



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

30 April 2020

Excellency,

I have the pleasure to forward herewith, a letter dated 28 April 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 leading the intergovernmental consultations on the alignment of the agendas of the 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 letter shares the substantive inputs received from the Group of 77 and China, and the European Union, regarding the different elements of the alignment process. It also transmits a co-facilitators' note aimed at facilitating the expert level virtual meeting, which will be scheduled in due course.

The co-facilitators kindly request Member States to send any additional views/inputs by Friday, 8 May 2020.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized, flowing script that ends in a small loop.

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

28 April 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", as mandated in Assembly resolution 73/341 on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (notably paragraphs 12, 27 and 28). We wish to refer to our first informal intergovernmental consultations on 17 February 2020 and to our letter of 4 March 2020 regarding next steps.

Taking into account the impact of COVID-19, we continue to rely on your guidance in the pursuit of the General Assembly process on agenda alignment which is important to ensure that, when the crisis is over, the United Nations intergovernmental system is equipped to best support the Decade of Action to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals.

In this regard, it is our pleasure to convey the substantive inputs received from the G77 and China and the ELI. We are also pleased to convey a Co-facilitators' note, which we hope would inform the forthcoming expert-level virtual discussion at a date and time to be confirmed.

We would be most grateful for any additional inputs or views you would wish to share by Friday, 8 May.

We thank you for your support to the United Nations General Assembly and its alignment process in view of the 2030 Agenda and look forward to your continued engagement.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration

Milica Pejanočić Đurišić  
Permanent Representative of  
Montenegro to the United Nations

Collen V. Kelapile  
Permanent Representative of Botswana  
to the United Nations

**Non-Paper of the Group of 77 and China on the intergovernmental consultations on the alignment of the agendas of the General Assembly and ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies in the light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

**Introduction**

1. The Group of 77 and China is willing to engage in the alignment process owing principally to its conviction that the full, accelerated and comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the greatest global challenge and the most critical and relevant issue for all developing countries. It is of the highest importance for the Group that this alignment process leads to a comprehensive coverage of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and associated targets, premised on the overarching priority of eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions and ensuring that no one is left behind. Our common objective is to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in its entirety, in this Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development.

2. The Group is equally firm in its belief in the respective role and mandates of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in fully supporting and guiding implementation of the 2030 Agenda and achievement of the SDGs. Leadership by States of the work of the General Assembly and ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies imposes on States the primary responsibility in deciding on the actions to be taken on their agendas. Consequently, the process should remain inclusive, always taking into account the views of the universal membership of the United Nations (UN) and safeguarding the rights of all States.

3. The Group views the alignment process as critical to the broader process of the revitalization of the General Assembly and to the overall reform of the UN. We support the core objectives of overcoming gaps, reducing duplications where they are found to exist and creating necessary and productive synergies between the two main bodies.

4. This Non-Paper is a preliminary contribution of the Group of 77 and China to the alignment process and sets out key positions and proposals of the Group on relevant aspects of the process.

**Key Positions**

5. The alignment process should not focus exclusively on the SDGs but should consider the 2030 Agenda in its entirety, including the three dimensions of Sustainable Development – economic, social and environmental. This would ensure that relevant issues covered by the 2030 Agenda, which are not necessarily reflected in any of the Goals or targets, would not be left out of the alignment process. We should avoid cherry picking in the exercise.

6. The universal nature of the 2030 Agenda inevitably creates linkages between the alignment process and other ongoing processes such as the HLPF and ECOSOC reviews and the revitalization of the work of the Second Committee. Consequently, the alignment process should be characterized by a comprehensive and holistic review of the agendas across all main bodies.

7. While the 2030 Agenda is the main focus of the alignment process, it is critical to note that the work of the UN and the development functions of its main intergovernmental bodies are considerably broader than the 2030 Agenda. These functions and the Organization's development programmes and activities will extend beyond the 2030 deadline of the SDG Agenda. It is important, therefore, to keep this larger context in view as we deliberate.

8. These consultations should aim for more elaboration and in-depth analysis of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the SDGs, in relation to the agenda items and sub-items. We strongly believe that there should be more substantive and content-based analysis of whether the agenda items of the General Assembly, ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies are aligned or not with the 2030 Agenda. This level of analysis cannot use as a main premise, the title of items and/or resolutions to determine whether they correspond or not with particular SDGs or aspects of the 2030 Agenda.

9. The mapping exercise will be directly impacted by the comprehensive analysis required at point (8) above. It is important to continue building on the mapping done to date as an evolving reference. There is need for a fuller and more comprehensive mapping and review to guide further discussions during our consultations.

10. With respect to gaps, duplication and overlaps where they are found to exist, we stress that:

- i. The interconnected nature of the SDGs could make it difficult to identify overlaps but it should be underscored that duplication does not necessarily mean repetition. Potential overlaps should be studied on a case by case basis, taking into consideration specific mandates and perspectives of different UN organs. Moreover, any exercise regarding overlapping agenda items should safeguard the primacy of the UN Development System.
- ii. Thus far, the alignment process has been pursued in an unbalanced manner, with a focus mainly on identifying overlaps. Therefore, greater effort must be placed on further identifying prevailing gaps in the treatment of the SDGs, in addition to the current focus on overlaps.
- iii. We reiterate the need to undertake a detailed, thorough and comprehensive analysis of the SDGs and the agendas of the General Assembly and ECOSOC before developing a set of criteria for identifying possible gaps, overlaps and/or duplication. This analysis would also enable rationalization of the agendas of the General Assembly and ECOSOC vis-à-vis the 2030 Agenda as a whole, which would include filling individual gaps in SDG coverage.

11. There should be no restrictions to adding new agenda items, where appropriate and necessary, to address those Goals and targets that are not adequately covered. The indivisible nature of the 2030 Agenda makes it imperative and urgent to ensure equal attention to and consideration of all Goals and targets aiming at its full and effective implementation.

12. While we are keen to achieve a successful outcome of the alignment process, we advise against setting artificial timelines for its conclusion. There should be adequate time and space to fully ventilate all of the relevant issues with a view to effectively completing the mandate.

### **Key Proposals**

13. Bearing in mind Resolution A/RES/73/341 of September 2019, and the resolutions and discussions on the strengthening of ECOSOC, States may propose periodic meetings in order to strengthen synergies, coherence and complementarity between the programmes of the General Assembly and its Committees and the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies. Also, through coordinated efforts, formulate joint work plans by selecting those topics that States want to prioritize in the main organs of the United Nations, which will allow an effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The General Assembly and the Council, through coordinated work, can choose emerging issues or cross-cutting topics that point to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This joint work will also allow ECOSOC to organize its subsidiary system around the 2030 Agenda by directing its efforts towards supporting subsidiary bodies, and by ensuring adequate financial resources for the fulfilment of its mandate. ECOSOC should seek to strengthen the visibility of the work advanced by its subsidiary bodies.

14. States may also promote interactive and inclusive discussions of topics on current issues of particular importance to the international community and that can guide the work programmes of both the General Assembly and its Committees, as well as the Council and its subsidiary bodies. The General Assembly is important for developing key system-wide strategic policy orientations and operational modalities for the UN Development System, and for the formulation and approval of policy matters.

15. Consideration should be given to joint reporting by the Secretary General on similar issues covered by the GA and ECOSOC and by these bodies, to capitalize on their synergies and augment their impact. Regular joint meetings of the ECOSOC and the main Committees of the GA would provide opportunity for identifying overlaps and duplication of agenda items in order to facilitate such joint reporting.

16. With respect to the SDGs that remain largely uncovered under the agendas of the General Assembly and ECOSOC, as well as those with limited coverage, the following options should be considered:

- i. Inscribing new sub-items under the GA or ECOSOC system agendas that would address the targets of the identified SDGs and develop resolutions on the issues of these SDGs under broader items of the agendas of the GA and ECOSOC;
- ii. Addressing targets in a more relevant and inclusive manner under the items that partially deal with the identified SDGs, or adding new content to agenda items related to those SDGs.

### **Conclusion**

The G77 and China fully supports the Co-Facilitators in the execution of their mandate and will remain constructively engaged throughout the process. The Group recognizes that outreach across regional and group lines is critical for progress and remains ready and willing to work with all stakeholders on this important task of aligning the agendas of the GA and ECOSOC in light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



## **Submission on behalf of the EU and its Member States**

### **Alignment of the agendas of the General Assembly, ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies"**

We would like to reiterate that Resolution 73/341 calls for making “*concrete proposals for the further biennialization, triennialization, clustering and elimination of items on the agenda of the Assembly, including through the introduction of a sunset clause*”. At the same time, the resolution calls on the PGA to “*identify proposals [...] aimed at addressing gaps, overlaps and duplications where they are found to exist in the Agenda of the Assembly as they relate to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a whole*”.

Despite the great effort of last year’s co-facilitators, the UN has so far failed to deliver in full on this mandate. We are determined to engage constructively with all partners to eventually reach this goal and we remain that all of us will have to make compromises to that end.

In this perspective, we would like to propose the following contribution to the concrete questions put forward by the co-facilitators:

As to the **first set of questions**, we believe that they cover only a very limited part of the **mandate**, as they focus solely on SDGs that might not yet be adequately covered in our work. However, the starting point of our conversation should be to look at overlaps and duplication across committees and agendas in a comprehensive manner.

**Only if we succeed to streamline** the already overloaded GA agenda and to reduce overlaps between the GA and ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, then **will we be able to free up the necessary space** to focus on the priority challenges, which need our full attention to implement the 2030 Agenda in a timely manner.

The documents and analysis produced during last year's process, i.e. the updated mapping as well identification of possible criteria for reducing overlaps and duplication, **are a sound basis** to take **concrete steps**.

We expect that on this basis the **final outcome will 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.

Both – the proposals and the 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 75<sup>th</sup> session of the GA.

**Concerning the second set of questions**, there is in our view **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. To determine gaps, overlaps and duplications, we need to work on the basis of concrete proposals. We would thus invite delegations to come to our next meeting with **a list of concrete proposals to address gaps, overlaps and duplication**.

As far as we are concerned the following concrete suggestions can be made:

- **Reduce the frequency of all resolutions** and/or agenda items to free up the necessary resources to make those resolutions, address new developments effectively and are action-oriented: As a default working method, any new resolution should be dedicated to a new issue or challenge and handled in a one-off resolution, while any resolution addressing an ongoing challenge should be triennial.

- All recurring resolutions should as default contain a **sunset clause** (also to be added to existing resolutions in their upcoming iteration). If due to unforeseen developments it is necessary to change the sunset clause, the GA can do so anytime.
- All purely **regional resolutions** should be reviewed: In the future regional resolutions should only be put forward for acute challenges with global repercussions and only in a one-off resolution. Where we already have several regional resolutions on an overarching subject (e.g. Sustainable Tourism in Central America and Sustainable Tourism in Central Asia) these should at least be merged.
- Review all **resolutions**, which are **negotiated in the GA as well as in the ECOSOC** (often on an annual basis in both organs), in order to free the currently wasted resources to actually drive implementation. Maybe the discussions/resolutions in GA and ECOSOC could be alternated: While the GA decides upon the general political direction and guidelines for the international community, the next (two?) years the ECOSOC could address the effective operative implementation of these general political guidelines in particular by the UNDS.
- Resolutions that are largely overlapping in substance or address subsets of an overarching issue should be **merged**. These include e.g. the ICT and STI resolutions, the resolution on trade with those on commodities and unilateral economic measures, the ones on poverty eradication and rural poverty.
- Focus any **new mandates** for High-Level meetings on a limited number of priority issues, which then can be addressed effectively and adjust mandates for report to make them streamlined and focused on action-oriented and evidence-based recommendations (as already partly implemented in last year's 2C on the basis of the Mexican initiative in this regard).
- Reduce the proliferation of **proclamations of international days and years** to few exceptional issues which are of a global importance and have so far been largely neglected by the international community, so that the key measure for this specific issue



it to raise awareness through an international day/year/decade. Again this would free up precious resources of the GA and other UN organs and institutions to actually drive the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

**On the third set of questions**, obvious cases of overlaps and duplications might be where both the GA and ECOSOC negotiate annual resolutions on the exact same subject. Many agenda items and resolutions cover a sub-issue of another item or resolution. When it comes to possible gaps, we are open to also discuss a new resolution by cross-regional groups. If we can find agreement on reducing overlaps, any new agenda item should be a one-off for specific issues or triennial for ongoing challenges as default.

**On the last question**, we have all the necessary information and instruments at hand to finally act. We have presented some concrete proposals to that end and we look forward to the facilitators to steer this process towards a successful outcome of this process, namely to operational language to be integrated in this session's new revitalization resolution, which will then be implemented during the 75th session.

## **Note of the Co-facilitators**

### **Alignment of the Agendas of the General Assembly, ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies**

The inputs received by the Co-Facilitators in March 2020 show that there are commonalities among Member States.

- All are committed to aligning the agendas of the GA, ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies with the 2030 Agenda and addressing gaps, overlaps and duplications where they are found to exist, so as to best support the implementation of the Agenda and address the key related priorities and challenges.
- There is agreement that gaps, overlaps and duplications should be identified and addressed taking into account the respective mandates and perspectives of intergovernmental bodies. In particular, the GA gives general policy directions for the international community including the UN development system while ECOSOC can discuss the effective operative implementation of these general policy guidelines.
- There is agreement on the need to build synergies between the General Assembly, ECOSOC and other bodies.
- There is agreement that gaps, overlaps and duplications should be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
- There is also agreement that the work of the General Assembly on alignment should not infringe on the right of any delegation to propose an item or resolution.

There are both commonalities and a variety of views on issues related to gaps, overlap and duplications:

#### **1. Gaps:**

- The mapping developed at the 73<sup>rd</sup> session aimed to identify gaps in addressing the 2030 Agenda. Some delegations consider that the mapping is completed and now want to focus on concrete proposals. Others feel further work is needed and that the mapping should look at the coverage of the 2030 Agenda as a whole, and not only at the SDGs. They also want the analysis to go beyond titles of agenda items and examine the content of resolutions and possibly reports under the respective items, so as to determine whether the SDGs/targets and other aspects of the 2030 Agenda are adequately addressed.
- There are various views on solutions to address gaps in the coverage of SDGs/targets, once they are identified:
  - o Add new sub-items to GA or ECOSOC agendas and develop resolutions on the missing targets under broader items
  - o Add new content to existing items related to the SDGs.
  - o Adopt a new resolution, which could be prepared by cross-regional groups
  - o At the same time, some delegations want new items/resolutions to focus on a limited number of priority issues. In general, they feel new resolutions should be on a new challenge or issue and be a “one off” resolution. Resolutions on on-going challenges should be triennialized.

*Questions for discussion:*

- Which issues are addressed in the 2030 Agenda and not in the SDGs?
- How can delegations conduct a more thorough analysis of the content of the intergovernmental work under the various agenda items, so as to determine whether SDGs/targets and other aspects of the 2030 Agenda are adequately addressed by the General Assembly, ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies? Is there agreement to do this?
- Is there agreement to include new sub-items or broaden the coverage of existing items and/or adopt new or modified resolutions in order to address the SDGs/targets that are insufficiently addressed in the GA, ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies? Would it be possible to look at some of those items on a biennial or triennial basis, allowing for issues to be addressed in greater depth but with a lower periodicity?

## **2. Overlaps and duplications**

- Identification of duplications:
  - o Some delegations feel that, in order to identify overlaps and duplications, it is important to look not only at the title of agenda items but also at the content of the resolutions/reports under those items.
  - o Other delegations propose to start identifying overlap/duplications by focusing on resolutions that are adopted by both the GA and ECOSOC on the same topic.
  - o There is agreement that criteria should be used to identify overlap and duplications. Some delegations would like to use the criteria defined at the 73<sup>rd</sup> session as they are. Others want to review those criteria after the gaps in covering the SDGs have been identified.
- Possible solutions to address duplications where they are found to exist include:
  - o There is agreement on the mandates given by the General Assembly, including on reviewing the periodicity of agenda items.
  - o Some delegations suggest alternating the consideration of specific issues by intergovernmental bodies -- so that the GA gives policy guidance in a given year and ECOSOC addresses implementation on the other years.
  - o Regarding issues addressed in two bodies, some delegations propose that the GA main committees and ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies convene periodic joint meetings so as to increase synergies, coherence and complementarity. Member States would have inclusive discussions and formulate joint workplans on priority topics so as to allow effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They would also choose emerging issues and cross cutting topics, on which ECOSOC would also mobilize its subsidiary bodies.
  - o Other delegations propose to merge resolutions that overlap in substance or address subsets of a broader issue. They provide examples of where this could be done for example within the agenda items allocated to the Second Committee. They also suggest merging resolutions on the same region; limiting the number of resolutions on international days and years; focusing new mandated high-level events on a few priority issues and introducing a removable sunset clause in recurring resolutions.

- Some delegations also propose that the Secretary-General prepare joint reports on issues addressed by GA and ECOSOC to capitalize on synergies and increase impact. More generally, it is proposed to make Secretary-General's reports more focused on actions and evidence based.

*Questions for discussions:*

- Could a single expanded analysis be conducted to identify gaps, overlaps and duplication, building further on the mapping conducted at the 73<sup>rd</sup> session? Would delegations be willing to carry out such analysis within small open-ended working group (s) supported by the Secretariat?
- Could we pilot the use of the criteria defined at the 73<sup>rd</sup> session in areas where resolutions on the same topic are adopted by the GA and ECOSOC so as to update those criteria as needed?
- On what topics are resolutions adopted by both the General Assembly and ECOSOC?
- On what topics could joint meetings of the General Assembly main Committees and ECOSOC be organized so as to enhance coherence and synergies?