

Background Note

Opening Remarks by ASG Mr. Lenni Montiel

Second EGM on WESS 2015

Dear colleagues,

On behalf of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, I welcome you to the second Expert Group Meeting on the World Economic and Social Survey (WESS) 2015.

In particular, I would like to thank the experts from academic and other UN offices.

Let me first share with you some latest developments in the UN led global process towards the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda, so that we can understand better the broad ground for WESS 2015.

The global process to elaborate the post-2015 development agenda in the past few years has indeed galvanized the international community and brought renewed momentum to the UN led global development thinking and practice.

The process has already made great achievements:

The Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals, after more than a year of inclusive and intensive consultative deliberations, has proposed 17 specific goals with 169 associated targets. Eradication of poverty and sustainable development are the priorities among these goals. These goals and targets are action-oriented, global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development.

The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing has also delivered its report on options for an effective sustainable development financing strategy, a basket of more than 100 options for policymakers, together with recommendations for a renewed global partnership for post-2015.

At the same time, the Secretary-General has presented his synthesis report to the General Assembly. The report synthesized the full range of

inputs available on the post-2015 development agenda. Based on these achievements, the inter-governmental negotiations to define the post-2015 agenda have already started. They finished two sessions so far in 2015, and each session has shown extremely enthusiastic participation by Member States, as well as civil society.

Looking forward, we will have three high-level international meetings within 2015, which will give us the opportunity to chart a new path of sustainable development for the next 15 years.

In chronological order, the first will be the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa in July. We expect a compact for a renewed global partnership to be achieved.

The second will be the special Summit on sustainable development, to be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York in September. At the Summit, the global leaders will endorse and launch the post-2015 agenda, along with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The third will be the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris in December. We expect that Member States will adopt a new ambitious and legally binding agreement to tackle climate change, which is a threat that could make it more difficult to deliver on the new sustainable development agenda

In short, 2015 is the year of global actions. This is a year of transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals.

In order to support the Member States in their transition, the DESA flagship publication of WESS 2015 has defined a highly relevant and challenging topic: MDG Lessons for Post-2015.

The purpose of WESS 2015 is to study the key policies and strategies adopted at both international and national levels, as well as at sub-national levels in some cases, during the past 15 years in the global endeavour to achieve MDGs, and discuss the policy implications for SDGs.

The focus of WESS 2015 is not on the formulation of development goals, but on the implementation stage of the goals.

WESS 2015 is not focused on evaluation of progress in the goals and targets, but on the analysis of policies and strategies, which have contributed directly and indirectly to the achievements of the goals.

WESS 2015 is intended to draw policy lessons from MDGs as the reference for SDGs, but it has no attempt to prescribe policies for SDGs. The formulation of policies for SDGs will be the primary task for Member States and the international community in the years to come, and the future issues of WESS will participate in this task.

There have been a prodigious number of studies on MDGs. For example, as shown in the reference list for each draft chapter you have ready received, the WESS team has reviewed some 800 papers and reports related to MDGs.

WESS 2015 does not aim at an exhaustive analysis of the MDG experience. Instead, it adopts a meta-analysis, i.e. analysis of the analyses that are already available, supplementing by new research where necessary and possible, and presenting it in an integrated framework of global development thinking and practice.

Launching MDGs was indeed one of the most important development initiatives taken by the United Nations. It is therefore also incumbent upon the UN to offer a closure to MDGs and provides lessons for implementation of SDGs in post-2015.

Given this daunting challenge and the extremely limited resources for the WESS team, we have to tap expertise from the UN system, as well as experts at large.

The preliminary drafts of WESS 2015 chapters prepared by the DPAD team have indeed benefited from inputs and comments of colleagues from other Divisions of DESA and many other UN Agencies, Funds, and Programs, as well as from a number of experts outside of the UN.

This is the second EGM for WESS 2015. This EGM provides a unique opportunity for experts from the academia and experts from within UN to come together and identify any lacunas in the current drafts. After the meeting, the team will have a few weeks to revise and finalise the publication.

I wish you a productive meeting.

Thank you again.