

### **Ninth Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals**

From March 2013 to February 2014, the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) conducted a total of eight sessions and discussed various themes identified in the Rio+20 Outcome Document. Based on the results of these meetings, the OWG Co-Chairs distributed the focus areas document for consideration of the ninth session of the OWG, with the objective of facilitating the work of Member States towards identification of the potential SDGs.

The Ninth Session of the OWG on SDGs (OWG9) took place in New York from 3 to 5 March 2014. Member States provided comments on the progress report on the work of the OWG, as well as the focus areas document. They proposed various ideas in order to consolidate and prioritize 19 focus areas.

Regarding forests, a number of Member States called for further recognition of the role of forests in the focus areas document. The OWG9 discussions also highlighted: the contribution of forests to food security and for local communities and indigenous peoples, as well as the need to address deforestation. In terms of proposals for forest-related goals and targets, some countries proposed to integrate forests and other ecosystems into a single SDG that clusters natural resources and ecosystems, including forests, biodiversity, marine resources, oceans and seas. There was also a suggestion to integrate forests as part of a broad goal on environmental sustainability.

Some countries called for a greater emphasis, including a possibility of a separate focus area, on desertification, land degradation and drought. Several representatives expressed divergent views on climate as to whether issues related to climate should be addressed only in its focus area or as a cross-cutting enabler, as well, in addition to its focus area. Some countries emphasized the importance of addressing mountain ecosystems. A number of Member States highlighted the importance to respect the ongoing intergovernmental processes and build on the existing commitments and targets, including those related to forests.

On the way forward, the OWG Co-Chairs indicated that they will circulate the revised focus areas document by 19 March 2014, based on which the OWG will discuss concrete proposals for goals and targets at its next session, to be held from 31 March to 4 April 2014. The revised focus areas document will reflect comments made during the OWG9. The OWG Co-Chairs will also provide informational non-papers on: (i) a matrix of interlinkages mapping how different focus areas could come together; (ii) a compendium of the existing targets in various focus areas, and (iii) a technical note describing the differences between goals, targets and indicators.

More information on the Ninth Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals can be found at <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/owg9.html>.