



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

4 March 2020

Excellency,

I have the pleasure to forward herewith a letter dated, 2 March 2020, from H.E. Ambassador Milica Pejanović Đurišić, Permanent Representative of Montenegro and H.E. Ambassador Collen Vixen Kelapile, Permanent Representative of Botswana, the co-facilitators overseeing the intergovernmental consultations on the alignment of the agendas of General Assembly and ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, in accordance with relevant rules of procedure and in the light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The co-facilitators are convening the second informal meeting of the intergovernmental consultations on Thursday, 23 April 2020, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the ECOSOC Chamber. There will also be a series of expert level consultations in the run up to the informal meeting.

The co-facilitators have also shared two documents, viz: a brief history of the alignment process; and informal highlights of the key messages delivered by delegations during the first informal meeting of the process on 17 February 2020.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'T' followed by a flourish and a circular mark.

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande

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



PERMANENT MISSION OF MONTENEGRO  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC  
OF BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

2 March, 2020

Excellency,

We have the honour to write to you in our capacity as co-facilitators of the intergovernmental consultations to enhance synergies and coherence by addressing “gaps, overlaps and duplication where they are found to exist in the agendas of the General Assembly, especially of its Second and Third Committees, and the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, as they relate to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a whole”, in accordance with Resolution 73/341 on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (notably paragraphs 12, 27 and 28).

Following our first intergovernmental consultations, we would like to invite you to the next round on **Thursday, 23 April 2020, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the ECOSOC Chamber**. In preparation for that meeting, our teams will convene preliminary, open, expert-level consultations to discuss the way forward and then, based on these discussions, address gaps, synergies, coherence, overlaps and duplication where it is found to exist in light of the 2030 Agenda, as appropriate, and to garner and discuss possible proposals. The planned dates for these discussions are:

- **Tuesday, 17 March, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. in Conference Room 6;**
- **Tuesday, 7 April, 10 a.m. a.m. – 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. – 6 p.m. or Wednesday, 8 April, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. – 6 p.m. in Conference Room 11; and**
- **Wednesday, 15 April, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. – 6 p.m. in Conference Room 5.**

In the meantime, we remain at your disposal to share directly with us your suggestions and recommendations to enable further advancement of alignment.

To facilitate our consideration, we are pleased to share with you, two documents: (i) informal highlights of the key messages from delegations at the intergovernmental consultations of 17 February 2020, as well as (ii) a background note giving a brief history of the alignment process.

**Intergovernmental consultations on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 73/341 of 12 September 2019, entitled ‘Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly’, regarding alignment of the agendas of the General Assembly and ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, in accordance with relevant rules and procedures and in light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

**Key messages of the informal consultations of 17 February 2020**

This document highlights the key messages offered during the informal consultations of 17 February 2020, which are intended to facilitate further reflection and open dialogue. The key messages both areas of agreement and disagreement, and should not be interpreted as the shared views of Member States or the Co-facilitators, H.E. Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile, Permanent Representative of Botswana, and H.E. Mrs. Milica Pejanović Đurišić, Permanent Representative of Montenegro.

The first informal consultations on agenda alignment of the General Assembly’s 74<sup>th</sup> session were convened on Monday, 17 February 2020, by the Co-facilitators. In their letter inviting Member States to these informal consultations, the Co-facilitators provided a Background Note giving the outcomes from the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the General Assembly on agenda alignment. These outcomes had been presented to the President of the General Assembly by the co-facilitators of the 73<sup>rd</sup> session, H.E. Ms. Marie Chatardová, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic, and H.E. Ms. Maria Helena Lopes De Jesus Pires, Permanent Representative of Timor Leste, and shared with all Member States by the President of the General Assembly in his letter of 18 September 2019.

The outcomes include (i) the updated mapping of SDG coverage by the General Assembly, ECOSOC and ECOSOC functional commissions, primarily aimed at identifying gaps in the coverage of the SDGs by intergovernmental bodies; (ii) possible criteria for identifying overlaps and duplication where they are found to exist; and (iii) the final compromise draft input of the alignment process as feed into the General Assembly draft resolution on the “Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly”, of which the final version is resolution 73/341.

During the informal consultations of 17 February, the Co-facilitators indicated, in their introductory remarks, that the consultations on alignment have a deep history on which to build. Beginning in the 69<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly, the United Nations work on agenda alignment during the past five sessions has been rich and comprehensive. During this (74<sup>th</sup>) session of the General Assembly, the Co-facilitators wish to build on this foundation and advance this work in the same spirit.

The Co-facilitators invited Member States to share their views and ideas on how to enhance synergies and coherence, and on how to reduce gaps, overlaps and duplication where it is found to exist in the agendas of our intergovernmental bodies. They also invited perspectives on the outcome and results that Member States wish to see from this current process.

## Key messages from the discussions

- There is marked support of Member States in moving the alignment process forward.
- The importance of aligning agendas with a view to identifying gaps in SDG coverage, enhancing synergies, linkages and coherence between the work of the General Assembly and ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies and addressing duplications was underscored.
- The process presents a critical opportunity to examine the agendas that guide the work of intergovernmental bodies, with a view to making these bodies more relevant and fit for purpose. The objective is to speed up the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in its entirety, in this Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development.
- The defining feature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is its integrated nature, which renders this process inextricably linked to other ongoing processes, such as the ECOSOC and HLPF reviews and the revitalization of the work of the Second Committee. The alignment process should be characterized by a comprehensive and holistic view of the agendas across all the main bodies.
- It was stated that the alignment process should not revolve exclusively around the SDGs, since due regard and attention should be given to the 2030 Agenda as a whole, of which the SDGs are but a part. This will ensure that relevant issues covered by the Agenda that are not necessarily reflected in any of the SDGs or targets would not be left out of the alignment process.
- Alignment needs to build on the work done in the past to advance the alignment mandate and to review the collective efforts thus far aimed at aligning the agendas.
- It was stated that any attempt to cherry-pick issues or aspects in this alignment process will not serve best interests. Artificial deadlines may prove to be counterproductive.
- The view was expressed that to determine gaps, overlaps and duplications, work is needed on the basis of concrete proposals. Delegations should be invited to come to the next meeting with a list of concrete proposals to address gaps, overlaps and duplication.
- The annual joint briefing of the GA and ECOSOC Presidents could be further focused on alignment.
- It was stated that the mapping assessment of the SDGs remains incomplete and would need a fuller and more comprehensive mapping and review to guide discussions.
- A view was that balance is fundamental, and more effort should now be dedicated to determining the criteria for identifying prevailing gaps in the treatment of the SDGs.
- Another view was that the documents and analysis produced during last year's process, i.e., the updated mapping as well as the identification of possible criteria for reducing overlaps and duplication, are a sound basis to take concrete steps.
- Accordingly, the process must carefully consider avenues for creating necessary and productive synergies, particularly between the Second and Third Committees and ECOSOC, that would address these gaps and ultimately contribute to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with greater efficiency.
- Equal attention and consideration should be given to all SDGs. In addition to informal consultations, it was proposed that informal-informal consultations be held to update the

mapping of the 73rd session. The SDGs should guide the process and there is a need to update the current mapping and criteria on duplications/overlaps.

- It was proposed that the Secretariat could update the mapping regularly, and the Secretary-General could raise overlaps and duplications at the CEB meetings at the level of the Heads of Entities. There is no need for an annual process led by Co-facilitators, yet every 2-3 years there could be an update.
- There is a need to ensure the highest level of efficacy and efficiency of the UN's intergovernmental bodies by removing overlap and duplication.
- The alignment process should facilitate a detailed, thorough and comprehensive analysis of the SDGs and the agenda items of the relevant General Assembly Committees to take account of the gaps, possible duplications, and overlaps where these are found to exist.
- Alignment is broader than the SDGs. While the SDGs can serve as the starting point of conversation, the alignment needs to look at overlaps and duplication across committees and agendas in a comprehensive manner.
- It was highlighted that it is premature to discuss criteria for overlaps and duplication at this stage. Before such reflection, there is need for a detailed, thorough and comprehensive analysis of the SDGs and of the various agenda items.
- A view was expressed that the criteria for determining overlap or duplication must be further elaborated with the aim of reaching consensus and taking decisions in this regard. Examining possible overlaps and duplication should be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Another view was that there is no need to further elaborate on the criteria for reducing overlaps. The examples of what constitutes an overlap, as defined in the criteria from the 73<sup>rd</sup> session, are comprehensive.
- It was emphasized that the overloaded GA agenda needs to be streamlined and overlap between the GA and ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies reduced to free up the necessary space to focus on the priority challenges, which need Member States' full attention to implement the 2030 Agenda in a timely manner.
- A view was expressed that the final outcome of the alignment process would need to be concrete proposals on how to address gaps, duplications and overlaps, through - inter alia - biennialization, triennialization, clustering and elimination of items on the GA agenda, as well as a timeline and a working plan on the implementation of these proposals, including on how decisions on further steps will be taken.
- It was further stated that both concrete proposals and a work plan on implementation and further steps must be part of the text to be decided upon as part of the Revitalization Resolution during this session, so that it can be implemented during the upcoming GA 75<sup>th</sup> session.
- It was also stated that obvious cases of overlaps and duplications might be where both the GA and ECOSOC negotiate annual resolutions on the exact same subject. If Member States could find agreement on reducing overlaps, as a default any new agenda item should be a one-off for a specific issue or triennial for on-going challenges.

## 74<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly

### Review of the agenda of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies, as well as the high-level political forum for sustainable development and other related forums in light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda

#### Brief history of the alignment process

#### **Seventy-third (73<sup>rd</sup>) session of the General Assembly**

The alignment process of the 73<sup>rd</sup> session [resulted](#) in an input to the Revitalization resolution, as well as an updated SDG mapping. Member States conducted an update of the SDG mapping from the 70<sup>th</sup> session while streamlining the approach, concentrating uniquely on the Goals without the targets. The updated mapping aimed at identifying how SDGs are covered by intergovernmental bodies, yet full conclusions were not drawn from this analysis during the 73<sup>rd</sup> session – such an assessment was conducted at the 70<sup>th</sup> session and could now be built upon. Member States also considered elements of possible criteria for determining overlaps and duplication, on which they expressed a range of views.

Overall, while there was general interest in advancing alignment, it was realized that further deliberation was needed for moving forward to align the respective agendas to the 2030 Agenda and sustainable development. There was the understanding that overlaps should be identified on a case-by-case basis and that the alignment process should not undermine the sovereign right of countries to propose agenda items or draft resolutions. The inputs to the revitalization resolution were adopted as paragraphs 12, 27 and 28 in GA resolution 73/341.

#### **Seventy-second (72<sup>nd</sup>) session**

Messages conveyed by the Co-facilitators to the PGA from the informal consultations [included](#):

- In the view of many Member States, the alignment should lead to an effective and comprehensive coverage of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs and targets by UN intergovernmental bodies.
- On the identification of gaps in covering the 2030 Agenda, it was noted that past experiences showed that the majority of the SDGs and their targets are covered by the GA and/or ECOSOC agendas, yet inter-governmental gaps on substantive issues remain: there is low coverage by the UN intergovernmental bodies on SDGs 6 (water and sanitation) and 12 (sustainable consumption and production) and SDGs 9 (infrastructure, industrialization and innovation), 10 (reducing inequality), 16 (peaceful and inclusive societies) have limited coverage. SDGs 13 (climate action) and 15 (life on land) are covered elsewhere in the UN system.
- With this in view, some of the Member States wished to consider discussions to create new agenda items where deemed appropriate and necessary to give those Goals and targets with low coverage a place to be followed-up and reviewed.
- Many Member States were of the view that duplication and overlap should be considered on a case-by-case basis, and mandates of the respective bodies should always be considered. There was a view that, in order to assess whether duplication exists, it is important to look not only at the title of items but also at the outcomes of the intergovernmental bodies on a similar item.

- Member States welcomed the proposal that the President of the General Assembly continue the alignment process during the Assembly's next session.

### **Seventy-first (71<sup>st</sup>) session**

During the 71<sup>st</sup> session of the General Assembly, a [report](#) of the Co-facilitators recommended that:

- The General Assembly Committees and its Bureaux hold joint meetings as required to outline the relationship between the work of these bodies and the 2030 Agenda; the bureau of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies could also be included, as appropriate.
- Seeking advice, within existing mandates, from the Secretary-General on the feasibility of issuing joint UN reports for Committee resolutions.
- The President of ECOSOC and the President of the General Assembly, in their annual briefing to Member States, provide more clarity on the interlinkages between the work of the UN, including the General Assembly Committees and ECOSOC subsidiary bodies, and the 2030 Agenda, taking into account the sub-set of goals to be annually discussed at the HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC.
- Future work on the alignment process, within its mandate, take into account other on-going processes related to the 2030 Agenda.
- In the 72nd session of the General Assembly, the General Committee, in consultation with the President of ECOSOC, present proposals to Member States on how to address gaps and duplication in the agenda of the General Assembly as they relate to the 2030 Agenda, and use as a basis for these proposals, if deemed appropriate, the report contained within the letter issued by the President of the General Assembly on 13 September 2016, *"Report on Strategic Alignment of future sessions of the General Assembly with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"*.
- The President of the General Assembly consider the feasibility of completing the first stage of the alignment process by the end of the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the General Assembly and as an input to the HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly, including addressing gaps and duplication in the agenda of the General Assembly, taking into account that further alignment of the UN will continue for the whole duration of the 2030 Agenda.
- The President of the General Assembly consider convening a meeting early in the session of the General Assembly with the chairs and bureaux of the main committees of the General Assembly and the President and bureaux of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, as appropriate, to discuss how their work relates to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and how best to enhance synergies, coherence and address gaps and duplication.
- The President of the General Assembly and the President of the Economic and Social Council, further to the holding of the above mentioned meeting, consider providing a joint briefing to member states to provide more clarity on the interlinkages between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the work of the General Assembly committees, the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, taking into account the sub-set of goals to be annually discussed at the HLPF under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council.



### **Seventieth (70<sup>th</sup>) session**

The Facilitator of the 70<sup>th</sup> session offered a [report](#) of the work done to strategically align the agenda of future sessions of the General Assembly with the 2030 Agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals. An annex to the report contained a mapping assessment of the of SDGs and targets based on the agenda items of the 69th and 70th sessions of the General Assembly and of the ECOSOC system.

In the report, the Facilitator emphasized:

- The work done is a beginning. It is the first time the SDGs are mapped against the GA agenda.
- A large group of countries expressed the view that it is imperative that the work in the GA and ECOSOC is coherently aligned with the SDGs. It considers that 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. On overlaps, this group of countries called to take care not to eliminate important substance from existing agenda items and to be focused towards enhancing synergies to ensure coherence.
- Another group of countries highlighted the importance of continually reviewing the agendas of the GA and the ECOSOC to streamline them. They also considered that it should not be assumed that all SDG targets should be covered by these two organs.
- Two concrete ideas arose during the informal discussions: (i) construct a table that sees whether the GA agenda items are aligned to the 2030 Agenda – all GA items would be listed and analyzed regarding whether they are related to the 2030 Agenda, and (ii) entrust an independent think tank or foundation with the task of studying overlaps in the agendas of the GA and ECOSOC.

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