

**Economic and Social Council**  
**Civil society hearing on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system**

**April 28, 2015**

**Presentation by Ms. Debra Jones, Director and UN Representative, Save the Children**

Madame Vice-President, Member State representative, civil society and other stakeholder colleagues

Thank you for inviting Save the Children to be a part of this important hearing which includes civil society views on how the United Nations system should be better equipped to deliver the set of new sustainable development goals. We have a unique opportunity with the new goals and the upcoming selection of a new UN Secretary General to reflect on what is the UN we want and the UN we need.

**INTRODUCTION**

The world has seen unprecedented progress in poverty reduction over the past two and a half decades. Still,

- more than 50 percent of all children in low income countries live in extreme poverty;<sup>i</sup>
- 58 million children are out of school<sup>ii</sup> and
- an estimated 17 000 children under the age of five die every day.<sup>iii</sup>
- Between 500 million and 1.5 billion children experience violence annually.<sup>iv</sup>

**Yet, we could be the generation that puts an end to preventable child mortality, ensures that every child receives a quality education, is protected from violence and has the resources to fulfil their full potential.** In September, world leaders will gather at the UN to agree on a new sustainable development agenda that has the potential to set us on course for a world where no one is left behind by progress, focusing attention on the poorest and most marginalized people in order to reduce inequalities in human development outcomes.

**Reaching the ambitious commitments of the sustainable development goals will require 3 things from the UN system, member states, and development partners -ambition, accountability, and actionability.**

## 1. AMBITION

**Ambitious sustainable development objectives will require ambitious funding and a transformative approach.**

**FUNDING** – Financing the UN, governments, and implementation partners is central to the implementation of the new development agenda. In particular, the UN cannot perform effectively if its budget is constrained.

Setting ambitious development targets is the first step to creating a better world for children. Following up with strong commitments on financial means of implementation to realize those ambitions is the next step. Increased FFD commitments from all parties, at national and global levels, including official development assistance (ODA), domestic resource mobilization and tackling illicit financial flows, will be pivotal.

**Member States should prioritize the following issues:**

- A commitment to strengthen tax systems, ensure that tax is progressive and that tax policies are addressing income inequality and poverty. **Government must increase tax to GDP ratio to at least 20 percent, while ensuring that taxes are progressive**
- **The UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters should be upgraded into an intergovernmental body on tax matters**, and given the resources and mandate it needs to take action
- Donor countries must set concrete timetables to meet their commitments to provide 0.7 % of GNI to ODA, and provide 0.15-0.20% of GNI or 50% of ODA (whichever is greater) to LDCs.

**UNIVERSALITY** – the universal nature of this agenda will make it transformative. This will require finding a clear UN presence at the national level. The UN will need to be more synergistic. I will speak in a minute about the UN working in partnership.

## 2. ACCOUNTABILITY

**GOVERNANCE:** A strong governance mechanism should underpin the Post-2015 development agenda. Member States must be held accountable for their commitments at local, national, regional and global levels.

Key lessons from the MDGs must be taken into consideration.

First, an equity and human rights lens must ensure that the most vulnerable population and income groups are addressed.

Second, Country ownership is vital.

Third, engagement of civil society is critical.

Fourth, a monitoring and review framework needs to be closely aligned

Resolution 67/290 states that a high-level political forum shall provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development, follow up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments, enhance the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in a holistic and cross-sectoral manner at all levels and have a focused, dynamic and action-oriented agenda, considering new and emerging changes.

Accountability is essential to spur and maintain action that is responsive to the rights and needs of people. Member States must be held accountable for their commitments agreed in the FFD Outcome Document and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, at local, national, regional and global levels. This will require transparent, participatory and accountable governance and budgeting at all levels, and improvements in data.

### **Member States are urged to prioritize the following issues:**

- **Citizens, including children, must have formal opportunities to engage in fiscal processes,** based on access to comprehensive, disaggregated, timely and user-friendly information, to effectively participate in decision-making and to ensure accountability of States to their commitments to finance development.
- **Put in place a participatory and transparent accountability and review mechanism** for commitments made in the FFD Outcome Document. This must be aligned and coordinated with the post-2015 accountability mechanism and work in synergy with international human rights institutions to ensure alignment with international obligations.
- **Establish and fund a global partnership on data** to support improvements in disaggregated measurement of progress for all people, including all age, economic, ethnic, gender, disability and geographical groups.

## **3. ACTIONABILITY: Actionability of the new agenda will require capacity and partnerships to achieve progress on the development agenda**

**CAPACITY** – The UN will need to deliver as one UN at the national level.

In the words of the UNSG, a UN system that is “fit for purpose” to deliver on the post-2015 agenda is one that is relevant, innovative, agile, inclusive, coordinated and results-oriented; and guided by universal human rights.

UN Country teams will support national stakeholders to implement the new post-2015 development agenda, while striving to deliver as one UN.

Country realities are more diverse than before. Middle income countries numbers increasing. Inequalities increasing. Differing capacities, priorities and needs. It is clear there needs to be further reflection. Universality of the SDG agenda will impact functions within the UN and government ministries. Governments could work in a cross ministerial manner.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

The development landscape is shifting tremendously with many players emerging, as well as high-impact philanthropists. Percentage of ODA is less than ever and fewer and fewer countries are aid dependent.

Partnerships will play an important role in addressing children needs today and in future. Civil society and the United Nations need to be working in a more collaborative way to tackle existing challenges, as it is clear that we can tackle problems only through collective action.

We need to identify how we can convene partners in an action-oriented and solution oriented way. How can we work with a variety of partners to increase impact? At a time when more and more people are accessing markets and when private sector increasingly makes decisions on health care, etc, how can we, development organisations, put ourselves into this mix to maximise our impact? What is clear is that influencing markets cannot be done by a single organisation. The need for partnerships and coalitions is growing.

We must keep discussions action oriented and practical, looking at ways where and how collaboration can be strengthened.

## **EXAMPLE OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SAVE THE CHILDREN AND UNICEF**

UNICEF partners with civil society at national and international levels. UNICEF’s collaboration with Save the Children has led to greater impact in our joint institutional priorities. Our collaboration happens on a variety of levels including global advocacy, policy and research, humanitarian work, country level operations, strategic consultations, and much more. UNICEF and other UN agencies can make the following contributions to partnerships with civil society:

- Convening power
- Global reach and country presence
- Technical expertise
- Procurement
- Training and development
- Scaling up innovations
- Behavior change
- Financial support

## CONCLUSION

As we continue today's discussion, think about how the UN system will contribute to the ambition, accountability, and actionability to achieve the ambitious commitments of the sustainable development goals.

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<sup>i</sup> World Bank (2013), "The State of the Poor: Where Are The Poor, Where Is Extreme Poverty Harder to End, and What Is the Current Profile of the World's Poor?" <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTPREMNET/Resources/EP125.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/fs-28-out-of-school-children-en.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://data.unicef.org/resources/childmortality2014>

<sup>iv</sup> UNICEF, 'Monitoring Progress on Major Conventions, Declarations and Plans for Children' and 'UNSG Study on Violence against Children: What are the limitations of the existing data and how can they be improved?', UNICEF, New York, October 2006 (internal documents) quoted in UNICEF, Progress for Children, A Report Card on Child Protection, September 2009, p. 7