



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

17 July 2017

Excellency,

I have the honor to forward herewith a letter from H.E. Gillian Bird, Permanent Representative of Australia and H.E. Martin García Moritán, Permanent Representative of Argentina, co-facilitators of the consultations aimed at enhancing synergies and coherence and reducing overlap in the agendas of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies, in light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In their letter, the co-facilitators present a report which summarizes their consultations over the past six months, setting out a number of recommendations for your consideration as well as a number of steps for the way forward.

I encourage Member States to reflect on their findings and, in particular, to give due consideration, within the context of the on-going consultations of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly, to the proposal relating to the continuation of this process during the 72nd session.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Thomson'.

Peter Thomson

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



7 July 2017

Excellency,

We are pleased to write to you in our capacity as the Co-facilitators to lead consultations aimed at enhancing synergies and coherence and reducing overlap where it is found to exist in the agendas of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies, as well as the High-Level Political Forum and other related fora in light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In line with this mandate, we have held open meetings with the whole membership, the UN system and other stakeholders on February 8th, March 6th, April 11th, and June 13th. In those meetings, there was an active participation of a wide range of delegations, reflecting the importance of this topic, which provided many concrete ideas and proposals, and allowed the preparation of the report that is enclosed herewith.

The report contains a summary of the discussions and recommendations to be submitted to the Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly for consideration by Member States.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your team for your collaboration throughout the process, and all the delegations for their active and constructive engagement.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Gillian Bird
Australia

Martín García Moritán
Argentina

H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson
President of the 71st Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations

Report of the Co-Facilitators on the consultations on the alignment of the work of the United Nations with the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development

Introduction:

We, the Permanent Representatives of Argentina and Australia were appointed as co-facilitators, pursuant to paragraphs 22 and 23 of the General Assembly resolution 70/305, by the President of the General Assembly on 22 December 2016, to lead consultations aimed at enhancing synergies and coherence and reducing overlap where it is found to exist in the agendas of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and their subsidiary bodies, as well as the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and other related fora in light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We held meetings with Member States, Civil Society, Committee Chairs, and UN Stakeholders between February and April 2017 with a final briefing held in June 2017. The goal of the meetings was to involve all stakeholders in an open and inclusive process and receive their opinions, inputs and feedback.

Results of discussions:

The discussions were rich with ideas. We have broadly grouped the ideas into three main themes:

1. Encouraging greater cooperation across the UN system on 2030 Agenda implementation

There was convergence between stakeholders on the need for stronger coherence within and among different UN fora on the 2030 Agenda. As a result, information sharing should be considered critical to better understand the breadth and depth of the work and discussions at the UN related to the 2030 Agenda. Overcoming the existing silos between Committees and understanding the value and connection of the 2030 Agenda to Committees outside of the Second and Third Committees will be critical in order to achieve the alignment of the 2030 Agenda in a coherent manner. While it is clear that the Second and Third Committees will be the most involved in the implementation and follow up of the Agenda, the linkages to First, Fourth and Sixth Committees must be strengthened, and these Committees empowered to move forward the 2030 Agenda. In this respect, Fifth Committee must also ensure that it is focused on the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, the Second and Third Committees need to ensure they do not hold onto ownership of the Agenda too closely. An Agenda of this scope can only succeed if it is addressed in a way that ensures its crosscutting and integrated nature.

Greater cooperation and discussion across different parts of the UN system is also vital, including between the work of the General Assembly and ECOSOC, and between ECOSOC's subsidiary bodies.

2. Gaps and duplication

From our discussions it was clear that further work on addressing gaps and duplications is required. Views differed on what work needs to be done to effect change. There remain

conceptual differences about what “addressing gaps and duplication” mean. For some it means mainstreaming and focusing the work of the UN, while for others it means developing agenda items to cover the gaps and strengthening the work of the UN. There is a strong need for Member States to agree on a framework to address gaps and duplication in the agendas of UN bodies. It is clear that in order to comprehensively address gaps and duplication, compromises are required including on both adding and streamlining mandates, resolutions and agenda items from the work of the General Assembly and other UN bodies. Any solution will require greater political commitment to achieve real reform.

3. Moving the UN from a vertical to a horizontal policy focus

During discussions a simple but powerful concept emerged; historically the division of work of the UN has been vertical, given that the basic organization of the UN is based on the division of Committees by different subjects with almost no mechanism of dialogue and interaction between them. As such, thematic areas of the UN are siloed and are not encouraged to work across different areas.

However, the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development – with its 17 Goals and 169 targets, integrated and indivisible nature, and balance across the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic; social; and environmental- cannot be considered in a siloed manner. The success of the 2030 Agenda requires the UN to operate horizontally, taking into account connecting issues across the breadth of its work. Discussions indicated a willingness by all parties to look at the 2030 Agenda through the lens of the entire UN, understanding this is not the current practice. In order to achieve the 2030 Agenda we need to move forward in this mindset change.

Recommendations

Following consultations we propose five practical recommendations to assist the UN and its Member States to improve the coherence of the 2030 Agenda. Four of these recommendations focus on how to move the UN beyond traditional policy silos and towards integration of the 2030 Agenda across the work of the United Nations. The fifth proposal is on the timeline for this process.

- 1. Recommend the General Assembly Committees and its Bureaux hold joint meetings as required to outline the relationship between the work of these bodies and the 2030 Agenda. Further recommend that the bureau of the ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies be included, as appropriate in these meetings. Recommend seeking advice, within existing mandates, from the Secretary-General on the feasibility of issuing joint UN reports for Committee resolutions.*

There was broad consensus around the idea of holding joint meetings of bodies and bureaux across the General Assembly and ECOSOC in order to promote consistency and coherence in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

We are aware that there are different views among Member States regarding joint reports. Nonetheless, in order to take forward the discussion, a preliminary issue that needs to be addressed is whether it is possible to have joint reports, bearing in mind the technical requirements for them (length, time frame, etc). Taking this into account, it would be useful to know whether joint reports are feasible, and on what subjects, so that States can decide how to move forward.

Bearing in mind that any decision will be made by Member States, we believe it would be constructive to know the opinion of the SG on this matter.

2. *Recommend the President of ECOSOC and the President of the General Assembly, in their annual briefing to Member States, provide more clarity on the interlinkages between the work of the UN including in the General Assembly Committees and ECOSOC subsidiary bodies, and the 2030 Agenda, taking into account the sub-set of goals to be annually discussed at the High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development under the auspices of ECOSOC.*

Bearing in mind the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the Agenda 2030, the President of the ECOSOC and the President of the General Assembly, in their briefings, could highlight specific resolutions, reports, or any input that might be related to the set of goals and themes discussed at that year's HLPF. This would also help deliver stronger coherence between what is discussed at the General Assembly and what will be discussed annually at the HLPF under the auspices of the ECOSOC.

3. *Recommend that future work on this process, within its mandate, take into account other ongoing processes related to the 2030 Agenda including the UN development system reform and the review of the General Assembly resolution 68/1 regarding the work of ECOSOC.*

There is a need to ensure that processes are not siloed. While it remains important that each process focus on its given mandate, there is also a need to ensure each process is cognisant of the other to support a coherent UN reform agenda.

The objective of this recommendation is not to re-open negotiated resolutions. Instead, it is for this process to be in line with the implementation of other ongoing processes. We are aware that each process has its particular mandate, objective and rhythm. However, all of these processes share a common aim: to improve the functioning of the UN. It is with this spirit that we propose they should not be isolated from one another, but reinforce each other, without deviating from their mandates.

4. *Recommend that in the 72nd Session of the General Assembly, the General Committee, in consultation with the President of ECOSOC, present proposals to Member States on how to address gaps and duplication in the Agenda of the General Assembly as they relate to the 2030 Agenda, and use as a basis for these proposals, if deemed appropriate, the report contained within the letter issued by the President of the General Assembly on 13*

September 2016, "Report on Strategic Alignment of future sessions of the General Assembly with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"

The process that was mandated by the President of the 70th General Assembly, HE Mogens Lykketoft, tasked Colombia to lead a process with the Chairs of the General Assembly Committees and the President of ECOSOC to map the Sustainable Development Goals with the work of the United Nations. In its conclusions, the group expressed a need to address the identified gaps and overlap in the agendas of the UN to achieve the correct alignment of the work with the 2030 Agenda. We believe it is necessary to move forward with clear leadership and a clear framework. The General Committee has a mandate to make recommendations on the agenda of the General Assembly, which can then form the basis for discussions by Member States. The recommendations of the General Committee would not contradict the State-led nature of this process, but could serve to pursue and encourage the achievement of this objective. After this assessment, any step forward, if agreed, would be decided by Member States.

- 5. Recommend the President of the General Assembly consider the feasibility of completing the first stage of the alignment process by the end of the 73rd Session of the General Assembly and as an input to the High Level Political Forum under the auspices of the General Assembly, including addressing gaps and duplication in the Agenda of the General Assembly, taking into account that further alignment of the UN will continue for the whole duration of the 2030 Agenda.*

We propose the deadline of the end of the 73rd Session of the General Assembly as the timeline for the completion of this work. This date coincides with the HLPF convened under the auspices of the General Assembly for the first time and four years will have passed from the adoption of the Agenda, and we will be only eleven years away from the year 2030 when the Agenda is due to be fully implemented and its goals and targets achieved.

Next Steps

Based on our discussions and drawing from these recommendations, we propose the following next steps:

- 1. That the President of the General Assembly consider convening a meeting early in the session of the General Assembly with the chairs and bureaux of the main committees of the General Assembly and the President and bureaux of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, as appropriate, to discuss how their work relates to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and how best to enhance synergies, coherence and address gaps and duplication.*
- 2. That the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Economic and Social Council, further to the holding of the above mentioned meeting, consider providing a joint briefing to member states to provide more clarity on the interlinkages between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the work of the General Assembly committees, the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, taking into*

account the sub-set of goals to be annually discussed at the High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council.

3. *That the General Assembly in the context of the consultations of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly during the 71st session consider requesting the President of the General Assembly to convene the General Committee to identify proposals, in consultation with the President of the Economic and Social Council, aimed at addressing gaps and duplication in the agenda of the General Assembly as they relate to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking into account the Report on Strategic Alignment of Future Sessions of the General Assembly and other inputs, for the consideration of the 73rd session of the General Assembly in advance of the 2019 High Level Political Forum under the auspices of the General Assembly.*

Conclusion

This work to enhance synergies and coherence and reducing overlap where it is found to exist in the agendas of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies, as well as the high-level political forum and other related forums in light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development started in the 70th Session of the General Assembly. Under the stewardship of Colombia a “*Report on Strategic Alignment of future sessions of the General Assembly with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*” was issued on September 2016 outlining gaps and duplication in the agenda of the General Assembly. This year we held open consultations in order to gather opinions. This report is our means to provide tangible proposals that can help Member States move this process forward.

We would like to thank all delegations and stakeholders for their active and thoughtful contribution to this process. We hope this report is useful for future discussions on aligning the work of the United Nations with the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.