

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

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Presentation by Ms. Marina Ponti, Global Policy Forum

Madame Vice-President, Member States representatives and civil society colleagues.

Let me thank you for your invitation to be here today on behalf of Global Policy Forum¹, to contribute to this important discussion, which I see interconnected with current negotiations on post 2015 and on Financing for Development.

When I was asked about the long term positioning of the UN system, the first question that crossed my mind was: Does the world need more or less UN in the post 2015 context?

The answer is simple:

The world needs more UN. Actually, there has never being a greater need for a global, universal and legitimate body to set norms, guide and coordinate policies and monitor their implementation.

But the world needs a different UN. One, which is, both:

- Able to deliver on the expectations raised by the SDGs universal and transformative agenda;
- Able to champion the interests and respond to the needs of its very diverse membership.

By agreeing to the SGD's member states have raised the bar. Now, they have to encourage and enable the UN to do the same.

There are three areas where I see the need for "more and better UN":

- 1) Set and coordinate global economic policies.

Economic and financial decisions will influence the attainment of the SDGs. A universal forum is needed to set and coordinate global economic and financial policies. The UN is the only universal organization that could fill that role, ensuring participation and ownership by all. The UN is also the only organization where a "coherent pluralism"² can become a "coherent

¹ Global Policy Forum is an independent policy watchdog that monitors the work of the United Nations and scrutinizes global policymaking. GBF promotes accountability and citizen participation in decisions on peace and security, social justice and international law. www.globalpolicy.org

² Dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the UN Development system
The United Nations and its functions
John Burley and Khalid Malik Geneva and New York, 13 April 2015

consensus”.

Other international organizations should clearly be involved, because of their mandate and their technical expertise. However, technical expertise cannot (and should not) replace inclusive and democratic decision-making.

Let me give you two concrete examples: *taxation* and *illicit capital flows*. These issues are priorities in today’s agenda for all countries (for different reasons) and both hold the key to the success of the SDGs. So, the UN –to continue to be relevant- should offer the political “space” where a “coherent consensus” could be built within a pluralism of voices and perspectives. If the UN will not create that “space”, there will be a further fragmentation of organizations and actors, which will significantly undermine the SDGs universal and transformative agenda. At the national level, the UN will also need to scale up its capacity building efforts in these two areas, but these efforts will be more meaningful and effective if the UN would also be in charge of coordinating their global policy framework.

- 2) Ensure coherence between sustainable development, human rights and peace and security.

The SDGs agenda requires coherence among policies and sectors. The silos approach of the past must be replaced by full integration of the different policies and sectors at the global, regional, national and local level. The SDGs agenda also calls for integration with human rights and peace and security.

As the main custodian of human rights, the UN should pave the way on how to integrate at the global, regional and national level the SDGs with all existing human rights protocols, frameworks, covenants and reporting mechanisms.

Moreover, the UN system should more systematically introduce human rights assessments to evaluate the impact of development activities and investments. As the SDGs agenda has the potential of mobilizing “from billions... to trillions³” of public and private money, it becomes imperative and rather urgent for the UN to put in place assessment mechanisms to ensure that all SDGs investments and activities support (and not undermine) human rights. Such assessments should also be carried out on public-private-partnerships (PPPs) and on blended investment mechanisms funded by public resources. The UN should also simplify its governance structures and combine some of its Boards to further enhance integration, coordination and

http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/qcpr/pdf/ie_burley_malik_paper_functions.pdf

³ From Billions to Trillions: Transforming Development Finance POST-2015 Financing for Development: Multilateral Development Finance <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEVCOMMINT/Documentation/23659446/DC2015-0002%28E%29FinancingforDevelopment.pdf>

alignment.

3) Lead the SDGs global accountability agenda.

The first legitimacy test of the SDGs agenda will be the ability (of the UN) to design and establish a transparent SDGs global accountability framework.

Notwithstanding the importance of regional, national and local institutions and their accountability mechanisms, it will be at the global level that the universality of the agenda will be verified.

This accountability framework could take on various shapes, and be housed in various venues (ranging from a reformed ECOSOC to the High Level Political Forum). However, it should foster:

- Accountability of all member states (for their shared but differentiated responsibilities⁴);
- Inclusive Participation of all stakeholders, particularly civil society.

Let me now conclude with a remark. When the MDGs were agreed (behind closed doors) the word *ownership* was absent from the debate. Fifteen years later, *ownership* is the most “used” word and the most acclaimed principle. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise the call for an increased mandate of the UN, as the only organization that can make *ownership* a reality.

Thank you.

⁴ European Centre for Development Policy Management, “Universality and Differentiation in the post 2015 agenda” <http://ecdpm.org/?publications=universality-differentiation-post-2015-development-agenda>