

## Comments by Canada on the Advanced Unedited Draft of the 2017 Report of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development

### Preamble

These comments are provided in the expectation that the views and opinions expressed will be taken into account in the preparation of future iterations of the Inter-agency Task Force (IATF) on Financing for Development.

We are uncomfortable with opening up draft versions of the IATF report for substantive comments by Member States and other stakeholders for fear that such a period for commentary would evolve into a negotiation process over the content of the report.

Thus, we would hope that any revisions to the advanced unedited draft of the IATF report are solely for the purpose of correcting factual errors.

### Overall Assessment

We have two assessments of the report; one on the substance contained within it and another based on its structural relationship to the broader sustainable development effort.

### Substance

As regards our assessment of the report based on its substance, we would grade it very high and express our overall satisfaction, particularly in light of the time constraints under which it was produced. In our opinion it is written in a balanced manner, seeks to ground itself in available data and evidence, and manages to address a small number of issues with considerable depth for a survey report of this nature.

Some brief, specific comments on the substance include:

- We very much welcome the selection of increasing investments in sustainable development, in particular medium and long-term investment, as one of the two thematic issues of focus of this year's report as well as the subsequent analysis in Chapter II and Chapter III.B. We agree that this is an issue of great importance and hope that this year's intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations recognizes it as such.
  - One suggestion for next year is to focus more heavily on the de-risking / getting-the-investments-in-the-first-place side of the long-term discussion. Perhaps focus could alternate between these two sides aspects of the long-termism challenge on a yearly basis.
- We are pleased to learn that the Task Force has begun working on better understanding the potential of cooperatives and savings banks in financial inclusion and look forward to learning the results of these efforts.

- The issue of entrepreneurship is not treated in great depth and could be a good target for further analysis in future years.
- The language on blended financing seems tepid and cautious and should be more positive and forward-looking.
- We welcome the growing awareness of possible unintended consequences of financial regulatory reforms on sustainable development objectives throughout Chapter III.F. We would welcome additional analysis of this important topic in future reports.
- On the components that look at the UN system itself, we would encourage a focus in future reports on some of the innovative initiatives a number of parts of the UN are undertaking such as the LDN Fund of the UNCCD or the UN Social Impact Fund being developed by UNDP.
- Chapter III.G is in our view the least interesting of all the chapters. It provides little new insight, analysis or value-addition. Instead of focussing on, for example, data flows for research and development (great candidates for the online annex in future years), a broader discussion on the developmental potential of new and emerging technologies, such as Blockchain, would be much more interesting and relevant, as would analysis of the impacts of certain technological trends on our sustainable development objectives, such as greater automation or the liquefaction of the work force through the use of online freelance models.

### Structural Relationship

With respect to the report's structural relationship with the broader sustainable development effort, we would grade it quite low and express significant concern. Specifically, the report has been written as though the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up (FfD Forum) exist in a vacuum isolated from the rest of the UN system and the broader global effort to achieve sustainable development. In this sense, the report has adopted the classic "silo approach"; an approach which has bedevilled the UN for many years but one we hope will soon come to an end under the leadership of the new Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General.

For example, a reader of the draft IATF report would have no idea that the 2017 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) is reviewing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14. Nor would a reader be able to recognize that the theme of the 2017 HLPF is *Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world*. This is highly problematic from our perspective given that the report is meant to serve as the basis for the negotiations leading to intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations which themselves serve as an input to the HLPF.

And the problem extends well beyond the SDGs and the HLPF. For example, in October 2016 the world gathered in Ecuador for the Habitat III Conference which led to the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, an ambitious plan of action that elaborates SDG 11 and highlights the linkages between SDG 11 and the other SDGs. Contained within the New Urban Agenda is a lengthy section on the means of

implementation with a particular focus on the sub-national/local/metropolitan/municipal level. Regrettably, the draft IATF report contains not a single reference to the New Urban Agenda nor does it treat the financing of the SDGs at levels below the national level in any kind of substantive manner (Box 2 of Chapter II.A on tax collection in Maputo, Mozambique notwithstanding). This strikes us as a missed opportunity.

Another example is provided by the UN Ocean Conference, taking place in June 2017 shortly after the FfD Forum and shortly before the HLPF. In our estimation, situational awareness would have called for this year's report to examine financing for development issues related to the oceans and SDG 14; either as a standalone section or in an integrated manner across chapters. Such a treatment could have examined the particular means of implementation challenges inhibiting the sustainable management of our oceans and informed us of new and innovative financial approaches being developed, such as the issuance of blue bonds. Instead, there is barely a reference to anything related to the oceans or SDG 14 save a brief mention on how the Oceans Conference *may* provide an impetus for a WTO agreement on fishery subsidy disciplines.

And life on land fares no better than life in the sea. In January of this year, at a special session of the UN Forum of Forests, negotiations on the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 were concluded with its formal adoption to take place in advance of the 12<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Forum on Forests in early May. Like the New Urban Agenda, it contains a sizeable means of implementation section fully embedded within the Addis Ababa Action Agenda framework. Yet, the adoption of this important instrument is completely overlooked as is any discussion on forestry-related means of implementation challenges or innovations.

The above examples illustrate our fundamental concern; that the draft IATF report has adopted an UN 1.0 approach in which it happily lives within its own stovepipe and forgoes the admittedly difficult effort of building linkages and situating itself within a broader system and as part of a broader effort.

### Future Reports

Looking to the future, we would expect that reports continue to review the three chapters and seven action areas of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda *as well as* provide relevant examination of the theme and goals being discussed at the HLPF of the same year.

We would also expect future reports to show better situational awareness by including helpful analysis of the topics discussed in the major UN meetings and conferences taking place immediately before or after the yearly FfD Forum; the Habitat III Conference, the UN Ocean Conference and the 12<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Forum on Forests being examples from this year.

This, however, does not necessitate a doubling in size of future reports. We view this year's report as being somewhat *sui generis* in that it had to establish a baseline comprising the width and breath of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to measure progress in future years. With much of this baseline work completed (we recognize that there remain a small number of topics whose baseline is not yet sufficiently developed due to a lack of data or other reasons) we would not foresee a need for the on-going review of the chapters of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to be as long, particularly if future

reports focus on new developments and areas highlighted as of an especial importance by the intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations.