

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE PRESIDENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
H.E. AMBASSADOR MARTIN SAJDIK

DRAFT TALKING POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT OF ECOSOC
THIRD MEETING OF THE ECOSOC MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP
MONTAG, 7 APRIL 2014

Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted and honoured to be with such distinguished leaders of civil society and the private sector. Thank you for joining me at the Third Meeting of the ECOSOC Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group.

My special thanks go to all of you and your organizations for your dedication and commitment in supporting the UN's economic, social and environmental agenda and for your willingness to cooperate with ECOSOC.

I have long been a strong advocate of a greater role of civil society in the work of the Economic and Social Council. I am convinced that global civil society can significantly contribute to solving global challenges of promoting sustainable development, advancing human rights, democracy and good governance.

I intend to build upon ECOSOC's role as a multi-stakeholder platform and create a participatory approach that deepens the role of civil society, academia, Non-Governmental Organizations, and private sector as partners in development as a priority in my Presidency agenda.

The challenge of invigorating civil society participation and strengthening cooperation between the UN and all sectors of society has always been central to the work of ECOSOC.

But today, as we accelerate our efforts in the coming months to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, while crafting the post-2015 development agenda, it is paramount that we make partnerships with civil society and the private sector a cornerstone of our work. Only then we will be fully able to address the *imperatives of sustainable development and a changing global development cooperation landscape*.

While Governments have the primary responsibility for policy making, non-state actors are now widely recognized as development cooperation actors in their own right. The concept of democratic ownership of international development cooperation is being increasingly emphasized, in stark contrast to the previous aid effectiveness agenda by central governments of partner and donor countries alike, reaffirming the vital role of parliaments, local governments, the private sector and NGOs, as key independent players in development.

So, at this critical juncture, partnerships with the private sector and civil society are vital for the future of development. These are also crucial for the work of ECOSOC and the United Nations at large.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me briefly recapitulate where we stand in reforming our institutions to meet these development challenges. I would like also to identify entry points for civil society and the private sector to make their contributions.

I will start with two pillars of institutional reform for sustainable development: the High Level Political Forum and a strengthened ECOSOC.

The High Level Political Forum was established at Rio+20 to replace the Commission on Sustainable Development to “provide leadership, guidance and recommendations for

sustainable development...[and] a dynamic platform for... agenda setting to advance sustainable development.”

The Forum was launched last year at the heads of state and government level. It will meet every year at the Ministerial level, under the auspices of ECOSOC. And every four years, under the auspices of the General Assembly.

The strengthened ECOSOC is poised to play a strong role in the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental, as mandated by Rio+20. It should become a leadership forum for policy dialogue and recommendations; the lead entity to address new and emerging challenges; and an accountability platform for universal commitments, monitoring and reporting on progress at all levels.

It will have several new important functions:

- The newly created ECOSOC Integration Segment will lead this balanced integration of three dimensions, throughout the work of its subsidiary bodies, including the Commissions on Social Development, on Status of Women, on Crime Prevention, on Drugs and others. Civil society, which is very active in these subsidiary bodies, is expected to make a significant contribution to this segment.
- Increased focus on accountability: Development assistance is profoundly changing in the 21st century. Non-state actors, such as civil society, philanthropies, and the private sector are taking an increasing role in international cooperation. Again we expect a greater role for them in the Development Cooperation Forum.

- The High-level Political Forum under the auspices of ECOSOC will be a central platform for promoting and reviewing the implementation of the post 2015 development agenda once it replaces the Annual Ministerial Review in 2016. The Forum should become a place where Ministers, representatives of civil society and the private sector gather to share experiences in implementing the post 2015 agenda, debate policy options, new challenges and the latest scientific findings.

Thus, the strengthened ECOSOC is in a unique position of being a bridge-builder to civil society, academia and the private sector and needs to push forward new and improved diversified forms of collaboration if it is to achieve a lasting impact and promote its goals.

We have built a solid legislative foundation for an increased role of NGOs and other major stakeholders in the on-going reform of ECOSOC, as well as in the format of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

General Assembly Resolution 68/1 on the strengthening of ECOSOC opens up the door to major groups and “other stakeholders” to participate in intergovernmental decision-making, traditionally considered to be the cornerstone for NGO in consultative status with the Council.

Resolution 67/290 defines the format, organizational aspects and key function of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Importantly, it provides the same consultative and participation privileges traditionally reserved to organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC to the nine major groups “and other relevant stakeholders”.

These two resolutions were adopted against the background of growing calls for deepening and broadening the engagement of non-state actors in the work of the United Nations, increasing interest from civil society in engaging with the UN, as well as emergence

of new groups of global civil society that seek to participate in the work of the United Nations.

As a way of launching this discussion today, I propose to address five specific questions:

- (1) GA resolutions 67/290 opened the participation in HLPF to the major groups identified in Agenda 21 and other stakeholders active in areas related to sustainable development. How can civil society fully take advantage of this opportunity?
- (2) GA Resolution 68/1 has significantly changed the way the Council interacts with civil society and other stakeholders. How can the Advisory Group assist in encouraging civil society to engage and promote the implementation of the UN development agenda?
- (3) How can we make the engagement worthwhile and impactful? Should the emphasis shift from participation/presence to results-oriented outcomes?
- (4) How to promote autonomously maintained national, regional and international thematic coalitions taking into account the experience of “major groups”?
- (5) How can the Group help raise awareness among the public at large about ECOSOC policy work?

I would like to conclude by thanking you once again for your commitment to work with ECOSOC and for joining this Advisory Group.

It is inconceivable that the post 2015 agenda with its more ambitious objectives would succeed without active support of civil society and other non-state actors.

I strongly believe that the work of this Advisory Group will be critical in ensuring that the partnership and engagement of Civil Society in the ECOSOC’s activities are

strengthened. I will do my best to make this a reality. My door is always open for any suggestions and ideas.

Thank you.