



Remarks

by

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General Assembly

**Interactive briefing between the President of the Sixty-Eighth session of
the General Assembly and Civil Society**

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Deputy Secretary-General,
Distinguished Members of Civil Society,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon and welcome to this first interactive briefing on the implementation of my theme for the 68th session: the post-2015 development agenda: Setting the Stage. I am particularly pleased that the Deputy Secretary-General, himself a former President of the General Assembly and a passionate advocate for broader participation of civil society in the work of the UN, is also here with us today.

To you the members of civil society let me say that I am very encouraged to see so many of you here and think this bodes well for what we all hope to accomplish before this current GA session ends in September. Time is short – so I hope we can all roll up our proverbial shirt sleeves and work together because there is a lot to accomplish.

As the 2012 Rio Summit made clear, multi-stakeholder cooperation will be essential to forging any sustainable development pathway and your contributions to the ongoing discussions on any new development agenda will be critical. This was true back in 2005 when I chaired the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. Now, close to ten (10) years later, I will again say to you what I said in my interactive briefings with your peers back then – you have an equal voice – you will be heard – the onus is on you to make sure that you engage with Member States. However, this time we need to deliver on a shared post-2015 development agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On my election as President of the General Assembly last June, I announced my intention to convene several thematic debates and high-level events. One of the High-level Events will directly address the contributions of Civil Society to the post-2015 development

agenda. So on this – and I hope on other subsequent occasions, it is fitting therefore that we should meet, exchange ideas and establish a line of communication. Today’s briefing also serves as an opportunity to see how we can work together in the coming months, specifically with regard to the debates/events which my Office will be convening over the next few months.

You and your various organizations are the trusted partners of the United Nations. You support the UN in carrying out its agenda in a variety of fields related to human rights, economic and social development, peace and security, and the environment. You are important contributors to the multilateral system tasked with ensuring that the marginalized and vulnerable of this world are not forgotten.

As we meet, the eighth session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals is underway; it is a critical juncture as this is the final session before members begin their negotiations on specific sustainable development goals (SDGs). That process and the parallel discussions within the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing is one that I encourage you to remain engaged in.

Members of Civil Society,

I am sure you will agree that the task of addressing the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals and transitioning toward a universal post-2015 development agenda is so fundamentally important and far-reaching that it requires the efforts of all stakeholders in government, business and society.

But let us all remember that the new global development agenda we seek, must go further and deeper and must not only build on the lessons learnt but also expand upon the MDGs with a set of clear, concise, measurable and easy-to-communicate goals and targets. The new agenda should focus on poverty eradication and eliminating inequalities –

particularly for the most marginalized; address critical new and emerging challenges; identify strategic themes and partnerships; consider the appropriate institutions for delivery; and be anchored in human rights. As I see it there are four critical questions that will inform our setting the stage for the post 2015 development agenda:

- How do we mainstream sustainability into all the policies, operations and interactions of every sector or government business and society?
- How do we integrate development policies, modalities and mechanisms to most effectively and equitably address the root and structural causes of poverty?
- How do we develop a core and concise framework for development that is both universal and yet specific to individual needs?
- How can we establish a process that is inclusive, interactive and dynamic – one that allows all stakeholders to work together to deliver on the outcomes that ensure a sustainable and productive future for all?

As President of the 68th session of the General Assembly, I see no greater task or mandate for my term than to support this vital process of getting the framework and content of the post-2015 development agenda right, so that people everywhere can live in dignity and with opportunities in their societies and economies.

For that reason, I chose “The Post 2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage!” as the theme for the 68th session, with the intention of convening three (3) high level events and three (3) thematic debates, focused on areas that I strongly believe deserve consideration in any agenda we adopt.

Let me say a few words about each of these six events:

The first event, the thematic debate on “Water, Sanitation and Sustainable Energy in the Post-2015 Development Agenda”, will be held on 18 and 19 February. We all know the statistics but outside of these halls, and across our planet some 783 million live without clean water, 2.5 billion have no adequate sanitation and 1.4 billion people are without access to energy and their lives have for too long been painfully difficult. Achieving universal access to safe drinking water, basic sanitation and modern energy services are amongst the greatest multifaceted development challenges confronting the world.

In any post-2015 development agenda we would need to define ways to respond to these challenges in a manner that allows both developed and developing countries to forge endogenous pathways that build resilience and lead to sustainable development.

On 6 and 7 March, we will hold our first high-level event on the “Contributions of Women, the Young and Civil Society to the Post-2015 Development Agenda.” The statistics tell us that women and youth have suffered the worst in the global crises of energy, water, food, fuel and finance. They are the majority of the uneducated, or undereducated, unemployed, underpaid, unappreciated, have few opportunities and little hope. This must be addressed. The marginalization of valuable human resources and members of our global society runs entirely counter to the very concept of sustainability. This event will address the potential, capacities and abilities of women, the young and civil society to contribute to the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, as well as how these groups can be best included in its outcomes. It will underscore the need for a development process that enables more effective, inclusive and informed participation of all members of society.

On 9 and 10 April, we will hold a thematic debate on “The role of partnerships in the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda”, jointly organized with the President of the Economic and Social Council. The constructive engagement of all

stakeholders is critical to framing and implementing a global development agenda and we can only succeed if all of us are prepared to act in partnership. Strengthened global partnerships for sustainable development will be a catalyst for the international community to advance towards an ambitious and transformative sustainable development agenda beyond 2015. At this debate, we will discuss how to build a renewed sense of commitment and partnership to both leverage new public and private resources as well as stakeholders' comparative advantage, including in the areas of research, technology, innovation, finance and human capacity.

The thematic debate on “Ensuring Stable and Peaceful Societies” will be held on 24 and 25 April. Stability and peace are essential conditions for sustainable development. The desire and right of every human being to live in peace, without the sounds and acts of violence and war being a part of daily life is an ideal to which we must all commit ourselves. This thematic debate will explore innovative strategies for achieving stable and peaceful societies, and thereby contribute to strengthening national institutions so that they can better respond to the twin challenges of poverty and inequality.

On 20 and 21 May, we will hold a High-Level Event entitled “Contributions of North-South, South-South, Triangular Cooperation, and ICT for Development to the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.” Technology has become a ubiquitous tool of knowledge, innovation and development. A world divided by the technological-haves and the technological have-nots will automatically condemn the have-nots to an unsustainable existence in the modern world. This event will focus on the means of implementation of the post 2015 development agenda, promoting better outcomes from all forms of cooperation, and urging immediate implementation of commitments under the global partnership for development. The event will be guided by the notion that South-South and triangular cooperation can contribute towards the post-2015 development agenda as a complement to traditional forms of cooperation.

This is an important consideration in light of the growing geopolitical importance and wealth of the South.

Our final High-Level Event on “Contributions of Human Rights and the Rule of Law in the Post-2015 Development Agenda,” will be held on 17 and 18 June. The main objective of this event is to examine how human rights, including the right to development, and the rule of law at the national and international levels, can support an inclusive, people-centered development agenda. Issues of governance, human rights and the rule of law are pivotal to sustainability and the development agenda. We must build upon lessons learned from the MDGs, including gaps and challenges, and we will examine the resources and capacities needed to foster a universal development approach guided by freedom from want and freedom from fear.

Far too often we do not pause to monitor, evaluate or review our successes and failures in order to learn from our errors and better chart the way ahead. Hence, to assess our progress and review outputs, a stocktaking event will be held in early September. It will pull together the findings from all six events and complement the other processes that are converging at the start of the 69th session in preparation for intergovernmental negotiations.

I am sure many of you want to know if and how I intend to take your comments on board. Let me assure that I will not just do so today, but also in the upcoming weeks. My office will consider your inputs as we prepare substantive background notes for each of the six events. My hope is that your inputs will also be reflected in the short action-oriented summaries that will ultimately be communicated to the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals; the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing; and to the Secretary-General for consideration in his synthesis report, to be issued to the UN General Assembly by the end of 2014.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Like all of you, I am all too aware of the enormous challenges facing our globe. With the 2015 deadline looming, we need to be collectively focused on building momentum for the post-2015 agenda. I am confident that we can all come together around one global sustainable development agenda, with poverty eradication at its centre and with true ownership from both governmental and non-governmental actors alike. Our common challenge must keep us in communication, our common cause must keep us collaborating and our commitment must keep us pressing forward to the new development agenda that serves the planet and all its people.

Thank you.
