

Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals Summary of 11th Session (Day 1)

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On 5 May 2014, the OWG began its 11th regular session. Under discussion were the focus areas on:

- Poverty eradication, building shared prosperity and promoting equality.
- Sustainable agriculture, food security, and nutrition.

The OWG co-chairs also outlined some of their expectations for the week and the way forward.

Process and next steps

- The two co-chairs continued to press delegations to put forward specific and concrete proposals to refine the targets and to limit the number. The intention of the co-chairs is to continue to strip out a lot of language so that governments have the essentials on which to negotiate moving forward.
- In that respect, it was emphasized again and again that delegations should resist the temptation to add more content and that it is now too late to do that. If delegations wish to add something new, they should propose where other issues could be taken out in exchange. It has to be a zero sum game moving forward.
- A possible change in the OWG's operating modalities was foreshadowed, with Ambassador Kamau noting that this 11th session could be the last in the group's current format; he made reference to the message coming through from Member States that a change of gear is important. Some inter-sessional work may be required between now and the OWG's next session (but see notes on this below).
- On the format of the document, it was noted that over the course of this week, the co-chairs will be drafting a chapeau, focusing on the main principles that will give direction and historical context to the goals and targets. This will be provided to delegations by the end of the week.

Overall comments on Focus Areas document and the process

In contrast to previous sessions of the OWG, in which the draft document has been generally well received, this session began with a number of concerns being expressed on both the content of the Focus Areas document, as well as the overall process:

- **Push for informal consultations:** there were clearly divergent views – split along developed / developing country lines – on the OWG's current modalities. Developing countries called for a 'more direct' approach to discussing the Focus Areas document, including by moving to an informal negotiation phase and making use of inter-

sessional meetings. South Africa went so far as to say that the deliberations should involve only those countries that hold a formal seat in the OWG, suggesting that the inputs of other countries should be made through established troikas. Developed countries preferred to continue along the current format of open meetings and consensus building.

- **Concerns that the Focus Areas document is now imbalanced:** a significant number of developing countries expressed concerns that the latest version of the OWG is far too imbalanced, with insufficient attention being paid to the issue of differentiation – meaning that it does not address different country capacities and levels of development. Some also noted that the document focuses too much on actions to be taken by developing countries, and does not address responsibilities of developed countries. The issue of common but differentiated responsibilities continues to be highlighted in that context.
- **Concerns about the editing process:** some countries outlined dissatisfaction with how the document has evolved since the last session. Saudi Arabia, for example, intervened with a specific point of order expressing their serious concerns over the manner in which the document has been edited, noting that many of their comments had not been reflected. Others noted that issues such as peaceful and non-violent societies and climate had remained in the document, despite a number of voices arguing for their removal, while other issues had been removed despite their being no calls to do so.

Poverty eradication / inequality

- **Removal of equality focus area:** a number of governments expressed their concern that the Focus Area on promoting equality had been removed / merged, even though there was little consensus that this should be done.
- **Means of implementation:** developing countries continued to advocate for means of implementation to be addressed as both a stand-alone goal, as well as being linked to each goal. Many have begun to provide examples of what they mean by this, including by highlighting commitments made by developed countries on ODA, as well as transfer of technology.
- **Vulnerable groups:** there was strong consensus on the need to address the situation of vulnerable groups in order to properly deal with poverty and inequality. A number of governments highlighted the situation of **migrants, refugees and IDPs** in that context, including Bangladesh, Lesotho (for the African Group), Brazil (for Nicaragua), Romania (for Bulgaria), and Australia (for UK and the Netherlands).