

Talking points for Mr. Seth delivered by Ms. Barthelemy
Expert Group Meeting
2015 and 2016 ECOSOC Cycles
UN Women Conference Room
4-5 December 2014

Session II: Institutional Structures and Behaviors for Transformation

Good afternoon

Thank you for this opportunity to speak at this session. Replacing my Director Nikhil Seth who was called to an urgent meeting.

Topic is important in particular because of the breadth and ambition of the post 2015 development agenda that is taking shape at the UN. There needs to be a commensurate evolution in societies and in their institutions in order to achieve transformational change. As Einstein said a long time ago “You cannot do the same thing over and over again and expect different results”.

Start by saying, we actually do not need an overhaul of the current set of institutions. Rio+20 refined our institutional framework only 2 years ago. It addressed GA, ECOSOC reform, created HLPF and made UNEP governing council universal. It is not about creating new institutions and their architecture. It is about us. We need to change our behavior patterns – the way we support and take part in these institutions – as Secretariat and delegates. We have to allow our institutions to support the implementation of an agenda that will be integrated, universal, and transformative.

I will focus more on international level. From these various characteristics of the post 2015 development agenda, we can derive a few conclusions on how our institutions should be operated/. I see four kind of imperatives – a word familiar to Thomas. Those are:

Imperative 1 – Universal yet flexible

Imperative 2 – Specialized yet coherent

Imperative 3 – Policy oriented while rigorous

Imperative 4 – intergovernmental yet open and inclusive

Imperative 1 – Way our institution should work should be **Universal yet flexible**

The SDGs are universally applicable to all countries. This is no longer an agenda for developing countries alone but one that can only be achieved if all countries move in the

same direction. At the same time, we must bear in mind the national circumstances and capacities of each country.

We need our institutions to be responsive to the needs of all countries. They should not overburden them. I am thinking in particular about the implementation reviews the HLPF is to conduct as of 2016. They must build on the results of the country reports and reviews that exist throughout the UN and beyond.

Because the agenda is global and takes into account national circumstances. We need much stronger links between the national, regional and international level.

At the national level, let me briefly say that progress has been made in sustainable development planning. But evidence shows that most countries are yet to have in place a well-functioning coordination mechanism with the capacity to align efforts around key, often multi-sectoral, national objectives. The UN country teams should support member states to achieve this objective. It can build especially on the experience gained from the MDGs and the manner in which the UN system rallied around the national MDG plans and strategies. The reports from national implementation of SDGs will be key for the review mechanisms at both regional and global levels.

Institutions should be

Imperative 2 – Specialized yet interrelated

We need to create an institutional environment that will reflect the changed nature of development. The SDGs are interrelated through common targets. Together, they point to important cross-cutting issues. We all know that silo approaches are no longer feasible. We need to adopt a more holistic approach and act on the interrelations among various issues and on the drivers of sustainable development.

Within the UN, the General Assembly, the reformed ECOSOC, HLPF, the universal UN Environment Assembly and the governing bodies of specialized agencies – all need to work in unison to support implementation and follow-up of the post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs. They must reinforce one another. Together, global, regional and national institutions need to be able to support the broader set of themes contained in the SDGs and their interrelations. They must reflect on the related trade-offs. They also can make policies more effective by ensuring that they act on the interlinkages among issues, goals and sectors. It is demonstrated that policies are more effective when they focus e.g. on the nexus climate change- energy-land water.

In order to achieve this, it is important to ensure coordination and coherence. We must avoid duplication through a clear division of labour.

Member States will define in the coming months the architecture for review and monitoring on the post 2015 development agenda. Share a few personal views.

The HLPF has the GA and ECOSOC as its two parent bodies. It can utilize the strength of both Charter bodies, support their work and send clear messages and recommendations through its declarations.

The HLPF can be seen a global apex of a multi-layered and multipolar review and monitoring system. Rather than duplicating work that is already done, it should build on the work that is on-going in the UN system bodies. Most individual SDGs have a home in the UN system. The work conducted in those “homes” – often the specialized agencies-is critical as it engages experts and is based on solid data and expertise

The HLPF can take stock of the key trends and messages from this work and provide guidance. This will encourage the same integration and coordination at the national level where integrated decision-making is of utmost importance. This means that the HLPF could work on clusters of SDGs, rather than looking at each SDG in isolation, as was often the case with MDGs in the past.

ECOSOC is the charter body entrusted to support the GA on development issues. It is to ensure coordination in the UN system. It mobilizes the contribution of its functional and regional commissions on its annual theme. This role is ever more important in the context of an integrated development agenda.

We also need to make sure that cross-cutting issues are addressed throughout the UN system. This means making better use of ECOSOC’s functional commissions. This applies in particular to CSW. The motto – Leave no one behind – also suggests that the Social Development Commission must be used fully to keep an eye on vulnerable groups.

ECOSOC is also uniquely positioned to advance the economic dimension of sustainable development, through its work on financing for development and trade. Its DCF reflects on how development cooperation should change in the post 2015 era. It makes the link to the humanitarian agenda and to peace building.

The GA is the overarching body dealing with development, peace and human rights issues.

Imperative 3 – Policy oriented while rigorous

The SDGs and targets will be accompanied by a set of indicators. Together, they make it possible to make UN intergovernmental work more structured and evidence based.

The policy directions and recommendations from UN bodies will only be followed up if their work is anchored in solid evidence and data from country level. This approach is developing, e.g. in ECOSOC operational activities. This also shows in the HLPF mandate to increase the science –policy interface.

This is a complex task. At the same time, the SDGs move beyond quantitative achievements to include qualitative aspects. They also call for disaggregated data to tackle inequalities. Statistical Commission must be used.

But the value added of intergovernmental bodies is also very much to allow an exchange of experience among countries. Their programme have to allow for this to happen.

Imperative 4 – intergovernmental yet open and inclusive

The SDGs recognize that the breadth of actors involved in development cooperation has increased. Governments must clearly remain in the driver seat of development. But CSOs, philanthropic foundations, the private sector, academia and local and sub-national authorities play a large role in sustainable development. We need an institutional set-up that makes it easier to engage these many actors. We must offer them entry points for concerted action. It is also important to find new modalities to launch partnerships and hold them accountable. The Samoa Conference called for innovative mechanisms to be developed in this regard. The OWG introduced new modalities. The my world consultations open the door for more participatory processes. We cannot close it.

Conclusion:

So let me conclude by saying that, moving forward, the emphasis should really be on coordination and behavior change rather than creation. The post-2015 development agenda will guide the work of the entire United Nations for the next fifteen years. So let us use the mechanisms we already have and assess how they can complement each other in order to provide improved support to Member States and accelerate implementation on the ground.

Thank you.