

Side Event at the 2012 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review Towards a Post-2015 UN Development Agenda

Concept Note

Three years from the target date to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, the Annual Ministerial Review provides an opportunity to strengthen the momentum behind efforts to accelerate progress. Member States have also recognized the need to initiate thinking about the post-2015 UN development agenda, building on the experience with the MDG framework. This side event is being organized by the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, in order to contribute to multi-stakeholder consultations on the agenda.

1. Background

Some Member States have launched national initiatives to feed into the discussions on a post-2015 UN development agenda. A number of civil society organizations, from all over the world, have begun to engage in the discussions. Academic and other research institutions have been particularly active. The private sector is beginning to increase its engagement.

In the Outcome of the 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the MDGs, Member States requested the Secretary-General to begin making recommendations on how to advance the UN development agenda beyond 2015, in his annual reports on accelerating MDG progress. The Secretary-General made initial recommendations in this regard in his August 2011 Report (A/66/126), with an emphasis on open and inclusive consultations on the agenda.

In line with this, the Secretary-General has established the UN System Task Team to coordinate system-wide preparations for the post-2015 UN development agenda. Its terms of reference include: (i) assessing ongoing efforts within the UN system; (ii) consulting with external stakeholders, such as civil society, academia and the private sector; and (iii) defining a system-wide vision and road map to support the deliberations on a post-2015 agenda.

The work of the Task Team will also inform the work of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on Post-2015, which will be launched after the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20, 20-22 June 2012).

2. Context

The UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda has held a number of informal briefings with Member States, including with the General Assembly, on 4 November 2011 and 28 February 2012, and with the Economic and Social Council, on 4 April 2012. The Task Team held an Expert Group Meeting involving a range of stakeholders on 27-29 February 2012. Its work is also informed by ongoing consultations between UN system entities and civil society organizations.

In the post-2015 discussions so far, four broad areas of focus have emerged: (i) the consultation process for formulating the agenda; (ii) substantive themes for consideration; (iii) the design/format of the agenda; and (iv) monitoring of progress and accountability for results.

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 both Least Development Countries and poor or marginalized people to participate in the discussions.

The importance of other intergovernmental processes feeding into the post-2015 discussions has also been stressed, especially Rio+20. Stakeholders have shown particular interest in how Member States will elaborate the concept of “sustainable development goals” in relation to a post-2015 agenda. There is a widely shared need to work towards just one UN development agenda for the post-2015 era, with sustainable development at its centre.

Regarding the substantive themes, support has been expressed for a post-2015 agenda that builds on the MDG framework, and keeps the focus on human development, while addressing emerging challenges. Such challenges include, among others, sustainable development, inclusive growth, inequalities, demographic dynamics, human rights and continuing conflict.

Even as a wide array of substantive themes is being raised, broad agreement exists on the need not to overload the agenda. Many stakeholders feel that the format of the post-2015 agenda should preserve the catalytic power of the MDG framework, with its limited number of easy-to-communicate, quantifiable and time-bound goals and targets.

Such focus and format are also seen as critical to the issues of monitoring and accountability. Different ways of measuring progress are being discussed, with attention, for example, to the multidimensional nature of poverty and to ways of addressing inequalities, in part, through better disaggregated data. Ways to reshape the global partnership for development are also being explored, to support implementation of the agenda as well as strengthen accountability.

3. Purpose and scope

The side event has the objective to contribute to multi-stakeholder discussions on a post-2015 UN development agenda. It should facilitate further engagement of the UN System Task Team with stakeholders, with a view to sharing and seeking feedback on the Task Team’s ongoing work to support the deliberations on the post-2015 agenda. It should further provide an opportunity for Member States and other stakeholders to inform about their own preparations for and expectations of the post-2015 process.

4. Format and participation

The event will be organized in the form of a panel discussion with invited panelists and time for open, interactive discussion with participants. The event will bring together the UN System Task Team with Member States, civil society organizations and others. Most of the expected participants will also be attending the Annual Ministerial Review.

5. Outcome

The UN System Task Team will prepare a summary of the discussions during the side event, which will feed into the broader consultations on the post-2015 UN development agenda.