

Briefing on the 12th session of the OWG

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On 3 June 2014, the Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the United Nations hosted a briefing on the upcoming 12th session of the OWG. Ambassador Csaba Korosi of Hungary, one of the OWG co-chairs, answered questions from delegations on what to expect from the P2015 process moving forward.

1. Where does the process stand?

- In his opening remarks on the current status of the P2015 agenda, Ambassador Korosi noted that the process can be divided into two parts. The first is the current goal setting phase, which is intended to provide answers to the question ‘What?’ What are the elements of the new development agenda?
- Later in the year, starting from autumn to early winter 2014, the process will begin to consider the ‘How’: how do we implement the goals and targets that are being agreed upon?
- The Ambassador noted that although the OWG is entering the final part of the goal setting phase (with only ten formal working days of the OWG remaining), it is by no means the end of the P2015 process, and in fact it is still only the beginning. There are still a number of ongoing processes, as well as the inter-governmental negotiations still to come.

2. The OWG zero draft

- As expected, the zero draft document includes an extra goal on equality, meaning there are now 17 proposed goals (though Ambassador Korosi characterized it as 16 + 1 – with Means of Implementation being more of a ‘toolkit’).
- There are some 212 targets (including 166 under the 16 thematic goals and 46 Means of Implementation elements). It was noted, not for the first time, that the challenge will be to shrink the number of proposals to a more manageable number of measurable elements.
- In that respect, Ambassador Korosi stated that there are many targets that don’t look like targets, but that are rather political aspirations or statements. However there are still a number of areas that can be merged or integrated, in order to help reduce the overall number.
- There are some issues that don’t have a specific home, and that have been addressed by being ‘mainstreamed’ throughout, including human rights; youth and family issues; indigenous rights; people living with disability; **migrants**; LDCs; disaster risk reduction; financial inclusion; culture and infrastructure.
- Although climate change remains in the document, it is an area on which there is no real agreement. There was no overwhelming constituency in the OWG prepared to defend or remove a climate goal. The co-chairs therefore have a

dedicated goal on climate, encompassing five targets, as well as targets under a number of other goals, demonstrating options for mainstreaming. It is up to Member States to determine which of those options they prefer.

3. OWG informal discussions (9-11 June)

- The co-chairs hope that the informal session of the OWG will offer an opportunity to hear Member States' initial impressions on the OWG zero draft.
- Delegations will be asked to go through the document goal by goal, not as part of a drafting process, but as a guided debate on the draft document and how governments perceive the document or believe it could be improved.
- The next formal session of the OWG, beginning on 16 June, will be the point at which delegations will need to begin to agree on final versions of goal and target language. With only ten days remaining, it is essential that the goal framework and the guiding chapeau be finalized.

4. Question and answer session

Following these introductory comments, Ambassador Korosi responded to a number of questions from the floor:

Is there an optimum number of goals? (Turkey)

- There is a difference between an optimum number and an acceptable number. If we asked technical experts what an optimum number might be, they might say ten to twelve. However, this may not be acceptable to Member States, particularly when many are seeking to incorporate their priority issues in the agenda, which might require more goals.
- For the co-chairs, the 'optimum' number would be whatever number is accepted by Member States. That said, 17 is probably still too many.
- In thinking about this question, it is also important to consider how the agenda could be implemented. 212 targets, each with say 5 indicators, would mean there would be over one thousand elements to measure and report on, which would be extremely difficult.

Elaborate on the approach to mainstreaming human rights (Ireland)

- People have a tendency to focus only on their 'pet' issues when looking at the draft document, but it is important instead to read the document as a whole. We need to begin thinking not about specific words appearing in the document but about what its overall impact will be.
- Human rights is a case in point, and a good example of how we must understand the idea of 'mainstreaming'. For example, the phrase 'human rights' only appears in the document once, but this does not mean that the framework neglects this issue. You will find issues such as equality, non-discrimination, civil and political rights, gender equality, child rights, disability, indigenous rights, **migrants**, and other economic and social rights in many targets across the framework.

What role can the UN system play in helping Member States to measure and monitor progress? (PNG)

- Delegates need to consider what awaits all of us over the next year and a half. The current phase we are in of setting goals and targets is really about outlining a broad vision and setting timeframes.



- The indicators are where measurement issues will really come into play, and that is a discussion that will begin later in 2014.
- In the meantime, there are a number of parallel processes that are all intended to inform thinking on the new agenda, how it will be financed and how it will be monitored. These include the OWG, the Financing Committee, and the discussions on technical cooperation and partnerships.
- These elements will be synthesized into the Secretary-General's report due later this year, which will form the basis of the ongoing discussions.

How are peaceful societies and means of implementation being dealt with? (Nepal)

- These are the two areas that are likely to evoke the most discussion. There are still diverse views on how to deal with these issues in the agenda.
- On means of implementation, there are some countries that seem to want to persist – although they don't say it this way – with an MDG type agenda focusing on a donor / recipient, North / South paradigm. Others say that they don't want to determine specific means of implementation now because it is too early and complicated from a technical point of view.
- On peaceful societies, some countries perceive this particular goal as focusing on peace and security. Those that see it in this light also believe that issues of that nature fall within the competence of bodies such as the Security Council, and that they should therefore be kept out of the new development framework. Others see it as more of a governance issue, noting that if we want to see the goals and targets fully implemented, we need strong and effective (national) institutions in order to do so.