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**Expert Group Meeting in Preparation for the 2015 and 2016 ECOSOC Cycles of the
UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**

New York, 4 December 2014

Introductory Remarks by

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to this Expert Group Meeting for the preparation of the 2015 and 2016 Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) cycles.

We are at the threshold of a new post-2015 development agenda. We are about to make the transition from the MDG-based to an SDG-based development agenda. These two cycles mark a critical transition.

As we are all aware from our experience dealing with intergovernmental processes, such major transitions are not always smooth and we can expect a few bumps along the way. The new development agenda is ambitious and the issues it endeavours to address are wide-ranging.

You will recall that General Assembly resolutions 67/290 and 68/1 have clearly defined the role of the Council in promoting integrated and coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of all

major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields, and in achieving a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

As a result of these resolutions, a new institutional structure consisting of ECOSOC, HLPF and GA must address the sustainable development challenges of a post-2015 world and guide the transition from an MDGs-based to an SDGs-based development agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a first step in guiding the transition to the new post-2015 development framework, the 2015 ECOSOC will focus on the theme of *“Managing the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals: What will it take”*.

The aligned theme of the 2015 High-level Political Forum under the auspices of ECOSOC is *“Strengthening integration, implementation and review - the HLPF after 2015”*.

The ECOSOC system will consider its theme throughout the 2015 session, which will culminate in the ECOSOC High-level Segment in July. During the High-level Segment, in order to provide food for thought for Member States in managing the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs, a report of Secretary-General to the Council on its 2015 theme will offer forward-looking analysis.

That report will focus on five thematic areas. These areas correspond to the five working sessions that been planned over the course of the next two days.

At the first session, later this morning, we will discuss the implications and application of such a new universal and more integrated development model, particularly as it aims to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. In the concept note before you, you will see a brief attempt to “unpack” the concept of universality and its applicability. How universality would ultimately be defined in the post-2015 negotiations will have important and practical implications on indicators, data, policies, institutions, and resource requirements. Better understanding of this concept, and what it would take to realize it would thus be critical to generate consensus around a manageable and implementable new development agenda.

The second session, this afternoon, will deal with institutional structures and behaviours for transformation. As was agreed in Rio, the new agenda should include all three pillars of sustainable development, and be underpinned by equity, human rights, good governance and rule of law, and access to technology. But realizing this vision entails a new way of doing business to find sustainable solutions beyond the current capacities of individual countries, institutions, and actors. It thus requires new “behaviour” – it needs to be enabled by approaches that recognize the complexity of the current developmental reality. Clearly, it will also need to address challenges beyond the traditional North-South divide. It must also manage difficult trade-offs between different policy areas, and between global, regional and national levels. Therefore, this second session will address what “transformational behaviour” will be needed to ensure that governments, the UN system, and other partners, respond to the universal agenda to deliver results to global citizens.

The third and final session today will build on this challenge. The credibility of the new agenda would ultimately depend on its ability to deliver. Thus, policy frameworks founded on the SDGs should encompass a broader range of issues than those addressed by the MDGs and account for more complex inter-linkages, spill-overs and trade-offs at different policy levels. Managing all these aspects will require a highly integrated approach to policymaking that accounts for complex policy nexuses such as gender equality, economic growth and employment, and promotes synergies and complementarities. The session will review some of the options in this area.

Tomorrow morning we will start with the fourth session, a round table discussion on multi-stakeholder partnership. We will aim to get a better understanding the specific roles and responsibilities of different actors in different development contexts. We will all agree that the role of stakeholders in the normative work of the United Nations has become indispensable. It will thus be critical that effective partnerships that go beyond traditional resources and funding modalities will also be part of the implementation of the new agenda. This session will thus address on the ongoing debate on the global partnership for development, on and the emerging distinction between global partnership and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

The fifth and final session of our meeting will be on monitoring and review, which will be critical for the successful implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. For monitoring to be truly effective, concerted efforts must be made at the national, regional and global levels. To start with, as the new development agenda is universal and inclusive, each country will need to implement, measure and evaluate it, in accordance with its own national development priorities. Since their launch in 2007, National Voluntary Presentations (NVPs) have established themselves as important platforms for monitoring and reviewing national level progress towards the achievement of the United Nations development agenda. The NVPs continue to grow and will be evolving, beginning in 2016, into national reviews, being presented at the High-level Political Forum. We must ensure that national reporting to the HLPF, under the auspices of ECOSOC, becomes an integral and central component of a post-2015 monitoring and review framework.

Of course, national development efforts should be complemented and supported at the regional and global levels. At the global level, the Economic and Social Council system, including the HLPF under its auspices, provides a platform for bringing together all stakeholders and advancing an integrated approach to a unified and universal agenda.

As we start to transition the monitor and review function of ECOSOC into a next phase, I would be interested to hear, throughout these two days, your ideas on how we can move forward in the transition to a sustainable development agenda and its implementation.

DESA stands ready to support ECOSOC and the HLPF.
