

**UN System Task Team to support the preparation of the Post-2015
UN Development Agenda
Draft Concept Note
6 January 2012**

I. Background

In September 2011, the Secretary-General requested Mr. Sha Zukang, USG-DESA, and Ms. Helen Clark, USG and Administrator UNDP, “to establish a core group of dedicated senior technical experts to coordinate system-wide preparations on ongoing efforts and propose a unified vision and road map for the definition of a UN development agenda post-2015, in consultation with all stakeholders.”¹ The DESA-UNDP-led Task Team should be in place from January 2012 and is to be supported by the full UN system.

The terms of reference for the Task Team, as defined in the request from the Secretary General, include:

- an assessment of ongoing efforts within the UN system;
- an assessment of initiatives taken by external stakeholders including the international financial institutions, civil society, academia and the private sector; and
- the development of a system-wide vision and road map for the post-2015 agenda.

The Task Team is to prepare a report early next year (by May 2012) that is to serve as input to the work of the High-Level Panel that will be appointed by the Secretary-General to advise him on the post-2015 development agenda. Upon Mr. Sha’s suggestion, and given the relevance of Rio+20 to the post-2015 process, the announcement of the High-Level Panel will take place after the conclusion of Rio+20 in early June 2012.

ASG Jomo Kwame Sundaram, UNDESA, and ASG Olav Kjørven, UNDP have been appointed as the Co-Chairs of the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda.

II. Analytical inputs

The analytical work needed to develop a UN system-wide vision for the post-2015 development agenda is rather complex; it will require the preparation of both thematic think pieces, as well as methodological and cross-cutting issues. Six critical questions that the UN System Task Team will have to investigate from the outset include the following:

- A. Critical assessment of the MDG framework** to identify what worked and what needs to be improved in a post 2015 development framework. Some issues that need to be evaluated include:
- the content of the MDG framework (what is included and what is not); its structure (the sequence of goals, targets and indicators);

¹ Interoffice Memorandum No. 11-08757. 19 September 2011

- the advantages of setting specific global and universal national goals, targets and indicators, and possible tensions with national contexts and processes;
- the value added of the MDG framework as a central part of the UN Development Agenda and its effectiveness in establishing coherence across different areas of the development process;
- the appropriateness of the policy framework and strategies for achieving the MDGs;
- the adequacy of the framework of accountability provided by the MDG agenda.
- the processes followed in formulating the MDGs as derived from the Millennium Declaration and as a sub-set of the IADGs

The review of the MDG framework should help to better understand the advantages and disadvantages of setting outcome targets vis-à-vis, for instance, focusing on intermediate processes or defining strategies of how to achieve goals. Also important is consideration of the appropriateness of established benchmarks and timeframes, including for target setting (e.g. would setting intermediate targets, say every 5 years, have helped, rather than just having a 15/25 year time horizon, as in the MDG framework).

B. Identification of emerging development challenges (or challenges that have become more pressing since 2000) in the current context and ways to incorporate them into the global development agenda. The Report of the SG A/66/126, *Accelerating progress towards the MDGs...* identified a key number of these challenges as:

- growing inequalities within and among countries,
- population dynamics (overall growth, urbanization, migration, population ageing);
- ensuring climate change, food and energy security, and environmental sustainability,
- maintaining peace and security and addressing the development challenges confronting countries affected by conflict and fragility,
- guaranteeing respect for human rights,
- establishing more effective mechanisms of global governance.

More systematic analysis of these challenges (and perhaps others, such as ensuring stability in global financial and commodity markets) is required to identify how these would alter development priorities, as set by the MDG agenda, and what operational implications that would have for the content and nature of the UN development agenda after 2015. These challenges are interdependent in a number of ways, so a key question will be whether they can be effectively addressed as complements or additions to the existing agenda, or would require a more fundamental revision in conceptualization of the existing UN development agenda. As suggested in the SG Report, a good starting point could be to review the pertinence of the values and principles laid out in the Millennium Declaration to conceptualize the post-2015 development agenda. Another option would be to refer to the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs), or UN development agenda (UNDA), of which the MDGs are a subset. This could be a starting point as Member States and other stakeholders have committed to the

IADGs at various UN conferences and summits since the 1990s and at the 2005 Summit and 2010 MDG HLPC. Another possible starting point would be to put sustainable development at the centre of the post-2015 agenda, balancing economic, social and environmental protection goals, as a means of strengthening and enhancing the MDG framework, as some have suggested would be the appropriate way forward.

C. Assess proposals and processes for the post-2015 development agenda, with a clear **mapping of actors** and interactions among multiple stakeholders. This should help inform the analytical work to be undertaken by identifying common themes and major differences among the different proposals, both in terms of substance and formats for a post-2015 development framework. This assessment should include the role of UN agencies leading/participating in the debates, as well as the role of on-going inter-agency processes, such as the IAEG, the UNDG-MDG Task Force, the MDG Gap Task Force, UN Regional Commissions, etc. The assessment should also try to include related processes taking place outside the UN-system, as led by national governments, academia, the media and/or CSOs. Analysis of these processes should help identify possible forms of engagement in the consultation processes to take place as well as opportunities for convergence of ideas.

D. Assess how the post-2015 development agenda would relate to ongoing processes and area-specific development targets. There are several processes within the UN that will have an impact on the post-2015 development agenda. In assessing the content and format of the future development framework, we need to consider the most relevant global agreements made on various issues after the Millennium Declaration in 2000, for instance:

- those relating to MDG 8 (as charted out by the MDG Gap Task Force);
- specific commitments made in relation to education, water and sanitation, food security, child and maternal mortality, and others;
- current debates (and agreements) related to “new” challenges: slums, migration, employment (Global Jobs Pact), access to energy (Energy for All), peace and security, environmental sustainability (UNFCCC, Rio+20), among others.

In relation to this, it will be particularly useful to have an assessment of ongoing processes and platforms where negotiations leading to international agreements are taking and will take place (Rio+20, International Conference on Nutrition, discussions in the G-20; work of the functional commissions of ECOSOC; DCF, etc.) and identify their consequences for the post-2015 agenda and its implementation.

E. Assessing how the global partnership for development should be broadened and strengthened. The present global partnership needs to be re-evaluated vis-à-vis the additional global challenges to be prioritized by the post-2015 development agenda and taking into account the discussions in Busan. In particular, if the focus is centred more strongly on issues related to sustainable development, this would require more active involvement, financial resources and policy coherence from all stakeholders, both from developed and developing

countries. The current MDG agenda is often perceived to be a set of targets for developing countries to achieve with support from developed countries. Confronting the challenges posed by climate change, population dynamics, economic and financial stability, peace and security, among others, would require a new perspective on the global partnership for development with more task setting (with benefits) for developed countries as well, in support of their own environmental sustainability, peace and security, in ensuring the provision of specific global public goods among other challenges. If part of a coherent and holistic agenda, this will pose important challenges for improving global governance. An initial assessment of options to strengthen the global partnership of development, including new financial mechanisms for global development and improved accountability, will be needed to advance the debate on this dimension.

F. Assessing possible formats for the post-2015 global development agenda.

While this is likely to be an ongoing issue to be addressed, it will be important to start thinking early how best to conceptually and, more importantly, operationally define and monitor the objectives and related processes of the post-2015 development agenda. The initial analysis could involve a quick review of the options being discussed in current debates (i.e. simply extending the dates to meet current MDG targets; an MDG+ agenda to include a few more targets; sustainable development goals and targets), as well as new alternative proposals, such as a limited number of over-arching goals, each requiring more specific targets and indicators, and a differentiated accountability framework, among other possibilities.

III. Composition of the UN System Task Team

As requested by the SG, the Task Team will be co-chaired by DESA and UNDP with support from the full UN system. Given the nature of the tasks, the focal points representing UN agencies need to have the technical expertise to lead the analytical work in the areas of their mandate and to represent the views of their organization. Focal points (and one alternate) to the Task Team should be appointed by the Principals of each organization.

IV. Modus operandi

The Task Team will be co-chaired by DESA and UNDP and will have representation from all UN agencies and programmes, the World Bank, IMF and WTO. Given the tight schedule for the preparation of the first draft of its report (around mid-April 2012), Task Team members will assume individual responsibilities for the preparation of analytical inputs, as outlined above. Working groups will be led by individual agencies with participation from others according to their mandates and they will report directly to the Co-Chairs.

Each working group will be responsible for developing their own work plan and calendar of activities and should, early on, identify possible consultations with experts, from within and outside the UN system, to assist their work. Resources for consultations and to cover travel of Task Team members, as needed, should be

identified; co-financing of these activities is expected from participating UN agencies.

The first meeting will be convened during the second week of January 2012 to establish the Task Team, approve the work plan and agree on the composition of the working groups. The co-chairs will call Task Team meetings on a regular basis to assess progress, to share information and to identify new activities as needed. Given the complex substantive matters at hand, the Task Team will also organize seminar-like meetings (of one or more days) for which also experts and stakeholders that are not among the focal points of the Task Team may be invited.

V. Immediate Tasks

Once created, the UN System Task Team will have to undertake the following tasks to become operational:

- agree on the work plan, expected outputs and calendar of activities
- decide on the composition of the working groups that will take responsibility for the analytical work and consultations (including agreement on the lead agencies and participation of others, depending on interest and thematic mandates)
- identification of possible consultations that should take place to spearhead the work of the Task Team
- identification of resources to support the work of the Task Team, both staff time and financial contributions for consultations and travelling if required

VI. Calendar

The UN System Task Team should be fully operational by mid-January 2012. The report from the Task Team, as requested by the SG, will be provided to the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons as an input into their own consultations. The exact date for the appointment of the Panel is still under consideration, but the first draft of the report from the Task Team should be ready around mid-April, in order to leave time for further refinements before the final version is made available to the Secretary-General and the High-Level Panel.