

Realizing the Future We Want for All

Report of the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda

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What is the ‘post-2015 UN development agenda’?

The current development agenda is centred on the Millennium Development Goals, which have an overall target date of 2015. The ‘MDGs’ encapsulate eight globally agreed, concrete goals, with time-bound targets and indicators for measuring progress, in the areas of: poverty alleviation, education, gender equality and empowerment of women, child and maternal health, environmental sustainability, reducing HIV/AIDS and communicable diseases, and building a Global Partnership for Development. At the 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting of the UN General Assembly to review progress towards the MDGs, governments called not only for accelerating progress, but also for thinking on ways to advance the UN development agenda beyond 2015. This is the origin of the discussions now underway on the ‘post-2015 UN development agenda’.

Why is it called the ‘UN’ development agenda?

The United Nations does not own the global development agenda. Its membership includes all governments, its mandate covers the range of issues for international cooperation, and its methods of work are open in various ways to engagement with and participation by many other types of stakeholders. The United Nations is thus the most inclusive and comprehensive platform for putting a global development agenda together and for bringing to the table the views of all governments and a range of other stakeholders, from civil society, the private sector, academia and research institutes to philanthropic foundations and international institutions. In the ‘post-2015 process’, the aim of the United Nations is to support the emergence of a global development agenda that all countries and all stakeholders will recognize as their own and that is worthy of the global challenges they face and the aspirations they all have for a better future.

Who is the UN System Task Team?

Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon established the UN System Task Team in September 2011 to coordinate system-wide preparations for a post-2015 UN development agenda. Co-chaired by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Task Team today brings together more than 60 UN agencies, Secretariat departments and other international organizations. Its mission is to assess ongoing efforts within

the UN system, consult all relevant stakeholders and define a system-wide vision and road-map to support the deliberations on the post-2015 UN development agenda. The first report of the UN System Task Team, on these three aspects, is serving as a reference for the ongoing consultations.

How was the Task Team Report prepared?

The preparation of the Report was informed by initial consultations organized by the Task Team and its member organizations with Member States, civil society, academia and research institutes, and the private sector. Informal briefings were held with Member States: in the General Assembly, in November 2011 and February 2012, and in the Economic and Social Council, in March 2012. The Task Team held an Expert Group Meeting in February 2012, for which it commissioned several papers from external experts. Task Team members also produced 18 joint think pieces to guide the analytical work on some of the new and emerging issues touched on in the Report. All the Task Team entities participated in drafting and finalizing the Report, providing their insights and expertise on specific areas. A review of the growing literature on the global development agenda, including lessons learned from the MDG framework, was also undertaken.

Which issues will be covered in the post-2015 development agenda?

The analysis by the Task Team supports the messages coming from Member States and others, including at the Rio+20 Conference, on the need for a post-2015 development agenda that retains a clear focus on human development and poverty eradication, while building on the lessons from the MDG framework, addressing new challenges and putting sustainable development at the centre. The Report points to various new challenges, or pressing issues, to be considered: an increasing environmental footprint; disaster risk reduction; rising inequalities, including gender inequalities and discrimination on the basis of gender, age, disability, ethnicity and otherwise; continuing violent conflict; and demographic changes, in terms of population growth, rapidly ageing populations, fast urbanization and continuous migration flows. There is the knowledge gap between and within countries, and governance and accountability deficits at different levels, requiring strengthened compliance with the rule of law. Food and nutrition security; water and sanitation; energy; and access to quality health services, including reproductive health, and to quality education and vocational training are of crucial importance. The Report also underscores, however, the recognized need not to overload the agenda with too many issues.

What would the agenda look like?

Based on its analysis, the Task Team Report recommends a transformative agenda, ambitious yet feasible, with potentially far-reaching and long-term positive implications for sustainable development. The agenda would set forth shared principles and goals to guide policy choices and mobilize action at all levels – global, regional, national, local – without being prescriptive and while recognizing differences in initial conditions, as well as interdependencies amongst objectives. The Report recommends retaining some of the noted strengths of the MDG framework, with its limited number of inspirational, easy-to-communicate and concrete time-bound goals and targets, for which measurable indicators can be developed. To support implementation, the global partnership for development would need to be strengthened, as one of shared responsibilities among all countries, involving all stakeholders and with a well-defined accountability framework.

Which goals and targets does the Task Team recommend?

The Task Team Report does not attempt to define specific goals and targets at this stage in the discussions. What the Report does is set out a vision for development starting with three fundamental principles – human rights, equality, and sustainability – as the foundation of the post-2015 UN development agenda. Building on these principles, it suggests four interdependent

dimensions that could provide the basis for defining goals and targets: inclusive economic development, inclusive social development, environmental sustainability, and peace and security. It also identifies a set of development enablers, reflecting the inter-linkages among the four dimensions, which could help guide policy making and build policy coherence, without being prescriptive or devolving into a 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

What will become of the MDGs?

The MDGs have proven to be a powerful tool in embodying a shared global vision and development framework to address poverty and hunger and advance human development. Significant progress has been made in a number of areas and some targets achieved ahead of schedule. The progress, however, has been uneven, across goals and within and across countries and regions. Gains will need to be consolidated. Gaps in implementation will need to be addressed. Even in some cases where targets are fully achieved – such as reducing extreme poverty by half – further efforts would clearly be needed. The analysis in the Task Team Report supports the views being expressed by many Member States and other stakeholders in favour of an agenda that keeps a focus on poverty eradication and human development, while addressing new challenges and putting sustainable development at the centre. This would provide for a strong continuity between the MDG framework and the post-2015 UN development agenda, including the sustainable development goals or 'SDGs' called for at the Rio+20 Conference.

What is the link to SDGs and to the follow-up to the Rio+20 Conference?

There is a recognized need to work towards one global development agenda for the post-2015 period, with sustainable development at its centre. The Rio+20 Outcome is an important step in this direction, having launched an inclusive intergovernmental process for developing a set of sustainable development goals "to be coherent with and integrated into the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015". Member States agreed that the SDGs should address priority areas for sustainable development and integrate and balance its three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. In defining further characteristics of SDGs – "action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries, while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities" – Member States have also gone some way in defining important features of the post-2015 UN development agenda.

How will the SDGs be defined?

An intergovernmental open working group to develop a proposal on SDGs, for consideration by the General Assembly, is to be established no later than the beginning of the Assembly's 67th session in September 2012. The Secretary-General will provide the initial input to the work of the group, in consultation with national governments. To support the working group, an inter-agency technical support team on SDGs is being established, under the umbrella of the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda. The working group will develop modalities to ensure "the full involvement of relevant stakeholders and expertise from civil society, the scientific community and the United Nations system in its work".

Who is involved in the consultations on the post-2015 development agenda?

Some Member States and regional organizations have already launched national and regional initiatives to feed into the thinking on the post-2015 development agenda, such as consultations and surveys. A number of civil society organizations, from every region, have begun to engage in the post-2015 process and have, amongst other activities, formed global coalitions working together. Academia and other research institutions have been particularly active, with a large

array of publications focusing on the post-2015 development agenda and numerous conferences on the topic. The private sector is also involved, including through the UN Global Compact. UN system organizations are heavily engaged in analytical work and outreach as well as support to the various intergovernmental processes that are feeding into the deliberations. They are working both individually and collectively, through the UN System Task Team and in other ways, including a project by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) on national level consultations, global thematic meetings and an online platform for public engagement.

How will the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable people be included?

There is consensus on the need for an open and inclusive consultation process, led by Member States and engaging all stakeholders, as well as on the need to support the capacity of Least Developed Countries and of poor or marginalized people to participate. This is a focus of activity of many of the civil society organizations already engaged in the process. It is also a commitment of the UN to help bring the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable into the deliberations. One major vehicle for this will be national-level consultations. The UNDG, through its MDG Task Force, co-chaired by UNDP and UN-Women, is supporting national consultations on the post-2015 development agenda in more than 50 developing countries. National stakeholders to be included in the consultations are government representatives, NGOs, civil society, community-based organizations, indigenous peoples, women's and social movements, youth and children, and the private sector, among others. The outreach component of the UNDG project on post-2015 also involves different types of opportunities for citizens to engage in the consultations through online discussion, webinars and other interactive online tools.

What happens next in the post-2015 process?

Broad and inclusive consultations on the post-2015 UN development agenda are already beginning to take place, inside and outside the UN, including at the regional level, for which the Report of the UN System Task Team Report is intended to serve as a reference. To lend further support to the multi-stakeholder consultations, the Secretary-General has established a High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which will have its first meeting on the margins of the General Assembly's high-level debate in September 2012. He has also appointed a Special Advisor on Post-2015 UN Development Planning, who will serve as an ex-officio member of the Panel. A number of intergovernmental processes, in addition to the Rio+20 follow-up, will feed into the discussions moving forward, particularly in terms of identifying priority areas. The processes will focus on such issues as rule of law, international migration and development, population and development, disaster risk reduction, information society, and women, among others. There are also the processes on development cooperation, financing for development and a sustainable development financing strategy that will be particularly relevant in terms of thinking about how to strengthen the global partnership for development to support implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. This fall, the General Assembly will consider the second annual report of the Secretary-General on accelerating progress towards the MDGs, in follow-up its 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting, which includes recommendations, building on the Task Team Report, on how to proceed with the process of defining the post-2015 UN development agenda. The Assembly is also to launch the intergovernmental open working group on SDGs. Much of the current activity may be geared towards the special event that is expected to be convened by the President of the General Assembly during its 68th session, which begins in September 2013. While the event is to focus particularly on accelerating progress towards the MDGs in the final stretch to 2015, it is also seen as a key milestone in the deliberations on the post-2015 UN development agenda.