

15 January 2021

Excellency,

I have the honour to transmit herewith, a letter dated 14 January 2021, from H.E. Ms. Rabab Fatima, Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and H.E. Ms. Darja Bavdaž Kuret, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia, the co-facilitators leading the intergovernmental consultations, in pursuance of resolution 74/303 of 4 September 2020 entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", with specific reference to paragraph 6 regarding consultations with all Member States, the President of the Economic and Social Council and the General Committee, within their respective mandates, aimed at addressing gaps, overlaps and duplication 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.

The co-facilitators are convening a virtual Ambassador-level informal consultation on Friday, 22 January 2021 at 3 p.m., via the Cisco WebEx Platform. The co-facilitators have also shared a working paper on Alignment of the agendas of United Nations intergovernmental bodies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I look forward to your active participation in this important meeting.

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



Volkan BOZKIR

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

14 January 2021

Excellency,

With reference to the General Assembly resolution [74/303](#) and the [letter](#) of of President of the General Assembly of 6 November 2020, we have the honor to write to you in our capacity as Co-facilitators appointed to lead intergovernmental consultations on the alignment process during the 75th session of the General Assembly.

As we mark the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations and the start of the Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development, ensuring that the agendas of UN intergovernmental bodies adequately align with the 2030 Agenda has assumed renewed urgency. In this regard, we intend to conduct an inclusive and transparent consultation process. We believe that, working together among all delegations in a spirit of consensus and trust, we can achieve an ambitious outcome on the alignment of agendas during this session.

To initiate the process, we wish to invite you to a virtual Ambassador-level informal consultation on **Friday, 22 January 2021, at 15:00 hours, via the Cisco WebEx Platform**. The logistical information will be circulated by the Secretariat in advance of the meeting.

We count on your full engagement and cooperation to move this process forward.

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



Rabab Fatima
Permanent Representative of
Bangladesh to the United Nations



Darja Bavdaž Kuret
Permanent Representative of
Slovenia to the United Nations

14 January 2021

75th General Assembly

Alignment of the agendas of United Nations intergovernmental bodies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Co-facilitators' working paper

1. Introduction

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs gave impetus to efforts to ensure the alignment of the agendas of the intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Since the 70th session of the General Assembly, consultations have taken place to “enhance synergies and coherence” in the work of the General Assembly, especially of its Second and Third Committees, and the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies by “addressing gaps, overlaps and duplication where they are found to exist in the agendas” of those various intergovernmental bodies.

Ensuring that the agendas of UN intergovernmental bodies adequately align with the 2030 Agenda is all the more urgent with the celebration of the UN 75th Anniversary and the start of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted progress in many areas of the SDGs and these impacts need to be taken into account in the work of intergovernmental bodies and their agendas. The pandemic has in particular exacerbated existing health, education, economic and social inequalities and underscored the imperative of cohesive work across the UN intergovernmental platforms in order to strengthen their actions to help recover and rebuild better.

The President of the General Assembly has appointed us as the Co-facilitators for the alignment process during the 75th session of the General Assembly. We intend to conduct an inclusive, transparent, and consensual informal consultation process. We believe that, working together among all delegations in a spirit of consensus and trust, we can, and should be able to achieve an ambitious outcome on the alignment of agendas during this session.

We are committed to working within the mandate of GA resolutions 74/303 and 73/341, which is focused on “addressing gaps, overlaps and duplication in the agendas of the General Assembly, especially of its Second and Third Committees, and the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies... in the light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. We will also give balanced and appropriate attention to both gaps, on the one hand, and overlaps and duplications, on the other hand, throughout the consultations, keeping in perspective the agendas and mandates of both the General Assembly and ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies.

The present note aims to stimulate discussions at our first meeting. It provides highlights of the history of the alignment process thus far and outlines our approach to the informal consultations and our proposed roadmap.

2. History of the alignment process:

There have been many analyses and proposals during the informal consultations on the alignment of agendas since the 70th session. We consider that this work has produced important understandings, tools, and concrete proposals, on which we can build.

At the 70th session, the General Assembly took note of the Facilitator's [report](#) on the strategic alignment of its future sessions with the 2030 Agenda. It also recalled the need to enhance synergies and coherence and reduce overlap. The Facilitator's work included a comprehensive mapping of how the targets under the SDGs are addressed within the UN intergovernmental machinery. It highlighted that, while the majority of the SDGs and their targets are covered in the GA and/or ECOSOC agenda, there is low coverage on SDGs 6 (water and sanitation) and 12 (sustainable consumption and production) in UN intergovernmental bodies. Additionally, 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.

During the 71st session of the General Assembly, the [report](#) of the two co-facilitators on the consultations offered several recommendations, including proposed actions by the President and General Committee of the General Assembly, Chairs and Bureaux of the main Committees and the President and Bureau of ECOSOC.

During the 72nd session, the [report](#) of the two co-facilitators offered a synthesis of the views of Member States as well as their own recommendations. Their key messages included the following. In the view of many Member States, the alignment should lead to effective and comprehensive coverage of the 2030 Agenda, and its 17 SDGs and targets by UN intergovernmental bodies, with the understanding that eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimension is the overarching priority. Regarding the identification of gaps in covering the 2030 Agenda, past experiences showed that there was low coverage on SDGs 6 (water and sanitation) and 12 (sustainable consumption and production). Additionally, 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. Many Member States had underscored that duplication and overlap in the agendas of the GA, ECOSOC, HLPF and other bodies need to be addressed also with a view to ensuring the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of the UN intergovernmental processes. 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 the feeling that, 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. Many Member States wanted to review the periodicity of some agenda items in cases where there were duplications.

During the 73rd session, the alignment process resulted in a [report](#) the co-facilitators and an input to the General Assembly resolution on revitalization ¹where the General Assembly:

- Took “note with appreciation of the updated mapping assessment of the Sustainable Development Goals coverage as an evolving reference document for the consideration of Member States during the seventy-fourth session of the Assembly” (the mapping assessment developed through the informal consultations aimed exclusively at identifying gaps in the coverage of the SDGs by UN intergovernmental bodies, building on the mapping of the 70th session); and
- Took “note of the initial efforts made during the 73rd session of the Assembly to develop possible criteria to identify overlaps and duplication where they are found to exist” (Member States had expressed a range of views on the criteria during the informal consultations. While the mapping aimed at identifying gaps, the criteria aimed at determining whether there is duplication in specific areas addressed by two or more intergovernmental bodies).

During the 74th session, discussions were impacted by the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and only a few meetings could be held in person. In the initial discussions, many Member States reaffirmed the importance of aligning agendas with a view to enhancing synergies, linkages and coherence between the work of the General Assembly and ECOSOC and the functional commissions and expert bodies. The objective was to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with greater efficiency. There were different views on whether the mapping of the 73rd session required to be further elaborated to analyse the coverage of the 2030 Agenda as a whole and deepen the analysis, or whether it was complete. There were also various views on whether the criteria needed to be further elaborated or whether it was time to identify overlaps and duplications and consider possible solutions. Due to the limited time available for consultations, Member States were not able to complete their exchange of views to shape further the work on identifying gaps, duplications and overlaps. The outcome of the consultations was a technical rollover of the mandate on alignment ² as an input to the General Assembly revitalization process. The co-facilitators convened a number of meetings and invited written contributions from delegations on the alignment process. They issued a background paper reflecting areas of agreement among delegations and areas requiring further consultations -including specific proposals for addressing gaps, overlaps and duplications (attached as Annex I).

3. The General Assembly consultations on alignment during the 75th session - Broad principles and areas for further work:

In our role as co-facilitators, we believe that, at the heart of the General Assembly consultations on the alignment of agendas, is the need to ensure that the work of UN intergovernmental bodies accelerates efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda and implement the SDGs, while ensuring that they work in the most efficient, effective and that they work in a complementary way. As noted above,

¹ A/res/73/341

² A/RES/74/303 reaffirmed all mandates of A/RES/73/341 and earlier resolutions on the revitalization of the General Assembly

we will work within our mandate as well as within the respective mandates of the General Assembly, especially its Second and Third Committees, ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies.

We intend to address both gaps, on the one hand, and overlaps and duplication, on the other hand, in a balanced manner throughout the process, and on a case by case basis.

We would like to build on the work undertaken during the past informal consultations on the alignment of agendas, as well as on good practices gained through the revitalization of the General Assembly, its Main Committees, and other intergovernmental bodies, including learning from the good practices of the executive boards of Funds and Programmes.

It is our understanding that, based on the consultations conducted during previous General Assembly sessions, there is broad agreement on the following principles (*see Annex I*), which we could use to guide our work:

- There is a broad commitment to aligning the agendas of the General Assembly, especially its Second and Third Committees, ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies with the 2030 Agenda and to addressing gaps, overlaps and duplications, where they are found to exist, so as to best support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and address the related critical priorities and challenges.
- The work on alignment should not infringe on the sovereign right of each Member State to propose an agenda item or a resolution;
- Gaps, overlaps and duplications need to be identified and addressed taking into account the respective mandates of each intergovernmental body;
- There is agreement on the need to build synergies and complementarity between the work of UN intergovernmental bodies;
- The identification of gaps, overlaps and duplication needs to be made on a case by case basis;
- The identification of gaps, overlaps and duplication needs to be based on a review of not only the titles of the items or sub-items, but also of the content of the resolutions or other outcome documents and, if needed, of the content of the reports of the Secretary-General;
- The informal consultations of the General Assembly will address at the same time gaps, overlaps and duplications.

To kick off the work during the coming session, we would like to hear from delegations their views on the mapping as it was developed during the 73rd session with the objective to identify gaps in addressing the SDGs in UN intergovernmental bodies. There were diverging views on whether that mapping needs to be expanded to address other issues from the 2030 Agenda, beyond the SDGs, and whether it should be deepened by examining the content of resolutions and possibly reports, rather than only the titles of items/subitems. Delegations are therefore invited to reflect on whether they wish to further work on this mapping and how. It would be important to ultimately use the mapping to make a diagnosis on which SDGs are insufficiently addressed in UN intergovernmental bodies (the gaps), building also on the findings of past sessions. This would lead to identifying possible solutions, some of which have also been discussed in the past.

Regarding overlaps and duplications, there have also been various views on whether further work is required to elaborate the criteria to identify overlaps and duplications, and on whether and how to start the examination of possible specific overlaps and duplications, on a case by case basis. Some

delegations have proposed piloting the implementation of the criteria in relation to areas where both the General Assembly and ECOSOC adopt a resolution and it would be good to know whether this would be acceptable to all. Some possible solutions to addressing overlaps and duplications have been discussed during past General Assembly sessions.

4. Roadmap:

The President of the General Assembly has encouraged us to have an early start of the informal consultations. Sufficient time is indeed needed to carry out the technical in-depth work required to make progress in identifying and addressing gaps, overlaps and duplications while bearing in mind the political sensitivities of those negotiations.

Since our appointment, we held conversations with various delegations and Secretariat officials, including previous co-facilitators. The President of the General Assembly invited us to a meeting of the General Committee, to which the President of the ECOSOC was also invited. Our door will remain open to all delegations throughout the consultations.

We intend to convene meetings starting late January, both at the level of Permanent Representatives, to mobilize political vision and guidance, and at the level of experts, where most of the analytical work and negotiations will be done.

Meetings of Permanent Representatives will be convened every four to six weeks, and as needed. The experts will meet as often as needed, including at a possible short retreat if needed and feasible given the medical restrictions.

We will regularly brief the President of the General Assembly and keep him engaged and informed.

We intend to complete the alignment process by June 2021, so as to provide input to the General Assembly resolution on the revitalization of the General Assembly.

5. Questions for discussions:

We wish to propose some questions to guide the discussions among Member States at our first meeting and motivate Member States to provide us with as detailed and clear feedback as possible, in order for us to be able to achieve a meaningful result, taking into consideration the sense of urgency and expectations of our mandate. This is only to stimulate initial discussion and not an exhaustive list. Member States are encouraged to raise any other issues that they deem important:

1. What would be the best possible outcome of the General Assembly consultations on alignment?
2. What are some of the achievable results that we can target this session, building on the work done so far in the alignment process? What is the understanding of the status of the mapping to identify gaps in the coverage of the 2030 Agenda by UN intergovernmental bodies (prepared at the 73rd session and welcomed by the General Assembly)? Could we draw conclusions on which SDGs are insufficiently addressed by the General Assembly, ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies? What are the possible solutions to address such gaps? Do the criteria to identify overlaps and

duplications developed at the 73rd session need further elaboration (and how) or could we start with piloting some examples in selected areas?

3. How can the alignment process efficiently take into consideration the reform initiatives in the GA and in ECOSOC, learning also from the good practices of the alignment of the Executive Boards of the Funds and Programmes with the UN reforms?
4. How can we encourage and further support the General Assembly, its Main Committees, the ECOSOC fora and segments, and its subsidiary bodies to combine their efforts in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda? How can we improve interaction and common approaches?
5. Could we integrate some of the good practices that we have seen in the work of the different committees and the GA and ECOSOC during the COVID-19 pandemic, regarding both their outcomes, organization of work and revitalization, so as to help address gaps and reduce overlaps/duplications?
6. How can intergovernmental bodies best respond to the impact of COVID-19 on the SDGs and how should this impact on their agenda?
7. How can we ensure the continuity of the alignment process and ensure that the work during each session builds on the previous achievements?

Annex 1: Note of the co-facilitators at the 73rd session “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 73rd 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:
 - Add new sub-items to GA or ECOSOC agendas and develop resolutions on the missing targets under broader items
 - Add new content to existing items related to the SDGs.
 - Adopt a new resolution, which could be prepared by cross-regional groups
 - 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 73rd 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 work plans 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.

- 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 73rd 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 73rd 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?

Annex 2: Mapping

A table titled "SDG Coverage by the General Assembly, ECOSOC and ECOSOC Functional Commissions" can be found in Annex I of the report of the Co-Facilitators of the alignment process at the 73rd session.

Kindly refer to page 7 of the following document: <https://www.un.org/pga/74/wp-content/uploads/sites/99/2020/02/Alignment-Process-Letter-from-co-facilitators.pdf>

Annex 3: Criteria for reducing overlaps and duplication where they are found to exist in the light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Kindly find a Note of the co-facilitators under Annex II of in the same report as above, pages 33 and 34 in the document (marked as page numbers 31 and 32).