

EGM to support the advancement of the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, New York

Session IV (28 February 2012)

Sustainable Development in the Post-2015 Context

Summary

A briefing on the Rio+20 process addressed the following issues:

The zero draft

- an overview was given of the initiative to launch a process to define sustainable development goals included in the draft;
- it was explained that the current zero draft had a strong focus on measuring progress, of both the green economy and the sustainable development goals;
- the draft also encouraged development of measures beyond GDP

Expectations for Rio+20 include: a platform for voluntary commitments and for launching of partnerships;

- a compendium or registry of these commitments is planned for re-reporting on progress.

Member States have put forward principles aimed at guiding the development of sustainable development goals, which include:

- an integrated treatment of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, a universal application to all countries, a concise set and limited number of goals, a focus on poverty and inequality, and a reflection of gender dimensions;
- Member States are not clear on the desired level of ambition at Rio+20 :
 - The lowest level would be to agree on launching a process to establish sustainable development goals;
 - more ambitious outcomes would spell out the areas to be covered by the goals, or even establish the goals themselves, leaving only the targets and indicators to be defined after Rio+20.

The UN post-2015 development agenda

- a call was made for a set of goals that would meet the depth of the MDGs, while ensuring a sustainable path for development.

Colombia presented the following agenda regarding sustainable development goals at Rio+20:

- it sought the highest ambition at Rio+20 and would welcome an agreement of at least the priority areas to be covered by sustainable development goals;
- since its initial proposal on the goals, it recognized that it had evolved through inputs from Member States and other stakeholders;

- it noted that during the Rio+20 process, other countries had suggested several guiding principles to define the goals, including calls for simple and more easily communicable goals with a focus on implementation;
- it added that a science driven process would be needed to implement the goals;
- it proposed to establish ad hoc expert groups for each goal following Rio+20 and to deliver recommendations for the goals beyond 2015 to the 2013 UNGA MDG review.

The presentation on the **Global Sustainability Panel** provided the following information from its newly released report:

- recommendation for establishing one development agenda and avoiding two separate agenda —one on development; the second on sustainable development;
- empowering people to make choices;
- working towards a sustainable economy (by involving financial ministers and bringing ecosystem management into the financial sphere);
- producing a state of the world outlook;
- creating a sustainable development council; and
- outlining principles for sustainable development goals, but the goals per se were not provided.

The **UNEP** presentation drew attention to the lack of monitoring capacity of many countries worldwide and offered some guidance on principles and priority areas for sustainable development goals:

- lack of monitoring capacity, in particular, was compromising the application of evidence-based policies;
- little progress had been made on the more than 600 environmental agreements negotiated so far;
- a review of 90 internationally agreed goals from environment agreements showed that 14 had insufficient data, 72 showed little or no progress and only 4 displayed significant progress;
- sustainable development goals could trigger better monitoring and progress;
- three key principles should be considered in developing sustainable development goals: precautionary principle, CBDR, and equity;
- goals such as climate change, migration, peace and security and forests were highlighted as relevant to both developed and developing countries;
- outcome-oriented sustainable goals could also consider sustainable consumption and production, biodiversity and access to water.

Discussions following the presentations addressed :

The relationship between the work of the UN Task Team and the Rio+20 process:

- it was clarified that any goals coming out of Rio+20 would not conflict with the MDGs; and,
- the post-2015 development agenda would not be decided at Rio+20: instead, the two processes should feed each other.

How sustainability could be brought into a framework of goals for beyond 2015:

- Three issues were considered important for sustainability: equality, human rights and good governance;
- some participants noted the trade off between addressing inequality and sustainable development —the first may come at the price of the second;
- the energy goals proposed within the UN Secretary-General’s initiative were advanced as an illustrative example of how the three dimensions of sustainable development could be reflected within one theme: energy access covering the social dimension, use of renewable energy addressing the environmental dimension, and energy efficiency directed towards the economic dimension;
- an overall call was made for selecting targets and indicators on a scientific and technical basis.