



**The President
of the
Economic and Social Council**

13 July 2015

Excellency,

I have the honour to transmit herewith the summaries of the High-level segment of the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) convened under the auspices of the Council.

This was an important session of the Council which allowed us to take stock of the significance and impact of the Millennium Development Goals and to plan for how best to implement, communicate and review the ambitious and transformative post-2015 development agenda we will adopt in September 2015.

These summaries, which reflect the discussions of the HLPF, held from 26 June to 8 July 2015 and the last ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review, held on 9 and 10 July 2015, will contribute to the third International Conference on Financing for Development and the inter-governmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda.

I want to thank the members of the ECOSOC Bureau, as well as Member State representatives, speakers, panellists and moderators, and other participating stakeholders, for contributing to ten days of constructive dialogue, open and transparent debate and innovative thinking.

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

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

Martin Sajdik
President of ECOSOC

All Permanent Representatives of States Members
of the United Nations and
States members of specialized agencies



The President
of the
Economic and Social Council

President's Summaries

of the

High-level segment of the 2015 session
of the Economic and Social Council

and

High-level political forum on sustainable development
convened under the auspices of the Council

13 July 2015

Part I: Summary of the high-level political forum on sustainable development “Strengthening integration, implementation and review: the HLPF after 2015”

In anticipation of the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda at the UN Summit in September 2015, the HLPF discussed how best to prepare for implementing the agenda and to shape its own work to promote and review the implementation of the agenda.

General messages

The year 2015 is pivotal for charting the path towards sustainable development for the next 15 years. The Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the UN Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Paris will be three critical milestones in this endeavor. Member States have already formulated the proposal for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There is now the need to launch an all-out effort to implement this new agenda. This agenda has eradication of poverty as its main objective and sustainable development as the way forward.

The HLPF will be crucial for helping to translate the vision of the post-2015 development agenda into action. The HLPF will be a place where the international community looks at the “big picture”. It needs to provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations. It will play a critical role in reviewing progress made towards the SDGs and help ensure accountability on implementation. It should address issues where implementation of the goals is off-track, including the means of implementation, and promote, inform and guide action. It should be solution-oriented. It should stimulate and facilitate collaboration for implementation. For this, it should have a clear view of readiness and capacity to implement the SDGs for all countries.

The HLPF should also be a forum for responding to new and emerging challenges, promoting the science-policy interface and considering the particular challenges of SIDS, LDCs, LLDCs, Africa and the special needs faced by MICs. It should be forward looking, assess the long term impact of policies and trends, and focus on building resilience. It could serve as an “early warning system” for international action, with its declaration providing concrete recommendations for actions.

The HLPF should be flexible enough to remain relevant for the whole period of implementation of the SDGs. Its agenda should balance predictability and flexibility. It should build on the work of other platforms and bodies, notably ECOSOC and its whole system. The Forum needs to be prepared in a transparent and inclusive manner. The deliberations of the HLPF meetings should resonate with all people, including women, children and youth, and disadvantaged groups.

It was proposed to develop a roadmap with critical milestones and steps for realizing the vision for the HLPF. This could include follow-up and review of the agenda up until 2030.

Implementation

There needs to be strong national ownership of implementation. Several countries are “early starters”: they have already started to adapt their legal and policy frameworks to integrate the SDGs. This includes constitutional amendments and the creation or adjustments of institutions. It also includes reviewing national sustainable development strategies and sectoral and other policies in view of the SDGs.

A point that was repeatedly stressed during the forum is the central idea of the new agenda of “leaving no one behind”. Governments must respond with policies that support individuals throughout their life

course and promote non-discrimination and inclusivity. Marginalized and disadvantaged groups, including children, youth, the old, women, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and migrants, among others, need to be given adequate attention.

Implementation should learn from the lessons of the MDGs experience. There also needs to be transparency and accountability, an area in which the HLPF can play an important role. The HLPF should become a forum for sharing national experiences in SDG implementation.

Communication

Communication will be critical for successful implementation. The primary responsibility of communicating the post-2015 development agenda throughout the next 15 years lies with the governments of the member states. The Declaration on the agenda will play a key role in this regard and the messages Heads of State and Government agree on in September should be clear.

Once the SDGs are adopted in September, they must be communicated to inspire billions of people everywhere to take ownership and implement the agenda. They must be distilled into something that people can understand, identify with, and relate to their daily lives. This is made easier because civil society contributed to shaping the agenda which reflects its aspirations as well as the complexity of today's world.

Communication should aim to make people understand how they personally contribute to the global agenda and to feel proud of this. It will be important to project that this is a universal agenda, with a much greater level of ambition than one could have imagined a few years ago. The motto to "Leave no one behind" is also a powerful vehicle for mobilizing people. It can be a two-way street, and be used to collect data on what people want and to create feed-back loop.

The agenda should be communicated through social media, traditional media and traditional civil society mobilization techniques as well as art, music and culture. Communication will have to happen in all countries and at all levels, down to the local grass roots level where implementation takes place. It needs to reach all groups and to be tailored to various countries and groups. It is also good to identify and target trend-setters in various communities.

It was suggested to think of alternative names for SDGs and for the post 2015 development agenda so that they are easier to communicate.

Translating the SAMOA vision into action

Progress is being made in regard of the SAMOA Pathway, notably on a partnership follow-up framework. Full implementation is urgent. It was stated that even only small projects can have huge impact. Capacity gaps have to be addressed, including in the area of statistics. The HLPF can help to mainstream the Samoa follow-up in the review framework on the post-2015 agenda.

Engaging all stakeholders

Implementing this transformative agenda will be impossible without engaging multiple stakeholders. Local governments, which operate on the front line of development, have an important role in localizing the implementation of the agenda. Parliaments should also play a critical role in national leadership and implementation.

The involvement of civil society at all levels needs to be consistently strong. The HLPF can play a role in this regard. Various approaches and pathways will necessarily reflect differences between country circumstances. The HLPF itself must engage major groups and other stakeholders in an ambitious, systematic and innovative way as mandated by the General Assembly.

Rallying business to implement the post-2015 agenda will be indispensable. There is a need to communicate the agenda in language it is familiar with. This will encourage long-term investments

that will yield investment returns as well as ensure broad-based socio-economic benefits and engender positive societal changes. Regulations, safeguards and the rule of law are needed.

Institutional framework

It will be necessary to create a multi-level architecture that can support implementation. Equitable and transparent governance will play a key role at local, national, regional and global levels. There needs to be system-wide coherence and complementarity between the forum and other existing bodies and institutions, notably ECOSOC. The HLPF must draw from the work of other platforms as much as possible. Regional meetings on sustainable development organized by the UN regional commissions as part of the ECOSOC system can identify regional specificities, review progress and transmit recommendations through established channels to the HLPF.

Follow-up and review, science and data

Follow-up and review

An effective follow-up and review mechanism is necessary to the success of the new agenda. The post-2015 Summit in September is expected to give broad guidance; however, further discussion will be needed. Guidance on the reviews should not be overly prescriptive, yet should be clear on what is expected.

The main principles that were put forward for the reviews were: they should be voluntary and state-led; address progress on all SDGs and means of implementation; be rigorous and science- and evidence-based; be inclusive; and support countries in making informed policy choices. Developing countries should be given support, including capacity building. The review mechanism should refrain from shaming, but build incentives to share experiences and lessons; discuss solutions and induce change. It should foster a culture of openness.

Follow-up and review should happen at multiple levels, all the way from local to global. The principle of subsidiarity may be applied. Coherence and close links need to be ensured across these levels.

The starting point must be the country level, taking into account country specificities. It will be where follow-up takes place and progress and policies are evaluated. All countries could be encouraged to conduct regular reviews and publish reports on their progress on the SDGs. Countries should have the flexibility to determine how to approach the review in light of their national circumstances, however comparability must be ensured. Existing reporting mechanisms should be used as much as possible to avoid increasing the reporting burden. Among those mentioned were the African Peer Review Mechanism or existing human rights mechanisms. Reporting requirements could also be streamlined to avoid duplication.

The regional level is also important for follow-up and review. Regional reviews can serve as a platform for exchange of knowledge and experiences. They can foster the translation of the SDGs into integrated national policies. They can also allow an inclusive discussion of regional trends, address cross border regional issues, support common solutions to common challenges, and foster regional cooperation. Each region can shape its own review process and the role of its various regional organizations, taking into account regional contexts. UN regional commissions will be expected to play an important role in some regions. Some countries would like peer reviews to be conducted at regional level. It was noted that reviews or peer reviews across different regions allow countries to draw from a great variety of experiences. Existing MDG monitoring processes will need to carry on their work with the SDGs.

At global level, the HLPF will play a decisive role in following up progress on the implementation of the new agenda. The zero draft of the post-2015 development agenda refers to the HLPF as the apex

of the review process. The HLPF should become a place for dialogue between all countries and all stakeholders, including parliaments.

The HLPF can host presentations by States of their *national review* and implementation efforts. All countries should be able to report to the HLPF on their progress on all aspects of the post-2015 development agenda. It was said that, ideally, each state would volunteer to participate in this process at least twice by 2030. Some said that national reports should be reviewed at regional level before being transferred to the HLPF. Regional platforms could identify issues to be addressed by the HLPF during a dedicated session. The HLPF could discuss guidelines for national voluntary reports. It will be important to find a balance between ensuring comparability of national reviews and preserving flexibility and national ownership.

The role of the HLPF should not be limited to receiving reports: it should encourage real dialogue, mutual learning and partnerships. It could be a “matchmaking market place” in this regard. A dynamic exchange will also spur interest from national agencies to participate in HLPF reviews. In a first phase, HLPF reviews could focus on what countries are doing to adjust their national strategies and policies for implementing the SDGs.

The *HLPF thematic reviews* should draw from thematic reviews taking place in the ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies and other fora and international organizations. Thematic platforms will thus be important for follow-up and review, but they need to adapt to the post-2015 development agenda. The HLPF should provide space for thematic platforms to showcase best practices and lessons learned and provide the basis for its own reviews of specific areas related to the SDGs. HLPF thematic reviews should look at nexus of topics or cross cutting issues, moving beyond a silo approach and examining the links between various goals.

Reviews should strive to take into account the voices of civil society organizations and citizens at all levels. There are various ways to ensure this engagement. These include institutionalized shadow or other reporting, engaging civil society at each stage of a process -- as done by the Committee on World Food Security -- or convening focused thematic meetings with relevant actors. At national level, constitutional and legal frameworks must be taken into account and country specific arrangements should be established. The activities of the UN system and other stakeholders should also be reviewed.

It will be important to be clear on which indicators and data will be used in the reviews.

Meetings of the HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly should focus on review of progress at the strategic level, including on means of implementation, and devote time to new and pressing issues that need addressing by the international community.

The HLPF, at its 2016 session, could elaborate further the review architecture and its functioning, based on an exchange of experiences on the elaboration of national strategies to implement the agenda and on feed back from the regions on their approach to reviewing progress.

Data

Data collection and analysis would be critical for implementation, follow-up and review of the post-2015 agenda and it would be crucial to use disaggregated data such as by income, age, migratory status, disability, sex and other. All stakeholders should have access to this information. It is important to link the SDGs with multi-dimensional measures of development and poverty. The review should seek to exploit the possibilities of “big data” and build on the data revolution. Country capacity for data collection, statistics and analyses will need to be strengthened.

Science-policy interface

The HLPF should provide a platform for science-policy dialogue, highlight trends, examine policy-relevant analysis and translate outcomes of such science-policy debates into action, thereby contributing to agenda setting. Traditional knowledge and various perspectives should be represented. The HLPF could help include SDGs topics on the research agendas worldwide.

The science behind new and emerging issues needs to be made available in a systematic and understandable way to policy makers. The Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) should deliver to the HLPF a concise analysis of emerging issues and global challenges. Many emerging issues and “grand challenges” were identified in the discussion.

Global Sustainable Development Report

The inclusive approach taken by DESA for preparing the 2015 edition of the Global Sustainable Development Report, GSDR, was welcomed. The report should continue to be produced in collaboration with all relevant UN agencies, scientists and experts and draw from peer-reviewed sources. It should avoid duplication of other reports. The GSDR should be clearly linked to the implementation, follow-up and review of the SDGs, focusing in particular on the interlinkages of the SDGs and identifying emerging issues. Thematic chapters could be linked to the agenda of the HLPF and inform its discussions.

Means of implementation

An ambitious agenda calls for ambitious means of implementation. A strengthened global partnership is needed. By assessing the status of financing, technology and capacity-building availability for implementation in all countries, e.g. from country reports, the HLPF could help direct support where it is most needed. It can also serve as a platform to mobilize support and launch partnerships.

Financing

It is important to agree and implement a strategy to mobilize resources from all sources to achieve the SDGs.

We need creative ideas on the way forward. Beyond the magnitude of investments required, it is also a question of channeling resources in the right way and ensuring sustainable development impact, as well as transferring knowledge and know-how and building development capacities in countries. Financing is also about providing incentives for innovation.

Some countries have also started plans to raise external resources in a coherent way to finance priorities in the SDGs. ODA will remain critical, especially for LDCs.

Capacity building for domestic resource mobilization is important. Improving public accounting systems is a critical tool. Supreme audit institutions can help improve transparency and accountability in use of public resources. The need to fight corruption and illicit financing flows has achieved higher recognition by the international community. Many called for a strengthening of international tax cooperation under the auspices of ECOSOC and its system.

Partnerships

Partnerships were repeatedly mentioned as important elements for the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. They can also help developing countries to bridge financing gaps or leap-frog to new technologies. Education can be supported by global partnerships in the same way health was during the MDGs. The HLPF could review the contribution of partnerships, sharing experiences and success conditions; and developing appropriate criteria or frameworks for partnerships. ECOSOC and its Partnerships Forum should provide inputs for the HLPF.

Technology

Many said that technology could become a catalyst for achieving the SDGs. In order to promote the utilization and advancement of new technological solutions, appropriate policy frameworks need to be established. Many said that transfer of knowledge and technology, particularly for LDCs and Africa, are needed, including gender-sensitive and equitable technology.

Capacity-building, training and learning

To implement the SDGs, there will need to be a focus on building capacity in the developing world, in countries lagging behind in science, technology, statistics and many other areas. Education and awareness-raising are critical to enable ownership of the agenda and its implementation. Inter-disciplinary and integrated approaches should be fostered, moving away from single disciplines. Evaluation of education systems should be further improved. Going forward, it is important to keep the learning and training issue on the agenda of the HLPF.

Integration

The SDGs are overlapping and cannot be achieved on a goal-by-goal basis. Synergies are important, as are trade-offs. Integrated policy making will be critical and requires taking into account interlinkages between various sectors from the policy formulation stage.

Integrated planning however remains a challenge. Ingredients of success for integrated approaches have been found to include: bold political leadership; adequate institutions in government vested with enough authority to ensure that the new approach is implemented and silo approach is avoided; active engagement of local actors; flexible funding mechanisms cutting across the silos; and quick, early wins in order to demonstrate success.

There are high hopes that the HLPF, building on the integration function of ECOSOC, advances an integrated approach to the sustainable development agenda, one that approaches poverty eradication in a holistic manner and maximizes coherence among the various relevant sectors and priority action areas. It could provide guidance to UN coordination structures such as UN-water and UN-Energy. Some said it could address orphan issues from the SDGs that do not have a clear home in the UN.

Sustainable consumption and production (SCP)

SCP is an integral and cross-cutting theme in the SDG framework. Many countries have been integrating SCP into their policy and legal frameworks. There is a strong political dimension to SCP in relation to its creating potential winners and losers. Hence, SCP needs government support and has to be incorporated in budget and planning systems. Shifts towards more sustainable consumption patterns can only materialize through involving citizens, including the disadvantaged groups, at the grass-root level to foster cultural change in values and behaviors. Thus empowering local governments is essential. Also important is to incentivize various actors. The involvement of the private sector, especially SMEs, is critical for success. The 10YFP on SCP, adopted at Rio+20, should be fully utilized to advance the implementation of SDG 12 on SCP as well as SCP-related targets under other goals.

Part II: Summary of the Annual Ministerial Review of ECOSOC
“Managing the transition from the MDGs to the sustainable development goals: What it will take”

MDG Review

Concurrent with the final Annual Ministerial Review of the ECOSOC High-level Segment, the launch of the final Millennium Development Goals Report—an annual assessment of global and regional progress towards the Goals—highlighted the historic nature of the Goals, the most successful anti-poverty drive in history. The occasion also emphasized the importance of building on the growing momentum for the new sustainable development agenda to be adopted in September 2015.

The 2015 Report confirmed that the MDGs contributed to reducing poverty, empowering women and girls and improving health and well-being. However, in many countries economic growth was not sufficiently inclusive or equitable to reach the poorest. Conflicts remain the biggest threat to human development, with fragile and conflict-affected countries typically experiencing the highest poverty rates and levels of extreme deprivation. Particular attention must be paid to the needs of middle income countries (MICs), where large concentrations of poverty persist.

Priority consideration and support must be given to countries in special situations, including the least developed countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which have critical gaps in meeting the MDGs and in resource mobilization.

Despite progress, on average, almost half of the population in LDCs still live in extreme poverty. The unfinished MDG agenda for LDCs should be integrated into the post-2015 development agenda, complementing the Istanbul Programme of Action (2011-20). Greater emphasis should be placed on enhancing aid-for-trade and trade facilitation for LDCs, as well as the potential impact of technology to accelerate growth, employment creation and overall development.

Transition from MDGs to SDGs

The High-level Segment of ECOSOC offered valuable policy guidance for the transition from the MDGs to the post-2015 development agenda. The broadening of the development agenda demands integrated policy responses to these complex development challenges at the country, regional and global levels, as well as to the growing systemic risks associated with the accelerating globalization and interconnectedness of countries. In response, countries need to deepen policy integration and cooperation. ECOSOC has a key role to guide such policy integration efforts at all levels, including through knowledge production and a broad range of partnership mechanisms. At the same time, the United Nations development system will need to support countries' efforts to formulate and implement evidence-based integrated policies.

ECOSOC's National Voluntary Presentations (NVPs) have grown into a vital lessons-learned platform that can be built upon in the post-2015 era, with more than 60 countries having participated since 2007. In 2015, presentations by the Governments of Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Philippines and Zambia emphasized the importance of mutually reinforcing actions at the national, regional and global levels, in efforts to successfully transition from the MDGs to the SDGs. In the course of the rich presentations and discussions, NVP Countries highlighted a number of critical lessons from the MDG process that would be instructive for the SDGs. Central among these lessons was the need to prioritize and focus on finishing the work at the heart of the MDG agenda, particularly with respect to poverty eradication. They also expressed concern that both attention and resources may become thinly dispersed across the broader and more complex demands of the new agenda, with diluted outcomes.

The right planning and policy frameworks need to be in place at the outset, with the appropriate buy-in and engagement of citizens and stakeholders alike. Of particular importance is the need to define specific milestones in the course of development planning, with clear monitoring and evaluation systems and criteria built in. In addition, there is the need to take a “whole of government” approach, working across institutional and administrative boundaries while balancing the interests of rights-holders and duty-bearers. Institutional mechanisms of the State, including parliaments, should be strengthened to enhance engagement in national priority setting, implementation, oversight and review. The participation of NVP Reviewers also underlined trust and accountability between development cooperation partners as critical for national progress.

State of the global economy and trade

In the post-2015 context, economic growth should lead to shared prosperity and should be measured not just by the rate of growth but also by the degree to which growth improves well-being of people on an equitable and sustainable basis. This type of inclusive growth is founded on the creation of decent jobs, improvement in livelihoods and rising real incomes for all.

Current forecasts of the global economic and financial situation reveal a mixed picture. The global economy continues to grow at a modest pace, with a gradual improvement expected in 2016. Growth rates in virtually all regions of the world will remain well below pre-2008 financial crisis levels. In many countries, growth is too weak to improve gains in employment creation and poverty reduction. Keeping in mind the centrality of balanced growth to achieving the SDGs, every effort will need to be made to harmonize policy actions to spur growth, increase foreign direct investment flows aligned with sustainable development objectives, and support structural reforms where needed.

The subdued performance of the world economy has been accompanied by relatively weak growth in global trade. In recent years, trade has expanded at roughly the same pace as global output after growing twice as fast in the decades before the crisis. Priority should be attributed to the expansion of international trade to better function as an engine of global growth and contribute to sustainable development objectives.

A key feature of the macroeconomic outlook for this year is the widening divergence in growth rates between the various developing regions. This divergence reflects a combination of global, regional and country-specific factors, including macroeconomic imbalances, political issues and armed conflicts. This implies a role for greater coordination and cooperation at the regional level. UN Regional Commissions provide a key linkage to regional and national specific development challenges and realities that would be valuable in promoting policy integration and related approaches in the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs. To this end, a linkage should be forged between ECOSOC and regional sustainable development mechanisms under the aegis of the UN Regional Commissions.

Building institutions and capacities

Policy integration for a successful transition to SDGs will be enabled by the reduction of barriers between institutions and the identification of incentives for cross-sectoral coordination. Institutional adaptation will rely on a shift to a culture of shared responsibilities, working across structures and disciplines and redefining organizational functions. At the same time, there is a need to build on existing local and national structures and norms, while minimizing the potential of competition for resources.

At the national level, institutional reforms must lead to outcomes that leave no one behind, are accessible to all and address the needs of the population. This may require designating or instituting new national bodies to strategize, plan, coordinate and review implementation. Institutional and human resource capacities would be needed to ensure that government agencies effectively engage and manage complex, multi-layered partnerships with other stakeholders, including the private sector

and civil society, in ways that build trust and accountability for results. With Governments in the lead, all partners should be engaged in the critical work of building statistical capacity, reviewing progress, measuring results and adjusting for significant course correction.

Promoting local ownership of the SDGs, including by local government authorities, is critical to the attainment of their objectives. In particular, young people and citizens in general should be empowered to own the development agenda and be part of the change that is urgently required.