

Inter-regional Workshop
Experiences and Lessons Learned from ECOSOC National
Voluntary Presentations
December 2-4, 2015
Pegasus Hotel
Jamaica's Statement

Session1: Lessons Learned from the NVP Exercise

10.15-12.30: **Objective:** Discuss the overall experience of performing ECOSOC national reviews, and their contribution to the assessment of progress towards the IADGs/MDGs by policy-makers and the international community

Moderator: Mr. Neil Pierre, Chief, Policy Coordination Branch, OESC/DESA

Mr. Moderator, other members of the Panel, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it is my distinct honour to share Jamaica's experience and lessons learnt in the utilization of the ECOSOC national voluntary presentations (NVP) as a means for the review and assessment of the implementation of the MDGs and to surmise

whether and to what extent this approach could be adopted for Agenda 2030. Let me state upfront that I will attempt to give as true a representation of our experience in the use of the NVP methodology as possible but recognizing also that any shortcomings in doing so on my part will rest purely on my account and not that of the government.

Mr Moderator, permit me to provide a conceptual and organizational framework on the basis of which I will draw some conclusions and state the lessons learnt in our experience with the NVPs. As you are aware, the concept of sustainable development has been around for over three decades and has its origin within the context of the environment. The evolution of the concept seems to have coincided with the thrust towards holistic and integrative policy and planning mandate which is most evident within the UN population and development conferences of the 1970s and 1980s.

The task of bringing the two conceptual trajectories into a unified system of thought and action was evident in all UN conferences of the 1990s and found its fullest expression up to that point in the millennium development summit in 2000. One of the major weaknesses, however, was that the attempts at integrating sustainable development into the programmes of action of the various conferences were approached primarily through specific disciplines and therefore partial and biased in perspective. Another major weakness was that the reforms in the organizational structures and processes of the UN and within governments were well below the necessary requirements and imperatives for full and effective integration. World leaders in all major

economies were reluctant to make commitments especially on environmental issues for which their governments would be held responsible. By the end of the 1990s and prior to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030), it would be fair to conclude that the integration of sustainable development into policy and planning in all its dimensions has been largely discipline-bound, sectoral and piecemeal. This state of affairs has been observed in all policies, planning systems and programmes at all levels including the UN.

Agenda 2030 is the first global attempt at integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development into a unified programme of action for implementation at all levels. Note however that Agenda 2030 has inherited not only the strengths, weaknesses and limitations in the policies, plans and programmes of the past but also those relating to the operational modalities and systems for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In light of this, there is a critical need for fundamental reform and in some instances ongoing reforms at all levels including the UN to bring the current structures and operational modalities for the various policies and programmes in line with the imperatives of Agenda 2030.

Having provided a broad outline of the attempts to integrate sustainable development into the planning, monitoring and evaluation systems of the UN and of governments prior to Agenda 2030, I will now focus more specifically on the NVPs. In the case of Jamaica, the MDGs came at the beginning of the new millennium. This was at a juncture

when the review and appraisal systems for the other UN programmes of action were fully established and operational at the national level. In this context, the approach to the MDGs was seen primarily as a reporting requirement of the UN and not an attempt to provide an integrative whole of government planning and appraisal framework for sustainable development. In fact, our government did not establish a central focal point for the MDGs until after our NVP report to the UN in 2009. Prior to this, the lead role for reporting on the MDGs was provided by different ministries and agencies. The rationale for this approach was not always clear but may have been determined by the thematic areas being covered and the role of the UNDP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade in directing the request from ECOSOC.

The request for the NVP was made by the ECOSOC to the MFAFT. The Planning Institute of Jamaica took the lead role for monitoring the preparation of the NVP in consultation with the MFAFT in 2009. This was done on the basis of its central role in policy, planning and coordination in government. In undertaking the assignment, The Planning Institute of Jamaica established a multiagency committee for coordinating the preparation of the NVP report. A local consultant was contracted to prepare the report. The report was finalized and submitted to ECOSOC. The NVP was prepared and presented to the Annual Ministerial Review in Geneva in 2009. The presentation was made by a representative of the Jamaica Mission in Geneva in association with the consultant and a Director from the Planning Institute. This experience was quite beneficial and highlighted substantial weaknesses in the data and monitoring systems for the

MDGs in Jamaica. The multiagency committee was dissolved at the conclusion of the assignment.

The failure of the government to establish an appropriate structure and mechanism for monitoring and review of the MDGs at the commencement of the implementation of same should not be viewed as a weakness of the planning system of the government but rather a reflection of the ad hoc and voluntary nature of the approach adopted by the UN. In this regard, it should be noted that the MDGs were not formulated through the usual national, regional and global consultative processes of the UN but was compiled by experts commissioned by the Secretary General on the basis of outcomes of the 1990 conferences and adopted by our governments. This approach may have created some level of non-ownership of the MDGs at the national level given that it was seen as being imposed from above and at a point when fully operational structures for covering similar issues already exist. The national inter-ministerial steering committees established for coordinating the preparation of the NVPs and other MDG reports were for specific duration and completed their work with the presentations to the UN. The establishment of a central focal point and a multi-sectoral structure for monitoring the implementation of the MDGs at the national level therefore, seem to have been an essential prerequisite for ensuring an effective monitoring and coordination system and for facilitating national ownership of the MDGs. The Planning Institute of Jamaica also facilitated the preparation of a comprehensive review of the implementation of the MDGs covering the period, 2000 to 2014 for providing inputs in formulation of the post 2015 development agenda (Agenda 2030).

Mr Moderator, as we move towards the setting up of structures and systems for the review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 2030 at the national level, we should ensure that national focal points and multi-sectoral mechanisms with responsibility for Agenda 2030 are established and/ or integrated into existing structures and systems. These systems and structures should ensure the full integration of all dimensions of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental. The systems and structures should also facilitate both routine/annual and ad hoc national voluntary presentations on Agenda 2030 as may be required by the UN. The NVPs, however, should not become the main format for reporting but integrated into the annual reporting systems for Agenda 2030.

Mr Moderator, I think it is imperative for the UN to continue to reform its systems, structures and processes in light of the mandate for sustainable development. While we fully acknowledge that ECOSOC has structurally integrated the three dimensions of sustainable development under its mandate, it has not as yet achieved functional integration. In moving forward, therefore, the Secretary General and ECOSOC should ensure that Agenda 2030 is centrally and fully integrated into the work programme and monitoring and review mechanisms of the commissions and subsidiary bodies of the UN. In light of this recommendation, commissions with responsibility of cross-cutting themes such as gender and population and development should be called upon to take on more comprehensive mandates in light of the scope and breathe of Agenda 2030. The Secretary General and ECOSOC

would also need to sort out the reporting and operating modalities within and between the commissions, subsidiary bodies and organs of the UN.

Thank you.