Secretary-General Mohammed  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

This morning, we had a meaningful dialogue and I want to thank you for sharing your thoughts, insights and concerns with me. I very much hope that our discussions also increased our understanding of each other's perspectives.

With the post 2015 development agenda, we have before us a task of great magnitude. Dialogue among all stakeholders will be necessary if we are to reach convergence on a single development framework and a set of goals that adequately meet the needs and aspirations of the diverse members of the human family.

This dialogue is important for two reasons – the first I have already mentioned, it is mutual understanding, recognising that none of us can cross this finish line without the support of the others, precisely because we do share one planet and what impacts one of us – in this interconnected world - affects all of us; the contagion of the crises in food, fuel and finance unequivocally proved that interconnection. The stark reality is that governments do not exist in a vacuum but in the context of business and social sectors where political, economic, social, technological, environmental, scientific and legal factors influence national and international decisions and outcomes. Any genuine and meaningful dialogue on development can only take place when it includes this array of interests and stakeholders and brings them to the table.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To this end, I would also like to thank you for your contributions so far. Over 3000 organisations have engaged in consultations through their regional affiliations to provide feedback on four post-2015 reports submitted to the Secretary-General. The concerns and proposals contained in these reports must now be reflected in our current discussions here in New York and it is my hope that Member States will give them serious consideration.

More than a million citizens have shared their concerns and priorities in public consultations and surveys in an effort to identify priorities for the post-2015 development agenda as seen by the average citizen. It is essential that this new agenda should be shaped by and respond to what people are experiencing on the ground. In that regard, this effort to use the technology to have a citizens' dialogue and to hear and incorporate their views, reflects the efforts by the UN to enhance democratic processes and to give the citizen a broader role within the organisation. What you are witnessing and participating in today is the UN's commitment to a people centred agenda which is built from the ground up. Your presence here and your commitment to this process will provide a substantive contribution to the General Assembly Special Event on 25 September, when we lay the roadmap for the post-2015 development agenda, building upon the successes and gaps of the MDGs.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

The second reason why this dialogue is important is that it relates to the MDGs which were conceived to accelerate the rate and level of development throughout the world. It must be conceded that the objectives of the eight MDGs have not been fully attained, nor have the targets for the goals had equal levels of implementation. Nonetheless, much has been achieved and billions of people, particularly across Asia have been lifted out of poverty while the lives of countless others in the developing world have been beneficially transformed. This has been achieved with the active engagement of civil society which embraced the MDGs and their capacity for development.

Building on the achievements of the MDGs, at Rio+20, governments agreed to the development of a set of SDGs on which an Open Working Group is diligently working and next meets in November. Just as we see the MDGs as part of the history of the last 13+ years, we must now come to see that the SDGs are part of the future. Together member-states, civil society and all stakeholders must now craft a post 2015 development agenda that is relevant for our times, fills the gaps not met by the MDGs, includes some of the new and emerging challenges and strategic planks and themes of development, while considering the appropriate institutions for delivery.

The past is relevant to the future. Professor Rex Nettleford of Jamaica makes the point that you cannot drive a car unless, from time to time you use the rear view mirror and take cognisance of what you see there. That ladies and gentlemen is precisely where we now find ourselves, glimpsing at the past, heading toward the future and a new destination, while learning from what we did and did not accomplish in the past and why. Let us take our vehicle forward safely to our new destination.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The next session of the General Assembly will largely be dedicated to an exploration of issues that will ultimately play a role in the new agenda we adopt. To further this dialogue, I will convene a number of events, one of which will be a High-Level event on the contributions of women, the young and civil society to the post-2015 development agenda. I look forward to your engagement and involvement over the course of the session, as UN Member States begin designing the agenda and furthermore, in the implementation process where our collective commitment to bettering our world will truly become manifest.

I thank you kindly for your participation today and look forward to hearing the outcomes of today's meeting and seeing its impact on the Special Event of the 25th.

Please let me wish you very constructive and fruitful deliberations and now offer the floor to our esteemed Deputy Secretary-General Mr. Jan Eliasson, to whose views both you and I are equally keen to listen.