

10th Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals

31 March - 4 April 2014, New York

Opening Session

Following the opening remarks and presentation of a definitional note on goals and targets by the Co-Chairs, a number of Member States made general comments on the methodology to define goals and targets. Many countries commended the Co-Chairs for their work to revise the focus areas document, identify interlinkages between focus areas and propose eight clusters of focus areas while cautioning that the proposed eight clusters and revised document should not prejudice the final outcome of the OWG deliberations in terms of goals and targets.

Countries highlighted elements that they deemed were not adequately addressed in the revised focus area document. These elements included: the Rio principles including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities; needs of countries in special situations including countries in Africa, small island developing states (SIDS), least developed countries (LDCs), and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs); balanced targets for both developing and developed countries; means of implementation including finance, capacity building and technology transfer; global partnership for sustainable development; sustainable consumption and production; climate change; energy; disaster risk reduction and resilience; human rights and a human rights-based approach; gender equality and women's empowerment; culture, and linkages with the ongoing intergovernmental processes. Several countries indicated the importance of identifying targets with the highest level of impacts and interlinkages to achieve sustainable development and using indicators to address the remaining issues.

Some representatives cautioned against over-clustering issues, which could potentially result in the loss of meaningful actions and targets required for sustainable development. Several speakers expressed divergent views on Focus Area 12 on "Promote equality", 14 on "Promote sustainable consumption and production", and 19 on "Peaceful and non-violent societies, rule of law and capable institutions" as to whether these issues should be addressed as target areas or as cross-cutting enablers.

Cluster 1 – Poverty eradication; promote equality

On "poverty eradication", many countries underscored that poverty eradication should be incorporated as an overarching priority for the SDGs and to address the unfinished business of the MDGs. A number of representatives highlighted the importance of leaving no one behind and proposed to integrate poverty eradication also as targets in other areas in addition to its stand-alone goal. Some countries underlined the importance of natural resource management to eradicate poverty.

On "promote equality", several countries called for a greater focus on the most marginalized and vulnerable groups. Some representatives expressed divergent views on "promote equality" as to: i) whether it should be addressed as a separate goal, a target and or as a cross-cutting enabler; and ii) whether it should address inequalities at both national and international levels or only at the international level.

The document with "Focus areas" should have consistent terminology, based on existing internationally agreed definitions. Most countries supported having a single goal; "eradicate poverty in all its forms by 2030" was echoed by several speakers. There were many, often overlapping proposals with regard to numerical targets. Countries underlined the interconnection of poverty with other areas, education, food security, health, energy, climate change; unfortunately, ecosystems were mentioned only by a few countries and there was a call to reflect the need of mountain peoples, often among the poorest. All countries agreed that poverty is the multidimensional and overarching issue; however, how to reflect it in the outcome document is yet to be seen. The possibility of having one goal on eradicating poverty but many poverty eradication-related targets spread across all future SDGs was mentioned. On inequalities, there was a

general suggestion to follow the human rights-based approach – apply it to all areas and future goals and targets. Countries see it more as a cross-sectoral issue rather than a single-goal theme. Several speakers underlined the importance of data, adequate indicators and the need for comprehensive methodology to measure progress towards SDGs.

Cluster 2 – Gender equality and women’s empowerment; Education; Employment and decent work for all; Health and population dynamics

On all focus areas of the cluster, in general, Member States considered that the listing of areas for consideration was appropriate and that those items could very well serve as individual targets or elements composing targets. Regarding the gender equality and women’s empowerment focus area, there was strong support for a stand-alone SDG on gender equality and women’s empowerment, and suggestions to mainstream gender equality and women’s empowerment into all SDGs were also made. As far as health goes, it was proposed that universal health coverage be not a target but a goal in itself; as for employment and decent work and capacity building for youth, fighting unemployment and wide availability of job placement offices and vocational schools were emphasized; on that domain some countries mentioned the need for a green economy and green jobs. Finally, it was mentioned by many that education is one of the “unfinished businesses” of the MDGs; the SDGs should therefore complement and be more ambitious in that domain.

Besides the thematic discussion, it became evident in this cluster the different approach that Member States may give to the elaboration and implementation of some of the SDGs. While there were countries defending a rights-based approach on all of this cluster’s matters, others emphasized that the issues at hand can only be dealt with as far as their developmental aspects go, i.e., excluding from the intergovernmental discussion on targets/goals those components that are considered of a national/cultural/social nature. Moreover, on several occasions the danger of proposing prescriptive targets, which would not be able to be implemented by all Member States, was reminded.

As examples, regarding lowering the number of incidents of domestic violence, it was said that the matter cannot be the object of a target since national authorities just get involved after the fact; however, national authorities may raise awareness of the problem through educational campaigns and this will contribute to lowering the number of incidents. On another occasion, it was mentioned that the emphasis shouldn’t be on women and girls, but on women and children.

Another issue raised by some Member States is that the discussion seemed not to be focusing on what was agreed in Rio + 20 and other international fora.

Cluster 3 – Water and sanitation; Sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition

While many delegates recognized the interlinkages between the issues of water and agriculture and food security, there was broad support for stand-alone goals on both of these focal areas.

On focus area 2, **Sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition**, key issues highlighted included: access to affordable, adequate, safe and nutritious food; ending/eliminating hunger, malnutrition and stunting; increasing agricultural productivity; promoting sustainable agriculture practices, including strengthening resilience and adaptability of farming systems to climate change; improving water efficiency in agriculture, and the key role of smallholders, family farmers, women, indigenous peoples and local communities in agriculture. Key challenges identified included: the need to reduce post-harvest crop losses and food waste; the need to remove harmful agricultural subsidies (which were seen as barriers to sustainable agriculture in developing countries); the need for improved access to credit and markets; the need to address governance and land tenure in developing sustainable land use policies; and means of implementation including capacity building, investment, and research and development on sustainable “high yielding”, “drought resistant”, “climate smart” agricultural technologies. In addition to these general areas of convergence, some

delegates called for greater emphasis on DLDD issues (Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought) including the target of a “land-degradation neutral world by 2030.” Several delegates referenced FAO’s stat that global food production would need to increase 60% by 2050 in order to feed growing populations, as well as the voluntary guidelines¹ developed by FAO’s Committee on World Food Security. Ecosystem approaches and the need for biodiversity protection were also highlighted by some delegates.

On focus area 6, **Water and sanitation**, key issues highlighted included: ensuring universal/equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water and adequate sanitation; reduction/elimination of water pollution; protection and restoration of watershed areas including mountains, watersheds and wetlands; improving water-use efficiency and wastewater recycling, and the need for implementation of integrated water resources management at all levels, as appropriate. Key challenges identified centred on means of implementation, especially investment in infrastructure for water and sanitation systems, access to water harvesting technologies and capacity building. Several delegates noted the importance of disaster risk reduction in relation to water management. Some delegates objected to the term “water-secure world”, and alternative formulations were proposed. The issue of a rights-based approach was seen as problematic by some delegates, while others referenced “The human right to water and sanitation²”. Some delegates emphasized the need to include hygiene as a target, referencing WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) programs. Some delegations flagged the issue of trans-boundary co-operation on water management as being a politically sensitive issue, with national sovereignty implications.

Cluster 4 - Economic growth; Industrialization; Infrastructure; Energy

Member States considered that the themes belonging to this cluster do complement each other. It was also mentioned by several speakers that this area was not dealt with by the MDGs, so the new SDGs present an opportunity to address issues which can contribute to the eradication of poverty, gender equality and creation of jobs, among others. Moreover, some speakers mentioned the need for the creation of a global enabling environment to promote sustained, sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Many elements of a traditional North-South debate were present in the various interventions. There were some innovative perspectives, though, such as the promotion of economic growth in harmony with Mother Earth; similarly, it was emphasized that economic growth should not happen in detriment to ecosystems and should have human beings as the focus. Therefore targets related to economic growth should have environmental conservation and social development components.

Some speakers mentioned that economic growth should be the object of a goal and targets should include elements related to industrialization and infrastructure. It seemed consensual though that energy should be a stand-alone goal with specific targets.

While elements related to climate change were mentioned as possible targets on all four focus areas, the issue of fossil fuels and a suggestion that appears on the focus paper regarding the phasing out of subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption was not well received by developing countries which are fossil fuel producers; it was suggested instead that subsidies for all environmentally damaging activities should be phased out. Moreover, it was reminded that fossil fuel production can also be unsustainable and that the issue should be tackled not only at the consumption end but also in its production and trade.

Finally, transportation was singled out as a matter that might merit a target on its own.

¹ Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security

² A/RES/64/292

Major Groups and other Stakeholders

Major Groups and other stakeholders made interventions and proposals on all clusters. Those relevant proposals include Peaceful and non-violent societies, rule of law and capable institutions, which would expand the definition of conflicts to include conflicts over natural resources.

On cluster 6 (Ecosystems and biodiversity) the Forest Stewardship Council presented five proposed targets on behalf of NGOs, indigenous peoples and women:

1. Ensuring rights for those most directly affected by deteriorating ecosystem systems;
2. Recognition of indigenous rights in conserved territories and areas;
3. Recognition of three Aichi targets for 2020 (5) – halving the rate of loss of all natural habitats including forests, and reducing degradation and fragmentation; (7) – sustainable management of areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry; (15) – enhancing ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks through conservation and restoration and contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification;
4. Focus on demand management;
5. Focus on sustainable production and consumption, where demand for forest products and biomass exceed levels of supply and priority is given to functional uses with local livelihoods protected.

Cluster 5 – Sustainable cities and human settlements; Promote Sustainable Consumption and Production; Climate

In regard to “sustainable cities and human settlements”, there was a broad recognition of the need to have a specific SDG on this issue, although some countries felt that separating urbanization and rural development may undermine the efforts to achieve sustainability for all. Many highlighted the following as critical components for eventual targets: improving the situation of the slum dwellers; abating air pollution; building resilient cities against the adverse impact of climate change and natural hazards; provision of clean, sustainable and affordable transportation; environmentally sound management of chemicals, sewage, wastes and water treatment facility, as well as recycling and re-use of materials; ensuring provision of sanitation services, and sustainable land use planning. Some raised the difficulties in measuring certain targets on the subject, such as enhancing social cohesion.

Regarding sustainable consumption and production patterns - SCP, many consider this an area for a dedicated sustainable development goal; others view SCP as a cross-cutting issue, though. In addition, there were some speakers who believe that SCP should be merged with other focal areas such as Infrastructure, Energy, and Ecosystems and Biodiversity.

Regarding Infrastructure, Energy, and Ecosystems and Biodiversity, a specific suggestion was made to merge those focal areas, to be titled “Natural resources and Ecosystems”, with specific provisions on promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns, moreover, targets under such a merged new focal area were proposed, including reversing the deforestation trend, as well as valuation of biodiversity and other ecosystems contributions. Many developing countries highlighted that it is the responsibility of developed countries to take the lead in promoting sustainable consumption and production.

Implementation of the Ten-Year Programme of Work on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, improving energy efficiency and increased use of renewable energy sources, clean transportation, removal of trade barriers for developing countries to clean technologies and commodities, increasing efficiency in sustainable use and management of natural resources, ensuring sufficiency of resources, reducing waste in food production and consumption, sound management of chemicals and wastes, provision of necessary financial resources and technology to developing countries, and promoting social and environmental corporate responsibility were mentioned.

On “climate”, apart from one call for a specific SDG on “climate change”, the speakers referred to the cross-cutting nature of “climate change” and stressed specific targets on this matter should be integrated under several SDGs. Countries highlighted some issues for targets under “climate change” including the interlinkages of climate change, desertification, land degradation and loss of biodiversity and deforestation. Potential areas for targets under “climate change” include issues such as: building green and low carbon economy; providing relevant technologies to developing countries; increasing use of renewable energy and improving energy efficiency; enhancing the capacity of developing countries including LDCs and SIDS to confront the adverse impacts of climate change/ weather-related extreme events/natural hazards; investing in clean energy technologies, and promoting sustainable consumption and production practices. One major point raised was that any action to combat the adverse impact of climate change should address mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation at the same time.

There was strong voice for the OWG not to prejudge the outcome of ongoing discussions under the UNFCCC nor to re-invent or violate the provisions of the Convention. The application of the Rio Principles, in particular CBDR, was emphasized by many developing countries, while some developed countries considered that CBDR is applicable only to the MEAs and not to the SDGs.

Cluster 6 – Conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, oceans and seas; Ecosystems and biodiversity

On “**conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, oceans and seas**”, there was a broad consensus for a stand-alone goal on the subject building on the work of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). A number of speakers highlighted the linkages with other issues, including: food security and nutrition; sustainable consumption and production; climate; disaster risk reduction, and ecosystems and biodiversity, among others.

Options for targets, *inter alia*, included: sustainable use of marine resources; reducing marine pollution and debris; enhancing resilience of coastal communities; halting destruction of marine habitat including ocean acidification; addressing destructive fishing practices, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; encouraging sustainable fisheries, and sustainable tourism.

Some representatives expressed reservations to consider protecting marine resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction, to avoid prejudging the outcome of the ongoing work on the subject by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. A few countries cautioned against the establishment of Marine Protected Areas due to lack of international consensus on the issue.

On “**ecosystems and biodiversity**”, while there was a broad support for a stand-alone goal on the subject, several countries stressed the need to take a balanced approach to reflect social and economic aspects in Focus Area 17 as it is currently oriented towards environmental conservation. Some speakers proposed ideas to reformulate the title of the focus area, including: addition of forests to the title; clarification to specify terrestrial or land ecosystems; and expansion to include environment, ecosystems and biodiversity.

Regarding forests, some Member States indicated that the current focus areas document does not contain sufficient reference to forests despite their significant benefits and contributions to achieve sustainable development. Some proposed a stand-alone goal on forests. A number of countries supported forest-related targets, including promoting sustainable forest management and addressing deforestation. Others proposed a goal or targets related to ecosystems and/or natural resources.

Regarding biodiversity, some countries called for a stand-alone goal on biodiversity. Several speakers proposed to include some elements of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets as targets.

Many highlighted linkages between the subject and other focus areas, including: poverty eradication; sustainable agriculture; food security and nutrition; water and sanitation; energy; gender equality and

women's empowerment; education; sustainable consumption and production; climate, and oceans and seas, among others.

Options for targets, *inter alia*, included: promoting sustainable forest management; addressing deforestation; restoring degraded forests; protecting mountain ecosystems; restoring degraded wetlands; addressing land degradation; halting loss of biodiversity; protecting threatened species; stopping poaching and trafficking of endangered species; maintaining the genetic diversity; ensuring fair and equitable benefit sharing of genetic resources; participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in decision making and in benefit sharing of forests and other assets, and promoting and protecting traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples.

Other proposals included: addition of the Bonn Challenge as a target to restore 150 million hectares of lost forests and degraded lands worldwide by 2020 and streamlining forest-related targets into one target. Some countries cautioned against the inclusion of a target on a land-degradation-neutral world due to lack of agreement under the UNCCD process.

Other forest-related issues highlighted included: the role of forests for employment; integration of natural resources into national and local development planning processes; management of natural resources at the landscape level; role of trade as a development catalyst; education and awareness raising of values of sustainable management practices; strengthening the forest governance framework, and linkage with disaster risk reduction.

Cluster 7 - Means of Implementation/Global partnership for sustainable development

The debate primarily focused on maintaining MOI as a stand-alone goal versus creating a section for MOI under each target (with specific, time-bound and numerical elements), as implementation for various targets will vary greatly. A few countries and groups of countries put forth the idea of MOI as a stand-alone goal **as well as** under each target. There was also a concrete suggestion to divide the stand-alone goal of MOI into two categories: (1) thematic and (2) procedural.

The issue of common but differentiated responsibilities was also a great focus in the debate, with a strong push to apply CBDR to the SDGs. Opponents only accept CBDR as it relates to global environmental degradation and not as an overarching or guiding principle on SDGs in general. The concern was in linking CBDR to aid policy and ODA.

The amount of focus on North-South versus South-South cooperation in the goal was also discussed. Many countries opposed the language in its current state, as the concerns were that South-South cooperation would be put forth as a substitute for North-South cooperation. However, it was generally agreed that South-South cooperation can be strengthened with, for example, increased institutional and financial support for south-south cooperation within the UN system, including rules and procedures that take into account the characteristics of south-south cooperation.

In this regard, there were calls to strengthen the role of the UN in MOI at the intergovernmental level, as well as a call for ODA commitments to be followed-through and scaled-up. There was also the view that MOI should go beyond finance, capacity building, technology, trade, and registry of commitments to also include international enabling environments with institutions that respond coherently and effectively, as well as a need to simplify cumbersome application procedures in bilateral and multilateral financing sources.

Data and reporting, in this regard, were also raised as an issue to assist with building economic and institutional capacities. It was suggested that capacity-building for monitoring, evaluating and reporting in terms of data needs to be included at the indicator level.

There were various views submitted on the appropriateness of addressing national versus international matters in the MOI, with some countries calling for explicit reference to national, regional and international

levels rather than the more broad term 'at all levels'. Many views called for a focus on national ownership over the development process.

In terms of the private sector, some views were expressed for concrete commitments or targets to mobilize adequate and predictable financing, as well as the need to promote and incentivize their engagement.

Distributional equity, as well as rapid, sustained and inclusive economic growth were also stressed in various interventions, with foci on inclusive and equitable trade; improving trade conditions for developing countries, and the development of an open, rule-based, predictable trading and financial system. It was further proposed that additional bullets be added to capture these.

In terms of technology transfer, it was proposed that a mechanism is necessary, in particular for clean and environmentally sound technologies, and also at the regional level.

Member States emphasized the need to renew, update and further develop the Global Partnership for Development. Diaspora remittances, North-South Cooperation, South-South cooperation, and new and innovative mechanisms were all highlighted, among others, as necessary sources of financing for sustainable development.

Cluster 8 - Peaceful and non-violent societies, rule of law and capable institutions

The final cluster on "Peaceful and Non-Violent Societies, Rule of Law and Capable Institutions" was also discussed. A number of Member States advocated for a stand-alone goal on these themes; others argued that it should be entirely integrated in other goals, as the themes are "enablers" of development rather than sources of development in themselves, and are largely within the scope of national sovereignty. Other Member States yet recommended that the cluster be split into two separate goals, namely, one on "peaceful societies" and one on the "rule of law". Several Member States pointed out the link between these themes and environment-related topics such as resilience of societies to natural catastrophes; the ability to manage natural resources sustainably, and the relationship between peace and clear land tenure and access to natural resources.

Closing of the Session and the Way Forward

Co-Chair Ambassador Macharia Kamau concluded the 10th session of the OWG by reminding delegations that the clusters being discussed were about aspirational goals rather than a document to be negotiated. He said that a chapeau would be added, but probably not until June. Amb. Kamau then explained that the document would be updated with all the views expressed during the week, and a new version would be available on Friday, 18 April. Consultations will then take place on the weeks of 5 May, 16 June and 14 July, with the aim of submitting the final version in August 2014.

More information on the 10th Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals can be found at <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/owg10.html>