



Statement

by

H.E. Mr. John W. Ashe

President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

General Assembly

**High-level Stock-taking event on the Post-2015 Development Agenda:
Contributions to the Secretary-General's Synthesis Report**

Opening Session

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President of the 68th Session of the General Assembly

H.E. Dr. John W. Ashe

Excellencies,
Secretary-General,
Distinguished Speakers and Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

I welcome you to this High-level Stocktaking Event that is intended to provide you, the Member States, and other Stakeholders with a unique opportunity to identify inputs to our Secretary General's Synthesis Report, which he has been mandated to prepare for your consideration and, more importantly, will provide the launching pad for your negotiations on the post-2015 Development Agenda during the 69th session.

In keeping with the provisions of paragraph 25 of GA A/68/6, which called upon the Secretary-General to [quote] "synthesize the full range of inputs then available and to present a synthesis report before the end of 2014," [end quote] this event is intended to afford you the opportunity to share your views on what could be important elements our Secretary General may wish to take into account when preparing his report, recognizing that he can and should draw on a wide a range of available inputs.

Against this backdrop, I invite Members and other stakeholders to be bold and pragmatic in their thinking about what could constitute a truly participatory, inclusive, people-centered post-2015 Development Agenda that has the eradication of extreme poverty as its overarching objective; an agenda that addresses access to information, participation and representation of the most vulnerable and marginalised - women, the young, Indigenous People, older persons and persons with disabilities; and one with a concise set of goals that are specific, measurable, time-bound, implementable, and has the appropriate accountability

mechanisms built in so as to enable monitoring progress in implementation. In short, what we seek is a transformational agenda that will reshape global development, and hopefully benefit generations to come.

Excellencies,

The 2012 Rio+20 Outcome Document put us on a path to redefine global development in a way that all nations should assume responsibility for the well-being of people and planet. The highly anticipated post-2015 development agenda, which you will begin negotiating, must represent our collective commitment to end poverty and ensure that sustainable development becomes the norm for all nations, societies and economies.

Through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we saw that international commitments can indeed create a global movement that lifts people out of poverty. The Post-2015 development agenda must pick up where the MDGs left off, fill in its gaps and take us to the next level.

Through a number of events held this past year, including the six High-level events and thematic debates I convened, important lessons have emerged and I would like to share some of what I have learnt.

As noted previously, I see a new development paradigm emerging that is people-centred and based on inclusiveness, equality and equity. Many now want development that is rights-based with the recognition that all rights are indivisible and interdependent, including the right to development. They want economic growth to be inclusive, equitable, resilient and environmentally and socially sustainable, and our natural resources to be managed in a way that is more conducive to human well-being.

Secondly, achieving sustainable development means that societies must truly transform. What kinds of transformations are needed? The poor and vulnerable, as well as women and youth, and all people who struggle to survive on the margins, must be empowered. And policies must address inequalities, poverty, exclusion, injustices, corruption and exploitation, all of which can lead to war, violence and instability.

Thirdly, the new development paradigm must recognize that the rule of law, at both national and international levels, bolsters economic activity and sustainable development. International law and the Charter of the United Nations must be respected in a non-selective way.

Finally, through this new paradigm, we must fully implement the lofty commitments – including those related to gender equality and women’s empowerment – we have so boldly undertaken.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The post-2015 development agenda must be more than ideas – it must be focused and action-oriented. Just yesterday we agreed that proposals by the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be the main basis for the concise set of goals that will encapsulate a truly transformative agenda. The SDGs build on the MDGs and incorporate economic and environmental dimensions. They break new ground by including issues such as energy, economic growth, inequality, cities, sustainable consumption and production, as well as peaceful societies.

However, we cannot achieve “the new” by relying on “the old.” We need an updated “toolkit” so to speak. The events I hosted pointed to some key elements for this toolkit. Let me briefly share a few suggestions in this regard.

Firstly, policies must take into account interrelationships among issues and sectors, or said another way, we need a holistic, integrated approach. For example, ensuring access to clean and safe water, sanitation services and sustainable energy are indispensable factors for poverty eradication, sustained economic growth, raising living standards and for achieving progress on gender equality and other fronts of development.

Secondly, participation was a key word mentioned throughout all these events. Policy makers should explore new ways of engaging civil society in the design of development and other policies. To ensure wide “buy-in” of the post-2015 development process, we have to provide opportunities for people to exercise their right to be included in decision-making and build an inclusive approach for implementation. Attention also needs to be paid to volunteers and

community organizations/cooperatives who can make significant contributions to implementation of the SDGs. Volunteering allows people to work side-by-side on the post-2015 agenda and is integral to participatory democracy; volunteerism needs to be recognised by local authorities and at different levels.

Thirdly, the importance of institutions and governance came up repeatedly in the discussions. For the new development paradigm to take root, institutions must be open and transparent, effective, responsive, and accountable. This requires building and strengthening capacity and coherence at both the national and international levels.

A fourth aspect of a new policy toolkit is an enhanced global partnership for development. This should include the effective use of partnerships, with incentives to encourage actors to advance on the various goals. Existing intergovernmental bodies, in particular the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development, can provide governance and accountability for partnerships. Yet at the same time, public oversight should not stifle private initiative.

Along with partnerships, the new partnership for development should make use of all forms of cooperation, including North-South, South-South and triangular. Official Development Assistance must also continue to reach the poorer countries and to benefit the poorest people. As part of the global partnership for development, the international community should also come together to ensure universal access to information and communication technologies.

Finally, our new toolkit must include a more robust accountability framework, which is guided by national ownership and leadership, and involves all stakeholders at all levels. Some options include peer reviews among countries in sub-regions and regions; and making full use of the oversight capabilities of the High-level Political Forum and the UN Environment Assembly.

Distinguished Guests,

These messages and lessons indeed provide sound guidance for proceeding with negotiations; however, much remains to be done to shape the collective vision, as well as the specifics of this new development agenda. Let me mention two important areas.

The Post-2015 Development Agenda should include an effective strategy to mobilize resources to achieve sustainable development and use them effectively. The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing has proposed options for such a strategy, and the Third International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in July 2015 will provide further strategic guidance. In this regard, it will be critical to reinforce coherence and coordination between the different post-2015 processes in order to shape a single and holistic approach to financing for development, which addresses the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Likewise, concrete steps must be taken to promote the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies. The General Assembly Structured Dialogues on this topic have pointed to some areas of agreement and I have built upon them to prepare my recommendations. A first step will be to map technology facilitation initiatives and better understand technology needs of developing countries. Many countries would also benefit from creating an information and knowledge-sharing platform. I hope that countries will be willing to consider such steps at the very minimum.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we look back over the past year, I believe we can be proud of what we have accomplished. We have conducted broad and inclusive consultations, given ourselves time to develop ambitious goals and targets in specific areas, and truly tried to understand people's aspirations. The proposal of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals is solid and ready for appropriate action.

I thank all of you for your substantial contributions to the discussions both at my High-level events and thematic debates, and as part of the important processes launched at Rio+20. As we begin the next phase, my hope is that they will coalesce into a transformative agenda that all individuals and societies can embrace as their own.

I invite the Secretary-General to take into account these messages and the ones that will emerge in this High-level stocktaking event as he prepares his Synthesis Report. And I now

pass the baton to the President of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly with a sense of optimism, gratitude and anticipation for what is yet to come.

Thank you.
