



Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals Summary of 9th Session

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Between the 3rd and 5th of March 2014, the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals convened its ninth formal session. This was the first meeting of the group following the release of the co-chairs' two preliminary reports – a summary of the OWG's discussions over the previous 12 months and a 'focus areas' document outlining some 19 thematic areas for consideration in the ongoing discussions.

The meeting provided the first opportunity for Member States and other stakeholders to respond to the OWG's focus areas document in particular, as well as to discuss the way forward following the conclusion of the OWG's information gathering phase.

Responses to the focus areas document

The focus areas document was well received by most, if not all of the delegations present. Governments were generally happy that the document reflected the broad discussions that had been held over the previous twelve months, and that it provides a solid basis with which to move forward between now and September.

Delegations did, however, draw attention to issues they believed were missing or incomplete, reaffirmed issues that are priorities for their governments, or critiqued the way that particular issues were presented. Issues commonly highlighted in the discussions included:

Disaster risk reduction

A significant number of delegations noted that DRR is not addressed in the focus areas document and that it requires greater consideration. This was highlighted by governments including, but not limited to, Bolivia (for G77 and China); Norway (for Denmark and Ireland); Peru and Mexico; Indonesia; Nauru (for the Alliance of Small Island States); Sri Lanka; Japan; Viet Nam; Ecuador (for Bolivia and Argentina); Romania and Poland; UK (for Australia and the Netherlands); Turkey (for Italy and Spain); and Guatemala.

Climate change

Although climate is addressed in the document as a focus area, many reaffirmed its importance and noted that climate change should be mainstreamed across the agenda. Many also cautioned that although the SDGs should address climate issues, the new framework should not overlap with or otherwise prejudice the ongoing UNFCCC processes: PNG (for PSIDS and Timor Leste); Bulgaria and Croatia; Norway (for Denmark and Ireland); Kazakhstan (for China and Indonesia); India; Japan; Maldives; Ecuador (for Bolivia and Argentina); United States (for Canada and Israel); Romania and Poland; Germany (for France and Switzerland); UAE (for Cyprus and Singapore); UK (for Australia and the Netherlands); Serbia; Guatemala; and Timor Leste.

Means of implementation

There was almost universal agreement that means of implementation is one of the most important aspects of the new agenda. There is substantial divergence however, on how it should be addressed. On the one hand, some delegations take the view that every goal should include means of implementation in addition to there being an overall goal: Guinea-Bissau (for Group of African States); Tanzania; Colombia and Guatemala; Indonesia; India; Zambia; Saudi Arabia; Morocco; Viet Nam; Ecuador (for Bolivia and Argentina); Ethiopia; Serbia. Others were unconvinced that means of implementation should be addressed under each goal, or at the very least acknowledged that further discussion is required: United States; Sweden. **Global partnerships** also received substantial attention, with delegations highlighting it as either an important component of means of implementation, or as an issue deserving of a goal in its own right, much like a revised MDG 8.

Common but differentiated responsibility

Closely related to means of implementation is the concept of common but differentiated responsibility, a principle emerging from Rio + 20 which sees common overall objectives supported by different types and levels of responsibility at the country level, depending on national capacity and resources. This is emerging as a key fault line in the ongoing discussions, with significant divergence between those delegations that believe CBDR should become a guiding principle of the new framework (mainly developing countries) and those that see it as a principle that applies only to environmental issues and that is not applicable to sustainable development broadly speaking.

Other issues that received particular attention included the need for the new agenda to be people centered and to adopt a rights based approach; the need to strengthen interlinkages between the different focus areas; incorporating culture as an issue in the agenda; and enhancing the focus on women and youth.

Migration

A number of states came out very strongly saying that **migration** wasn't given enough consideration in the document, outlining different areas where migrants and migration should be taken into account:

- **Bolivia** (for the G77 and China) stated that migrants and migration are relevant to all countries of origin, transit and destinations. These are global issues, with economic and structural imperatives. The organizational and political challenge is to overcome these biased approaches and work towards facilitating orderly and safe mobility, recognizing that greater mobility is inevitable in a context of increasing globalization.
- **Bangladesh** noted that migration did not get due focus it deserves in this document. Welfare of migrants, migration costs and remittance transfer cost are three fundamental areas on the migration issue that should find places in the new development framework. As we are aware, greater mobility is inevitable in a context of globalization, increasing economic disparities, climate change, environmental challenges and demographic changes. We have to overcome organizational and political challenges of orderly and safe migration. Given the

robust size and potential, we recognize the significant role that the remittance can play in development financing as it offers much-needed foreign currency.

- **Lebanon** emphasized the importance of international migration as a part of the post-2015 development agenda and SDG framework. It is important for us to reflect the way migration can be harnessed for sustainable development gains and contribute to poverty eradication. A strengthened global partnership, economic growth and employment and decent work represent areas to which migration issues should be incorporated. Indicators can capture its potential as a financial resource for development, such as reducing the costs of remittance transfers, and investment in human capital like education and health care.
- **Ecuador** (for Bolivia and Argentina) highlighted the protection of migrant workers as an issue to consider in the employment and decent work focus area.
- **Germany** (for France and Switzerland) noted that ‘the inclusion of migration in different focus areas of the Co-Chairs’ document is a step in the right direction. It rightly mentions the protection and empowerment of migrants as well as the role of remittances contributing to development. We look forward to contributing to concrete targets on these issues also’.
- The **UK** (for Australia and the Netherlands) suggested that there should be a target on reducing IDPs and refugees in the context of a goal on peaceful societies.
- **Malta** noted that migration is an important element of sustainable development. However, migration should not be considered as part of the SDGs for its own sake or in a vacuum. Malta proposed that any migration related goals and targets include the following: strengthen the fight against human trafficking and smuggling of persons; underline and include the already agreed principles of international law in combating irregular migration; ensure that with well-managed migration, readmission policies become an integral part of migration management. The Maltese delegate further noted that trafficking and smuggling of persons has a direct effect on developing countries as much as on developed countries, and ultimately, effectively combating irregular migration will first and foremost aid the migrants themselves, who are often victims of international organized crime. We see no reason to remind all Member States about the horrific consequences of ill-managed migration, as we all remember the tragic events in the Mediterranean last October.
- **Sweden** noted that migration (amongst other issues) should be addressed through means of implementation.
- **Turkey** (for Italy and Spain) said that the relationship between migration and development should be well reflected in the new agenda.
- **Uruguay** said that governments are making progress with regards to migration. They suggested that migration could be addressed in the agenda in a supplementary way, for example by addressing the rights of migrants, including women and children.
- **Guatemala** said that migration (amongst other issues) should be addressed in a cross-cutting way.

Other delegations that mentioned migration include Slovenia, Sri Lanka, the Holy See and Belgium.

The way forward

During the last session of the meeting, delegations discussed the next steps in the OWG’s work, based on a proposal put forward by the two co-chairs. Kenyan Ambassador Macharia Kamau outlined that proposal as follows:

- The stocktaking phase of the process is clearly over, and the OWG is now moving into a ‘consensus building’ phase.
- The co-chairs have heard from member states that they don’t wish to see any substantial revisions to the focus areas document, and nor do they intend to present a substantially revised document.
- However, they will ‘tweak’ the text slightly to reflect the broad comments that were made during the week, with the **updated version to be presented by Wednesday 19 March**.



- The upcoming sessions of the OWG will use the updated document as the basis for discussions, which will be structured so that delegations can address each part of the document in turn. The coming OWG sessions will address the first 5 or 6 focus areas, the session following will address the next set of 5 or 6 focus areas and so on. Further detail on this will be provided by the co-chairs in the coming week.
- From March 31 onwards, the discussions in the OWG sessions should focus on putting forward concrete suggestions for goals and targets.
- To support that process, in addition to the revised focus areas document, the co-chairs will also provide: 1) a one or two page document outlining how goals and targets should be structured; 2) a matrix that maps interlinkages between different issues; and 3) a compendium of the goals and targets that have already been agreed to by governments in different fora.

There is a general sense that although the long-term process will be to narrow down the 19 focus areas into a more manageable list, discussions over the next few meetings may be more about expanding and deepening understanding of particular issues, rather than beginning to 'exclude' issues.

The next session of the OWG will be held from 31 March to 4 April.