

E-discussion: *“Managing the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals: What it will take”*

Summary Report

Thematic Window II: Required adaptation by institutions, structures and individuals

I. Introduction

Thematic window II of the e-discussion addressed “Required adaptation by institutions, structures and individuals” in the context of managing the transition to the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The window was moderated by Mr. John-Mary Kauzya, Chief, Public Administration Capacity Branch, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. There were 148 contributions from experts in a variety of fields, including from civil society, business, academia and the UN system.

The following questions guided the discussion in this window:

- What types of changes and adaptation in institutions and structures will be needed at the national, regional and global levels to facilitate a smooth transition to a post-2015 era? What are the necessary corresponding changes in the roles and responsibilities of all partners?
- To what extent are existing global institutions and policy frameworks ready to adopt and implement a more integrated approach to development? What adjustments may be needed to ensure that governments, the UN system and other partners respond to the universal and unified agenda and deliver equitable results for everyone?
- What are the institutional and individual capacities required to facilitate a smooth transition from the MDGs to the SDGs?

II. Discussion Points

There was general agreement that institutions, conceived as organizations as well as formal and informal rules at national regional and global levels, will need to adapt in the transition from implementing MDGs to SDGs.

The nature and magnitude of the adjustments in institutions, whether through creating new ones or reforming existing ones, will not be uniform everywhere. They will depend on the context at the national, regional or even global levels. While the SDGs are universal, implementing them will be pursued in **context-specific** ways.

Given the emphasis on integration embedded in the SDGs, institutions will need to be readjusted or created to prioritise capabilities for **coordination, collaboration, partnerships, and holistic approaches** to development.

The implementation of the SDGs will need to adopt a human rights approach and the concerned institutions will need to adapt to work holistically within a **rights-based approach**.

One institution that may require further **reform** is the United Nations. The voices of global citizens should be represented at the global level, and foster democracy, justice, prosperity, security and sustainability everywhere in the world. In addition, the UN system will need to adopt working approaches and methodologies that enable it to tap capabilities outside its own institutions for implementing the SDGs.

The media is undergoing a rapid change, especially with the growth of **social media**. While it is necessary and proving useful for social media to promote interaction that is rapid and almost instantaneous, mainstream media, which provides well thought out and often well researched information and opinions that can guide policy and institutional reform, continues to serve a very important purpose of providing objective information.

Intergovernmental discussions of successful implementation of commitments (e.g., MDGs, plan of action for LDCs, etc.) often refer to the need for **capable institutions**. Where does the capability of institutions reside? The answer from most comments seems to indicate norms, rules, regulations, laws and structures. But how do these come about? And once they are in place, how do they get dynamised to effect implementation?

There is a need to bring on board very strongly the issue of **leadership and human resource capacity**. Leaders and people in these institutions work and implement commitments such as SDGs. Transformative leadership will be critical to ensuring the success of implementation of SDGs. Transformative leadership will engineer the necessary changes in institutions. It will transform individuals in their mindset and capabilities, it will transform organizations and institutions, and it stands chances of transforming societies. It must be recalled that there is a symbiotic relationship between leadership and institutions where by leaders engineer institutions and institutions guide the operations and behavior of leaders. How will transformative leadership and human resource capacities come about in the transition from MDGs to SDGs?

Many participants have referred to institutions as though they are synonymous everywhere. There is a need to think about which kinds of institutions that are being referred to, as there are many different types; legislative, executive and judicial institutions, as well as those with coordination and collaboration functions. Some operate at local, national, regional or global levels.

III. Policy recommendations

Institutional capacity development will be key to ensure smooth transition to implementation of SDGs which will necessitate new knowledge, new skills, new approaches, networking, and changing mind sets. Implementing SDGs will need to go hand in hand with **capacity development** efforts including institutional reforms, organizational restructuring, advocacy, sensitisation and training.

The nature and magnitude of the adjustments in institutions will not be uniform everywhere, but will depend on the **context** at national, regional or global levels.

Characteristics: Institutions must prioritise capabilities for coordination, collaboration, partnerships, and holistic approaches. They must be participatory, anticipatory, connected, collaborative, more transparent, accountable, responsive and flexible.

In the context of **diversity**, institutional behaviour must be accommodating of various ideologies and context-sensitive to be able to cater for diversity nationally, regionally and globally.

Transformative leadership will be critical to the success of implementation of SDGs. Transformative leadership will engineer the necessary changes in institutions by transforming individuals in their mindset and capabilities, transforming organizations and institutions, and transforming societies.

Change of mentality is required for individuals, populations, leaders in public sector institutions, private sector institutions and civil society at the community, local national, regional and global levels. Changing mentalities is critical in adaptation and change of institutions and structures as institutions and structures guide the behaviour and practice of individuals working within them and individuals build, develop, modify and adapt institutions and structures. It will take a significant shift in mentality to effectively drive the achievement of SDGs.

Adaptive capacities that give opportunity to flexibility, resilience, as well as the individual and collective capability to visualise the future needs and adjust current status quo to prepare to meet those future needs are a prerequisite.

Sharing will need to be a feature of societies, institutions and individuals that seek to meet the SDGs and this will require adjustments in the ideological determinants of the distribution and use of resources. This may include revisiting the role of the market in determining distribution, equity and equality in access to resources, goods and service as well as to integrated development benefits.

Reform of education and training institutions that are aligned with the requirements of SDGs will be needed to transform societies and individuals and to change mentalities and align them with the requirements of sustainable development. Appropriate education at all levels from kindergarten through universities will be needed to alter and adapt values, and form individuals who think critically and holistically and embrace values of diversity, equality, equity, and societal gains above individual gains. In addition, institutions and organisations that will champion sustainable development goals will need to be “learning institutions and organisations”. There is need for strong monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks that support the sensitization of national, regional, policy making.

Collaborative institutions will need to go beyond just collaboration and use approaches that condition them to **integrated policy making** and planning and practices such as joint budgeting. This will need a change in norms (rules, regulations and laws) that govern for example the way government ministries and departments work together. New institutions should be anticipatory, participatory, networked, connected (cities and rural areas) and not reacting in the “business as usual” way.

Value/norms based institutions that will promote values such as human rights, justice, dignity, gender equality, transparency, accountability, ethics and professionalism are needed.

The implementation of the SDGs will require not just institutional reforms but something akin to **institutional revolution** in all sectors: Primary Revolutions in Agriculture, Government, Enterprise, Data, Applied Research and Attitudinal and Behavioural Change, as well as Secondary Revolutions in Nutrition Security, Food Security, Health Revolution, Education and Financial Inclusion. They should not be risk averse but risk taking and risk sharing to guide people towards uncharted ways that could produce hitherto unachieved results.

Institutions can best support and promote the harnessing of the **interface between technology**, including information and communications technologies **and development** especially in the areas of service delivery to apply technology to ensure equity and to transform lives of the poor.

Change and adaptation must not only focus on institutions and structures but on the **people**, their values and norms, shifting interests as well as ideological underpinnings because it is by them and through them that institutions ultimately achieve what they are intended to achieve.