

Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals Summary of 11th Session

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Between the 5th and the 9th of May 2014, the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals convened its eleventh formal session.

1. General outline:

This session of the OWG saw the two co-chairs continue to press delegations to provide specific, concrete proposals on goal and target language, and attempt to reduce the number of Focus Areas and targets to a more manageable number.

The co-chairs emphasized a number of times that governments should resist the temptation to add more content and that, if delegations wished to do so, that they should propose where other issues could be taken out in exchange. It was noted that the process would increasingly need to become a zero sum game. Despite this, there are still somewhere in the order of 150 targets, and the next document is likely to have even more as a result of the number of specific proposals put forward by delegations throughout the week.

Generally, support for the draft document remained high, although some governments began to express concerns about various areas.

a. *Equality*

The first clear message noted by the co-chairs was that the issue of equality needs to be revisited. It is expected that the focus area on equality will reappear in the next iteration of the document, reflecting concerns expressed by a number of delegations about its removal.

b. *Climate change*

Although there was a general view that climate change should be mainstreamed throughout the framework and should not become a stand-alone goal, the co-chairs felt that there is still some conversation to be had. Those most emphatic about keeping climate change were only ready to be flexible if climate is mainstreamed across goals in a manner they find acceptable. There are those who think climate should not be a stand-alone goal, and those that think it should be no matter what, including SIDS countries. Climate change will remain in the next iteration, but the co-chairs undertook to spend a bit more effort to streamline and mainstream climate in the other areas as well.

c. Means of implementation

FA15 was an area that attracted a great deal of conversation and a large number of proposals. However, there are many diverse ideas on how to deal with this area and therefore a lack of clarity on how to proceed. Apart from the discussions on whether it should be a stand-alone goal as well as a mainstreamed issue, there is no clear direction to the discussions. Some delegations emphasized the importance of global partnerships, suggesting that this issue be ‘elevated’ somewhat so that it is given more prominence.

d. Peaceful and non-violent societies

This focus area continues to be the most contentious aspect of the discussions. Not only are delegations divided on whether or not this focus area should be included, but there are also a number of alternative views on how it should be characterized. Although it initially encompassed issues associated with conflict, it now appears to be focused more in terms of addressing trans-national and domestic crime.

2. Migration:

As with the previous two sessions of the OWG, migration has continued to receive a good amount of visibility throughout the week. Although migration was mentioned in a few different contexts, both directly and indirectly, four broad themes emerged in the discussions:

a. Emphasizing migrant rights to ensure ‘no one is left behind’

A number of countries highlighted migrant rights as a broad cross-cutting issue in a number of areas, including in ensuring migrants (and other vulnerable groups) have access to health, education and employment, and are taken into account in efforts to address poverty and inequality. In some cases, delegations did this by crafting targets specifically referring to migrants and other vulnerable groups. In others, they noted the importance of disaggregated data. For example:

- **Australia** (for the Netherlands and UK) noted that in order to ensure that the new agenda leaves no one behind, targets should be met by all relevant social and income groups. Inequalities can be addressed by integrating measures throughout the framework such as empowering and inclusion of marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples, minorities, **migrants, refugees and IDPs**, persons with disabilities, older persons, children and youth.
- **Nicaragua** (for Brazil) stated that in order to promote equality, there is need to address the vulnerabilities of groups such as women, indigenous, minorities, **migrants, refugees**, persons with disabilities, older persons, children and youth, as well as discrimination based on race, ethnicity or age. In this regard, Nicaragua suggested the following target: “by 2030 to promote economic, social, political and environmental inclusion of poor and vulnerable groups, including women, indigenous, minorities, migrants, refugees, persons with disabilities, older persons, children and youth”.
- **Mexico** (for Peru) stated that the OWG and the post-2015 agenda must incorporate the principle of equality and non-discrimination, with the aim of progressively reducing disparities among marginalized groups such as migrants. In that

respect, they noted that they could not imagine an inclusive agenda that would only address the development outcomes of nationals or citizens. Migrants have to be considered in the design of universal goals in the areas of health, education, urban development, agriculture and employment. Migrants and their families should be allowed access to appropriate, affordable and quality health care and to a fair and unhindered education. The new agenda should also promote decent work for migrants, both in the country of origin and destination, and also promote non-discrimination in the workplace.

- **Italy** (for Spain and Turkey) advocated for a specific target in the poverty eradication focus area paying particular attention to the most marginalized groups; those experiencing the most severe forms of deprivation and being the most likely to be poor or to fall below the poverty line including vulnerable women, **migrants**, youth, people with disabilities, minority groups among others. In the focus area related to gender equality and women's empowerment, this group also proposed amendments to target a) along the lines of: "by 2030 implement policies that ensure women's equal participation and empowerment at all levels of decision making; and end all forms of discrimination in law, policies and practices against women of all ages, in order to ensure access to justice to women and girls and in particular to those belonging to vulnerable groups such as **migrants** and disabled". In the area of economic growth, employment and agriculture, this group supported a target on the promotion of decent employment, following ILO's agenda, with a suitable social protection system with focus on the most marginalized including **migrant workers**. The group suggested specific language along the lines of: "protect the rights of all workers, **including migrant workers**, especially by means of social dialogue and in compliance with ILO fundamental rights at work". In the area of sustainable cities and human settlements, the group suggested adding a target related to the specific needs of vulnerable groups, such as women, disabled, and especially **migrants**, as most of the cities are still under the pressure of migration. They proposed the following language: "Address the specific needs of vulnerable groups, such as women, children, disabled and migrants who live in slums and suburban areas". It was also noted that cities must adapt to migration flows through the provision of necessary shelters and basic services.
- **Poland** (for Romania) noted that equality is a fundamental objective which was called and emphasized throughout the process and should be mainstreamed across all focus areas. Eliminating discrimination and marginalization of all kind means setting targets and indicators that measure the actual access to services and goods by targeted groups such as women, children, persons with disabilities or **migrants**.
- **Switzerland** (for France and Germany) highlighted that references to gender, the poorest and most marginalized, persons with disabilities or **migrants** are fundamental. They suggested that these references serve to orient the definition of **indicators which should be based on disaggregated data**. In order to ensure that this is taken forward, this group proposed rewording the title of the goal to read: "Provide equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all".
- **Croatia** (for Bulgaria): to make sure that growth is inclusive and it reduces poverty and inequality we have to pay special attention to youth unemployment, participation of women in the labor force, elimination of gender-based and other forms of labor market discrimination, including against persons with disabilities, **migrants** and others; providing support for medium- and small-sized enterprises; ensuring education for all.
- **Sweden** noted that promoting freedom from violence is a way of addressing the most vulnerable populations and situations and ensuring that no one is left behind. In that respect, they suggested that focus area 16 (peaceful and non-violent societies) should include a target to "Strengthen the rule of law, with a focus on protection of the rights of the most vulnerable, including **refugees and internally displaced persons**".

b. Highlighting the need for a dedicated target on migration

A number of countries emphasized the importance of including a target on migration. However, there were alternative proposals for how such a target should be integrated in the framework, the most common being a move to either economic growth, employment and infrastructure, or to means of implementation and global partnerships:

- **PNG** (for Nauru and Palau, Timor Leste and Pacific SIDS) prioritized, in the context of FA16 on peaceful societies, target (e) on ‘planned and managed migration policies’. They noted however, that this target would be better framed by focusing on the issue of displaced people from all forms of shocks, including: natural disasters, conflict, climate change and other social, economic or environmental disturbances.
- **Brazil** proposed that the target on migration appearing under FA16 (peaceful and non-violent societies) should be moved to FA8 (economic growth, employment). They noted that including migration under FA16 creates a negative perception that migration is a threat to society. This proposal was supported by **Indonesia** (for China and Kazakhstan), **Iran** and **India**.
- **Switzerland** (for France and Germany) outlined their support for a target that promotes “policies for safe and regular migration and that facilitate migrants’ contribution to sustainable development”. However, they were also of the view that it was more appropriate to include this target under other areas, such as economic growth.
- **Sweden** noted that there is an area which is missing from Means of Implementation in the current draft, and that is the positive contribution of migration towards sustainable development. They suggested a separate heading in that focus area on Migration and mobility, with targets addressing the following issues: reduce the cost of remittances; reduce recruitment costs paid by migrant workers; enhance possibilities for cross-border skills recognition; enhance portability of earned social security benefits, such as pensions.
- **Bangladesh** also noted that a target on migration should become part of a global partnership for development to: “enhance global cooperation to facilitate orderly, safe, responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and managed migration policies”. Bangladesh also noted that a number of elements related to migration could be included under FA15 (means of implementation and global partnerships) by clustering all migration related elements under a new sub-heading titled ‘migration and mobility’.
- **Barbados** (for CARICOM) suggested that the migration target currently under FA16 (peaceful and non-violent societies) be moved to FA10 on sustainable cities and human settlements.
- **Sierra Leone** supported a target on migration, but noted it would be better placed under FA8 (economic growth and employment) or FA10 (sustainable cities and human settlements).
- **Slovenia** (for Montenegro) supported a target on migration.
- **Cuba** suggested that target 16(e) be moved to FA1 on poverty eradication.
- **Greece** expressed their support for the target on migration, but proposed that it be amended to include return and reintegration policies and programmes and readmission.
- **USA** (for Canada and Israel) noted that a **target on migration was not warranted**. They did not elaborate on whether they meant in the context of FA16 or in the framework altogether.

c. Reinserting a target on refugees and IDPs, and creating a separate target on trafficking

- **UK** (for Australia and the Netherlands) noted that target (a) under peaceful and non-violent societies (dealing with transnational crimes) is helpful but conflates several issues. In that respect, they asked that the target be broken down into a number of separate targets encompassing issues including “reduce illicit flows by x% and reduce money laundering and **trafficking of people**, arms, drugs and wildlife” and “reduce the number of **refugees and Internally Displaced People** by x%”.
- **Slovenia** (for Montenegro) supported the view that target 16(a) should be broken down into separate targets, including on **trafficking**. **Greece**, **Brazil** (for Nicaragua), **Sierra Leone** and **USA** (for Canada and Israel) also supported that proposal.
- **Liechtenstein** (for Iceland) highlighted the issue of **trafficking**. They also noted that **internal displacement** can be a yardstick of peaceful societies, and called for a target to address that issue.

- **Switzerland** (for France and Germany) argued that FA16 on peaceful and non-violent societies could include targets clustered around: personal safety; access to fair justice for all; tackling external stresses such as organized crime and violence, including **human trafficking**.
- **Timor Leste** noted that they had previously put forward a target on **displaced people**. They reiterated this again, and reaffirmed to position outlined by PNG to reword target 16(e) (planned and managed migration policies) to: “reduce number of and find durable solutions for people who are displaced”.
- **Norway** (for Ireland and Denmark) supported a target to reduce the number of **refugees and IDPs**, including by **promoting durable solutions**.
- **Turkey** (for Spain and Italy) also supported target 16a) (by 2030 reduce by x% crime, violence and exploitation especially of children and women including by reducing organized crime and **human trafficking**) and stressed the importance of protecting migrants. They proposed the addition of the word “migrants” after “women.”
- **Liberia and Portugal** broadly supported a target on **trafficking**.

d. Establishing a separate target on reducing remittance transfer costs

- **Mexico** (for Peru) proposed that remittance costs be treated as a separate target. They noted that, since remittances are private resources, they should not be referred to in the context of mobilizing additional financial resources for development. Remittances can help alleviate poverty but do not provide a mechanism for financing development. Mexico also noted that remittances often involve significant social costs such as separated families, risk of falling into trafficking networks or dangerous migration.
- **Bangladesh** promoted a separate target on reducing the costs of migration, including remittance costs: “Reduce overall costs in migration process and minimize transaction cost of remittances across the [migration] chain”.
- **UK** (for Australia and the Netherlands) stated that targets 15j and 15k under means of implementation could be merged and expanded: “Mobilize additional financial resources from multiple sources, including innovative financing for sustainable development, foreign direct investments and other long-term private investments, inclusive finance, and reducing the costs of **remittances**.”
- **USA** (for Israel and Canada) supported a target on reducing the transaction cost of **remittances** to 5 percent (while maintaining strong policies to prevent illicit financial flows, notably terrorist funding) in the context of discussing financing under means of implementation.
- **Morocco** argued that remittances should not be considered as part of sustainable development financing, suggesting a move to FA1 on poverty eradication.
- **Indonesia** (for China and Kazakhstan), **Nigeria** and **Tunisia** broadly supported a target to reduce the cost of **remittance** transfers.

Other migration related references included:

- **Barbados** (for CARICOM) supported including migration in a means of implementation target on capacity building. They suggested target 15(t) be reworded to: “develop and strengthen human resources development frameworks in developing countries, especially LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, in support of national plans to achieve sustainable development goals, including in relation to agriculture, water, energy, health, **migration**, DRR and sustainable natural resources management”.
- **Benin** (for LDCs) noted that the new agenda should aim to reduce all costs within the migration process, including the transaction costs of global remittance flows; foster the developmental impacts of migration; and ensure an enabling environment to make migration beneficial for all countries, including by resisting the imposition of restrictive measures on labor migration; and by deepening short-term, circular migration, particularly for migrant workers from LDCs.

- **Mexico** (for Peru) agreed with the view that including migration and migration policies under subsection e) of focus area 16 on peaceful societies could generate an erroneous perception that migration is a threat to peaceful societies, and that it should instead be addressed in a cross-cutting way.

3. Way forward:

- The co-chairs expressed their desire to continue the good atmosphere and discussions that have evolved within the OWG.
- Although some delegations – primarily developing countries – had argued for a shift in the process towards an informal negotiation style of discussion, the co-chairs proposed to keep the OWG as is, even in the next two sessions.
- However, they did foreshadow some changes as somewhat of a compromise position.
- First, they noted that from now on, delegations need to focus specifically on the targets. There will be no more statements, except for the first session, and the discussion will instead go through the focus area document target by target.
- Second, it was proposed that the week before the next formal session, the co-chairs will convene informal consultations with delegations. The only dates that are available are 9-11 in the GA Hall. These consultations will not preempt the OWG and no decisions will be made in this meeting. It is solely for the purpose of building further consensus on key issues.
- The next iteration of the OWG document will be released on or around **27 May**.