



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

16 May 2018

Excellency,

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter, dated 15 May 2018, from H.E. Ms. I. Rhonda King, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and H.E. Mr. Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, Permanent Representative of Belgium, Co-facilitators to lead intergovernmental consultations aimed at enhancing synergies and coherence and reducing overlap where it is found to exist in the agendas of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies, as well as the high-level political forum and other related forums in light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in accordance with paragraphs 28, 29 and 30 of resolution 71/323 of 8 September 2017 entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly".

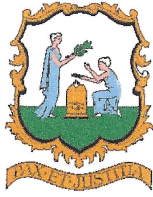
The Co-facilitators will be convening the next round of consultations with Member States on Thursday 31 May 2018 at 10:00 am in Conference Room 4. The "Food for thought" paper which will be used as a basis for discussions is attached.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Lajčák".

Miroslav Lajčák

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



Saint Vincent and the Grenadines



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

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15 May 2018

Excellency,

We write to you in our capacity as co-facilitators of the intergovernmental consultations on issues relating to the alignment of the work of the General Assembly and ECOSOC on 2030 Agenda.

We thank delegations for their substantive engagement in the alignment process thus far. In view of the second round of consultations with Members of the General Assembly, scheduled for **10:00am Thursday 31st May 2018, in Conference Room 4**, we are pleased to share with you the attached "Food for thought" paper which will be used as a basis for our discussions. As we prepare for our next meeting, we encourage delegations to give full consideration to its content.

We anticipate your full participation in the next round and we look forward to a very constructive debate.

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

Rhonda King
Permanent Representative of Saint
Vincent and the Grenadines to the United
Nations

Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve
Permanent Representative of Belgium
to the United Nations

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

Review of alignment of agenda of the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and their subsidiary bodies and the HLPF and other related forums in light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Food for Thought

The Co-facilitators have prepared this Food for Thought paper based on the informal consultations convened with Member States on 3 May and the Co-facilitators' informal consultations with the Bureaus of the Second, Third and Fifth Committees of the General Assembly and of ECOSOC. The paper includes options suggested thus far by the respective Bureaus and by Member States, as well as, in some cases, the Co-facilitators' own reflections.

Given the valuable history of the alignment endeavor, the paper draws from the Report on Strategic Alignment of future sessions of the General Assembly with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, prepared during the 70th session of the General Assembly by the Permanent Representative of Colombia, with the support of four members of the General Committee, the Permanent Representatives of Morocco, the Netherlands, Slovenia and the Republic of Korea.

The paper also draws from the summary of discussion and recommendations contained in the final report prepared during the 71st session of the General Assembly by the Co-facilitators (the Permanent Representatives of Argentina and Australia) after having convened consultations aimed at enhancing synergies and coherence and reducing overlap where it was found to exist in the agenda of the GA, ECOSOC and their subsidiary bodies, as well as the HLPF and other related forums in light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda.

The Co-facilitators offer this paper as a basis for further reflection, proposals and analysis.

The basis for the intergovernmental review of agenda alignment is General Assembly resolution 71/323, "*Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly*", in particular paragraphs 28, 29 and 30:

28. *Also recalls* the need to enhance synergies and coherence and reduce overlap where it is found to exist in the agendas of the General Assembly, especially of its Second and Third Committees, the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, and the work of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Council and the Assembly, as well as all other related forums, in accordance with relevant rules of procedure and in the light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and calls for the continuation of such efforts during the seventy-second session of the Assembly;

29. *Requests* the General Committee, while exercising its functions under rule 40 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, to pay special attention to reduction of such overlap;

30. *Requests* the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session to identify proposals, through consultations with all Member States and the President of the Economic and Social Council, as well as through the convening of the General Committee, aimed at addressing gaps and duplication in the agenda of the Assembly as they relate to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking into account the report on the strategic alignment of future sessions of the Assembly and other relevant inputs, for the consideration of Member States during the seventy-third session of the Assembly;

General remarks

- A key objective of the consultations is to better organize the work of the United Nations intergovernmental bodies in support of the 2030 Agenda.
- The processes on the review of 68/1 and the agenda alignment can support and build upon one another, in support of the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, each process has its own focus, and it's important to take into consideration their respective mandates.

The agenda alignment process would need to be coordinated in particular with the process on the revitalization of the General Assembly. Its outcome will inform the GA resolution.

Possible areas of action

Enhancing synergies and coherence in agendas

- Through its deliberations on the alignment, the General Assembly could offer a vision and guidance for the realization of the 2030 Agenda, take an active role in mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda in this pursuit and be focused towards enhancing synergies to ensure coherence.
- The 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development - with its 17 Goals and 169 targets, integrated and indivisible in nature, and balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic; social; and environmental- cannot be considered in a siloed manner.
- The success of the 2030 Agenda requires the UN to operate horizontally, connecting issues across the breadth of its work. The 2030 Agenda would be looked through the lens of the entire UN. In order to achieve the 2030 Agenda there is a need to move forward in this mindset change.
- The work in the General Assembly and ECOSOC should be aligned with the SDGs. The SDGs and targets should cut across the work of the GA and ECOSOC and its functional commissions. Where it is deemed appropriate and necessary, agenda items should be created while considering merging and set aside if seen as no longer relevant.
- The President of the GA and the President of ECOSOC could convene an annual briefing to Member States at the beginning of the GA session and aligned with the ECOSOC cycle outlining the connection between the work of the GA on the 2030 Agenda and its link to the

ECOSOC annual cycle and discussions to be held in the HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC. For this, the cycles of the GA and ECOSOC should remain the same.

- Working methods supporting alignment exist yet remain currently underutilized, such as the para. in 67/290 offering cooperation between the President of ECOSOC, the PGA and the Chairs of the 2nd and 3rd Committees. They could be used effectively, as well as the decision 65/530 on working methods of the Second Committee in order to avoid duplication of meetings

Addressing gaps

- The majority of the SDGs contain targets that are covered in the GA and/or ECOSOC agendas.
- The existence of a gap does not mean that it necessarily needs to be filled. We should discuss whether all SDG targets should be covered by the General Assembly and ECOSOC. Some issues are dealt with elsewhere, such as SDG13 (climate action – at UNFCCC), SDG15 (life on land – at UNEA) and SDG9 (industry - at UNIDO)
- The value-added of the United Nations intergovernmental processes should be considered, and focus should be placed on efficiency and effectiveness.

Reducing duplication and overlap

- During the 70th session of the General Assembly, the alignment process looked only at gaps, and did not analyze duplication.
- Overlaps should be considered on a case-by-case basis, and mandates should always be considered.
- There are differing mandates between the General Assembly Committees and the ECOSOC system. The GA's main mandate is to give political guidance, while the ECOSOC system provides technical and normative guidance to Member States and to the UN system, and is more focused on policy recommendations.
- ECOSOC could increase the emphasis on policy recommendations, actual implementation of the SDGs, including progress and challenges. In this context, it would be important to look at the ECOSOC Integration Segment and HLPF under the Council's auspices and High-level Segment of ECOSOC, which are under discussion during the current review of GA resolution 68/1.
- ECOSOC also has a role to support coordination of the UNDS.
- Apart from analyzing the overlaps, it is important to see that there are no contradictions or inconsistencies in the way an issue is dealt with by different entities, nor in the recommendations that stem from it.

- The assessment of overlap should go beyond the titles of agenda items and examine the content of the resolutions.
- The analysis should bear in mind the different perspectives from which Second, Third and other Committees undertake their work. It would also be important to evaluate possible overlaps between the GA and the ECOSOC, analyzing items according to the mandates of these two organs.
- The agendas of the GA, the ECOSOC and the HLPF should be continually reviewed in order to streamline them.

Next steps

Member States may wish to continue to consider the questions previously circulated by the Co-facilitators, through the PGA's letter of 1 May, to frame the discussion, as well as additional questions and suggestions regarding possible next steps:

- Where do you see the greatest overlaps and the greatest potential synergies between the agendas of those various bodies?
- How can the consultations take into consideration other related processes, such as revitalization of the General Assembly and the review of General Assembly resolution 68/1 on the strengthening of ECOSOC?
- While recognizing that ECOSOC has the prior responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the A2030, the GA Committee and Bureaux could hold joint meetings to discuss how their work relates to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- The Committees of the General Assembly could have more dialogue with one another to highlight the interlinkages between their ongoing efforts.
- The ECOSOC functional commissions could have more interaction and dialogue with each other to promote synergies in their work building on the annual dialogue with the ECOSOC functional commissions and other expert bodies.
- Outgoing and incoming bureau could be encouraged to meet at the beginning of the new sessions in order to share lessons learned and good practices.
- Is the General Committee currently underutilized (Art.40 of the rules of procedure of the GA)? When adopting the provisional agenda, could the GA consider the latter's contribution to Agenda 2030 and look at synergy, gaps and duplication? In order to streamline them, the ECOSOC bureau and the General Committee could compare their draft agenda's before approving them. The annual briefing by the PGA and ECOSOC President could be the result of that exercise.

- In addressing overlaps, biennialization, triennialization and sunset clauses of resolutions could be considered. Merging or elimination are also possible options to be explored, while ensuring that no important substance is lost. Given the nature of the 2030 Agenda, it would be important to prioritize those agenda items that approach an issue from a more integrated, inclusive perspective. To consider this in earnest, would a more in-depth analysis of the differentiation of functions between and across committees, organs and the various fora and outcomes of resolutions be necessary and, if so, how might that be accomplished?
- Greater focus and a reduction in reports, conferences and negotiations could make the UN more efficient overall. The Secretary-General could be invited to consider consolidated or combined reports on issues addressed by several bodies. Recommendations could be addressed to the various bodies taking into account their functions. Consolidated reports can also be considered for related items.
- The suspension of some agenda items should be considered when debates are not progressing. Agenda items and sub-items could be clustered and outcomes combined, such as through omnibus resolutions. The intergovernmental bodies' agendas could benefit from a sharper focus. Member States should exercise self-restraint in regard to proposing agenda items.