

Closing Remarks by

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**Inter-regional Workshop on Experiences and
Lessons Learned from ECOSOC National Voluntary Presentations**

Kingston, Jamaica, 2-4 December 2015

Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have now come to the end of an intensive and insightful three-day workshop.

I would like to thank our distinguished group of participants who have joined us from all over the world to share their experiences and perspectives. I especially would like to thank our speakers and moderators for their important insights, which have greatly contributed to make this workshop a success.

A special thanks goes also to our two facilitators, Mr. Alan Atkisson and Mr. Cuauhtemoc Leon, who have, over the last three days, skillfully guided and stirred the discussion to ensure that the objectives of the workshop could be met.

A key objective in this regard was to enable a candid reflection on the last seven years of National Voluntary Presentations to ECOSOC to draw important lessons for the future.

Over the last three days, you had a unique opportunity to do so, by sharing and learning from each other's experiences with the NVP exercise and discussing the challenges of adapting to a goal-oriented framework to review development progress.

We identify a broad range of issues and challenges that will re-emerge and will need to be addressed in the context of the next generation of national reviews under the HLPF and in national efforts to tackle the SDGs. Many of these points boil down to the issue of capacity.

Limitations in statistical, analytical and institutional capacity at the national levels have already emerged from the NVP exercise and have been reiterated in this workshop as well. Addressing these capacity gaps will be even more critical in the context of the SDGs.

I will not attempt to summarize the rich discussion that we had over the last three days as there will be a summary report of the workshop for this purpose.

What I would do is to highlight a few key points that we should hold on to in our collective efforts to address capacity gaps.

Firstly, data gaps do not need to be daunting. While the challenge of generating and processing information and data are well known, there are also ways to deal with data gaps by for instance utilizing existing data more effectively and through data projections and simulation.

Secondly, the analytical challenges of conducting cross-sectoral analysis and reviews as a basis for policy-making can be addressed. We have heard today about new and existing methodologies for doing so that have already been applied successfully in a number of countries.

Thirdly, the institutional dimension will continue to be critical to pull all of this together. Political will be critical to promote policy integration, but so would be the right set of institutions. There are considerable capacity gaps to be addressed in this regard and building the right institutional framework will take time. But there are ways in which we can make this effort less daunting. The systemic approach can guide us in this regard.

The discussion of the last three days provides a good basis to help countries in their transition from an MDG to an SDG-based framework.

We had a unique opportunity to gain a much deeper understanding of the challenges that countries have been facing with the NVP exercise. This will serve as well in our efforts to strengthen the review of the SDGs.

We also had an opportunity to identify key capacity gaps that most countries face and will continue to face in conducting goal-oriented reviews and analysis and discussed possible approaches to addressing them.

This is, in my view, a key outcome of this workshop as it provides a basis for the formulation of a capacity development agenda for the future, both for countries and the international community.

Addressing the capacity gaps to effectively review sustainable development goals as a basis for policy formulation will be critical to ensure a smooth transition to and realization of the 2030 Agenda.

Sharing knowledge and experiences and facilitate learning among countries will continue to be critical in this regard. As we have seen today, countries are already experimenting with new practices and tools to address the complex challenges of the post-2015 era.

We need to continue to share and learn from these experiences to enable the emergence of new and effective ways to advance the sustainable development agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The outcome of this workshop will be an important input for the planning of the next generation of national reviews in the High-Level Political Forum and for the work of the development partners, including the United Nations in supporting this process. My Department stands ready to continue to support countries in their efforts.

Once again, I would like to thank you all for your important contribution and wish you all safe travel.

Thank you.