

Summary of the Stakeholder Preparatory Forum for the Post-2015 Development Agenda Negotiations

INTRODUCTION

The Stakeholder Preparatory Forum for the post-2015 development agenda negotiations was held on 16th January this year in the headquarters of the United Nations in New York. It was organized by the [Steering Committee](#) representing the Major Groups and other stakeholders, facilitated by UN-NGLS and UN DESA-DSD.

The Forum hosted approximately 400 participants, including UN Member States and the UN System and stakeholders from civil society and the private sector. Among the panelists, moderators and discussants the Forum featured civil society representatives from all different continents; as well as high level delegates from the UN Member States, including the two co-facilitators of the post-2015 intergovernmental negotiations from the Republic of Kenya and the Republic of Ireland, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Germany, India, Kingdom of Morocco, Peru, Romania, the Russian Federation, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the European Union. High level officials of UN DESA and UN-NGLS as well as the president of ECOSOC participated. The agenda is available [here](#).

The Forum was held two days ahead of the first session of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, which will be adopted at the UN Special Summit in September 2015.

CORE DEBATE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Welcome and Way Forward

The first session of the Forum presented a general overview of the post-2015 development agenda and process and highlighted the following core elements that must be taken into consideration, in particular in regards to its political declaration:

- **Our responsibility and sense of urgency:** on moving forward, the final stages that are to define the agenda must emphasize a profound sense of urgency in achieving transformative change, thus ensuring the survival and well-being of present and future generations. We similarly emphasize people as rights-holders and governments as duty-bearers; as well as the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities to address inequalities among nations.
- **The need to shift to a development paradigm respectful of natural, human and cultural diversities:** many of the world's crises are rooted in structural and historically determined inequality, injustice, discrimination, environmental and social exploitation, embedded in the current development paradigm. Entrenched profit and power-oriented interests are behind unsustainable and unjust patterns of extraction, production, consumption and waste that are driving poverty, hunger and climate change in the world today. We must ensure that the development paradigm that informs the post-2015 development agenda is cognizant of the world's plurality and diversity, valuing and respecting cultures and people's fundamental rights, as well as the rights of the Mother Earth and all living beings. It must be at the service and committed to Living Well (*Buen Vivir*) and to Development Justice, considering redistributive, economic, social, gender, environmental and intergenerational justice, as well as accountability to all people.
- **Human rights must be the cornerstone of the post-2015 development agenda:** Human rights must be upheld in all aspects of its conception, implementation, follow up and review, particularly for the poorest and most marginalized who are least often heard. The agenda must be coherent and reinforce synergies with the numerous human rights conventions, plans of action, processes, and structures of binding obligations to Member States. In this sense, agreed language and terminology of above mentioned frameworks should serve as the starting point for the whole post-2015 development agenda.

- **Equality and overcoming all forms of discrimination:** The post-2015 development agenda must thoroughly address the prevailing invisibility and inadequate representation and influence in decision-making processes of discriminated groups, including persons with disabilities, LGBT, women, older people, migrants, refugees and displaced people, indigenous peoples, afro descendants, workers, small-scale farmers, children and youth and other minority groups.

Focus on Secretary General's Synthesis Report

The Preparatory Forum positively acknowledged core dimensions of the post-2015 development agenda as currently put forward on the 17 Goals and 169 targets. We particularly appreciate its universal nature; its extension to social, economic and environmental dimensions; the perspective that no Goal should be considered met if not met for all; the underpinning premise of human rights, dignity and well-being; the commitment towards equality and non-discrimination, and the recognition of the centrality of civil society and people participation in planning, decision-making, implementation and accountability. However, the Forum also noted shortfalls, which are expressed below:

- **Civil society regional perspectives:** The post-2015 development agenda must take into account the perspectives presented in the UN-NGLS report entitled "Advancing Regional Recommendations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda".
- **The six essential elements** presented in the UN Secretary General's (UNSG) Synthesis Report can be read as crosscutting elements of the agenda, but should not be used as headings for clustering or as an excuse for merging the goals and targets of the Open Working Group (OWG) Report. Furthermore, there are missing elements such as equality and participation. In addition, the current concept of prosperity must be revisited. As it stands, it consolidates the current growth and profit oriented development paradigm. It should be substituted with a more transformative concept, such as Living Well and Development Justice.
- **The asymmetrical and unjust international economic and political order** that has stripped developing countries of resources and limited their domestic policy space is not addressed. We recommend that the post-2015 development agenda reinforce the commitment to the creation of a rights-based and equitable multilateral trading system, with fair representation of developing countries in international financial decision-making. Moreover, sustainable debt solutions with no harmful conditionality to Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and other forms of financing should be established.
- **Private Sector:** The UNSG's Synthesis Report proposes to tap into private resources and facilitate foreign direct investments (FDI) in developing countries as well as Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). Evidence shows that FDI liberalization has sapped the resources and weakened the economies of many nations, while favoring transnational companies and banks. The negative impact transnational corporations have in threatening food and energy sovereignty, damaging ecosystems and livelihoods, must be made explicit, halted and reflected in the post-2015 development agenda. The latter should ensure compliance with the UN's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
- **Public services, labor rights and labor market institutions are insufficiently acknowledged:** Minimum wages, collective bargaining, strong and independent unions, progressive implementation of social protection floors including pensions for all and other employment protections such as those stated in the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and ILO's Recommendation 202 on Social Protection Floors are critical for ensuring equality. They should be promoted by the SDGs. Well-funded universal access to and delivery of quality public services must be made explicit.
- **Militarization:** This issue is not addressed in UNSG's Synthesis Report. There is an urgent need to reduce militarization and arms trade globally and it is paramount to recognize the negative impacts these have on human rights. The post-2015 development agenda must capture these dimensions if we want to ensure peace and security in coming decades.

- **Gender equality, girls and women's rights and women's empowerment:** While the post-2015 development agenda has both a standalone goal and crosscutting targets, some issues must still be addressed, including: securing rights to land, other resources and assets; eliminating barriers to inheritance, succession, customary and/or family laws and marriage-related harmful practices to women's rights; women's political participation at all levels and throughout their life course; economic empowerment; social protection, decent work and living wages; recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work of women of all ages; maternal and infant mortality, sexual education and guaranteeing sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- **Education:** target 4.1 of the OWG report rightly ensures free equitable and quality primary and secondary education for all boys and girls and other targets convey a rights-based perspective of education, acknowledging persons with disabilities, youth and adult education and lifelong learning. The UNSG's Synthesis Report, however, fails to commit to this vision and instead promotes a reductionist and economist perspective of education, with weak reference to teachers. The ambition of the post-2015 development agenda must be to ensure that all learners are taught by qualified, professionally trained, motivated and well-supported teachers.

Means of Implementation and Global Partnership for Development

- **Science, technology and innovation:** Unequal access and use of technology is yet another factor that deepens inequalities. To foster sustainable development, technology must be people-oriented, inclusive, accessible, gender and age sensitive, participatory, apply precautionary principles and have justice at its core. Furthermore, indigenous and endogenous technologies must be strengthened. Technology must be designed to fit and benefit people of all ages and abilities. Existing intellectual property regimes build monopolies that reap profits for a few. Instead, technology must be conceived as a public good.
- **Participation and partnership:** Means of implementation (MOI) should not be built in a vacuum. Participatory research with marginalized groups has taught us that people are co-creating locally appropriate development solutions. MOI will only deliver sustainable results if they recognize and build on people's agency for change. Contributions from active citizenship, people's engagement and volunteering in extending development to the hard to reach and the uncouneted populations should be recognized and supported and systematically integrated into development policies and planning.
- **Financing for development:** Financing for development strategies must address the implementation of all goals and targets of the OWG Report. Domestic resources must increase, including through improved progressive tax systems, the elimination of tax evasion and of corruption. ODA must remain a top priority while countries put in place the right public policies that halt fraud and money laundry. The trend to hold too many expectations on the private sector as the main solution for financing the post-2015 development agenda must be halted. National and international frameworks need to be put in place, compelling corporations to report on, and be liable for the social and environmental impacts and effects to human rights of their activities.

Follow up and Review

- **Monitoring and accountability mechanisms:** these must be considered as a core component of the overall post-2015 development agenda and there must robust and comprehensive mechanisms, anchored on transparency, participation and the right to information, as well as encompassing extra-territorial obligations. We must understand accountability broadly, including reporting; monitoring by authorities, communities and independent bodies; data analysis; policy reviews; feedback, complaint and grievance mechanisms. The Forum acknowledged that while data disaggregation by marginalized groups is a fundamental aspect for monitoring and review, important questions remain open as to how to protect

these groups from stigmatization, discrimination and criminalization depending on country context. Accountability mechanisms- from the local and regional levels, to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF)- must be backed by adequate financing. Furthermore, legal frameworks must be put in place to ensure effective participation of individuals and communities to capture best practices and lessons learnt, in line with paragraph 149 of the UNSG's Synthesis Report, which recognizes the legitimacy and role of non-governmental actors in accountability.

- **Existing structures and mechanisms:** It is important that the post-2015 development agenda acknowledges and builds upon already existing structures and mechanisms in different thematic areas, such as the Education for All Steering Committee, and Human Rights review instruments, such as the Universal Periodic Review, so that their legacy is not lost.
- **Indicators and data:** While drawing up indicators, it is important to ensure that the scope of targets is not reduced and that their nature is not altered. Furthermore, the data revolution must go hand in hand with the process of indicator development and ensure the promotion of equality through data disaggregation by gender, age, disability, race and ethnicity, among other important aspects that need to be tracked. Indicators must also take into account any potential harmful effects on future generations of SDG's targets and MOI. It is paramount for the effective monitoring of the SDGs to build capacity in institutions, national statistical offices as well as grass-roots community actors in the areas of participatory accountability, data collection, processing and transfer.
- **Ownership by the people:** It is crucial to ensure national-level ownership and accountability for the SDGs and a safe and free environment for civil society and other stakeholders must underpin this. Substantive participation and the perspective of groups that have been historically discriminated and excluded must continue in the follow up and review process, at all levels and in all mechanisms and spaces, including the HLPF. Substantive civil society participation and voluntary engagement in the shaping and monitoring of the agenda will lay the ground for promoting its broad dissemination and ownership. People across all ages and abilities must be able to perform a critical independent role in the monitoring and review process. Those aspects must be clearly reflected in the whole post-2015 development agenda.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Forum was exemplary in its dynamics and dialogue, resulting in solid analysis and recommendations for the attention of Member States and the UN System. The quality of interventions is the best advocate for this type of forum not to be just a one-off event. We respectfully request the co-facilitators and Member States to consider future editions of this Forum as the intergovernmental process makes progress and commit to work with Member States, UN DESA and UN-NGLS to adapt formats in support of evolving deliberations.