



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

24 March 2017

Excellency,

I have the pleasure to transmit herewith a letter, dated 24 March 2017, from H.E. Ms. Gillian Bird, Permanent Representative of Australia and H.E. Mr. Martín García Moritán, Permanent Representative of Argentina, Co-Facilitators to lead consultations aimed at enhancing synergies and coherence and reducing overlap in the agendas of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies, in light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The co-facilitators will hold an open meeting with Member States and other relevant stakeholders on Tuesday 11 April 2017, at 10:00am, in the Trusteeship Council Chamber.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Thomson', written in a cursive style.

Peter Thomson

All Permanent Representatives
and Permanent Observers
to the United Nations
New York



24 March 2017

Excellency,

Australia and Argentina, as the Co-facilitators to lead consultations on enhancing synergies and coherence between the work of the General Assembly and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, will hold an open meeting with Member States, UN stakeholders and civil society on Tuesday 11 April 2017 at 10am in the Trusteeship Chamber.

At the previous open meeting held on March 6th, there was an active participation of a wide range of delegations, reflecting the importance of this topic. We found the exchange extremely productive and fruitful, providing many concrete ideas and proposals.

In order to move forward in our discussions, we would like to clarify views on a number of issues raised during the course of our facilitation. We have set out the following questions ahead of the meeting:

1. Would alignment of the General Assembly work with the 2030 agenda be improved through joint Committee meetings, joint bureau meetings, and joint UN Secretary-General reports on common issues?
2. Which gaps of the 2030 Agenda do you identify in the GA and ECOSOC? How could they be addressed? On the other hand, how can we best differentiate between overlap that is useful and overlap that is duplicative?
3. How can the UN system focus on results rather than mandates? And what are possible ways to create an incentive-based system for results?
4. We've been hearing proposals of establishing a deadline to conclude the alignment process. Would the year 2019 be a possible option?
5. How can we ensure the coherent work of the HLPF with the GA and ECOSOC? How can our process be consistent with resolution 70/299?

Separately, please find attached a background note on mandates for the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. This was requested at our last meeting and is meant to provide background on mandates for the various bodies.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Gillian Bird
Australia

Martin García Moritán
Argentina

H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson
President of the 71st Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations

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Mandates for General Assembly and Economic and Social Council

The **General Assembly (GA)** is the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. It has universal membership and a broad mandate: to discuss any matters within the scope of the Charter, with limited exceptions related to international peace and security. Specifically, the GA has a mandate on matters related to international political cooperation, codification and development of international law, UN budgetary matters, assistance in the realization of human rights and promotion of economic, social, cultural, educational and health cooperation

The General Committee of the GA prepares the draft agenda for the each session. Member States may request inclusion of supplementary items on the agenda. The General Committee considers the draft agenda and the lists of supplementary and additional items and makes recommendations with regard to each item proposed. The GA adopts its agenda at the beginning of each session on the basis of a report from the General Committee, including allocation of items to the Main Committees. The General Committee is further mandated to assist the President of the General Assembly in coordinating the proceedings of all committees of the Assembly.

The **six Main Committees** of the GA are set in the Rules of Procedure (which only describe titles of the Committees). The issues dealt by each Main Committee have evolved over time.

(a) *Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee)* deals with disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community and seeks out solutions to the challenges in the international security regime.

(b) *Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)* deals with a variety of subjects which include those related to decolonization, Palestinian refugees and human rights, peacekeeping, mine action, outer space, public information, atomic radiation and University for Peace.

(c) *Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee)* deals with issues relating to economic growth and development such as macroeconomic policy questions, financing for development, sustainable development, human settlements, globalization and interdependence, eradication of poverty, operational activities for development, agriculture development, food security and nutrition, and information and communications technologies for development. It also considers issues relating to groups of countries in special situations.

(d) *Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (Third Committee)* deals with human rights questions, questions relating to the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the right to self-determination. In addition, the Committee addresses social development questions such as issues related to youth, family, ageing, persons with disabilities, crime prevention, criminal justice, and international drug control.

(e) *Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee)* is the Committee of the General Assembly with responsibilities for administration and budgetary matters.

(f) *Legal Committee (Sixth Committee)* is the primary forum for the consideration of legal questions in the General Assembly.

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The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has limited membership based on regional representation and rotation: 54 Member States elected for three year terms. Composition and functions of ECOSOC are defined in Chapter X of the Charter. The functions and powers of ECOSOC are related to international economic, social, cultural, educational, health, and related matters, on which it can make recommendations and prepare draft conventions.

Resolution 61/16 strengthened ECOSOC and recognized the need for a more effective ECOSOC “as a principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development, as well as for implementation of the international development goals agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Development Goals” and further recalled that ECOSOC should strengthen its role as central mechanism for system-wide coordination. The implementation of resolution 61/16 was reviewed in resolution 68/1, which restructured the work of the ECOSOC.

ECOSOC has an annual High-level Segment which takes place in tandem with the three day Ministerial Segment of the HLPF. Its other sessions include Integration Segment, Humanitarian Affairs Segment, Operational Activities for Development Segment, Coordination and Management Meetings, Financing for Development Forum, Development Cooperation Forum, Science, Technology and Innovation Forum, Youth Forum, Partnership Forum and special meetings on specific situations or issues. ECOSOC has various subsidiary bodies, including functional commissions (such as the Commission on the Status of Women, Commission on Social Development and Commission on Population and Development), regional economic commissions, standing committees and expert bodies.

The High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was created in the “Future We Want” outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). HLPF was created to replace Commission on Sustainable Development and was tasked to follow up on the implementation of sustainable development and should avoid overlap with existing structures, bodies and entities in a cost-effective manner. The HLPF was envisaged to inter alia provide political leadership, make recommendations, follow up and review implementation of sustainable development commitments, promote system-wide coherence and the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and strengthen cooperation with stakeholders and science-policy interface

The functions of the HLPF were revised when the 2030 Agenda was adopted and were further clarified through Resolution 70/299. The 2030 Agenda gives HLPF a central role in overseeing its follow-up and review at the global level. Furthermore, the HLPF is to facilitate sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, and provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for follow-up. It will promote system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies. It should ensure that the Agenda remains relevant and ambitious and should focus on the assessment of progress, achievements and challenges faced by developed and developing countries as well as new and emerging issues. The HLPF meetings under the ECOSOC carry out thematic and voluntary national reviews, whereas HLPF meetings under General Assembly every four years will provide high-level political guidance on the Agenda and its implementation, identify progress and emerging challenges and mobilize further actions to accelerate implementation.