

The next phase of the Open Working Group

The Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals conducted a total of eight thematic discussions from March 2013 to February 2014. On 21 February the Co-chairs of the OWG informed Member States about the way forward and explained the lessons learned during the consultations process:

- There is broad understanding that completion of the unfinished business of the MDGs on poverty eradication and other important social objectives must figure centrally in the SDG framework
- The principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development including, inter alia, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities as set out in Principle 7 and in paragraph 15 of “The Future We Want” document, were taken into account
- Also considered was the MDG special event Outcome Document from September 2013

The sessions were guided by the consensus that the SDGs should be action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries, while taking into account the different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. The goals should address and incorporate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and their inter-linkages in a balanced way.

In order to move the process forward and establish a basis for the up-coming negotiations, the Co-chairs have issued a report, which does not constitute a zero draft. This report identifies 19 focus areas, though the list is not exhaustive. The Co-chairs refer to these areas as “necessary to build prosperous, peaceful and resilient societies that also protect the planet.” Negotiations around the focus areas will begin in early March and be completed around early July. They will culminate in a document containing concrete goals, targets and indicators.

The Co-chairs produced a document that will serve as an excellent starting point for discussions. There are explicit references to persons with disabilities as appropriate. Important points such as mainstreaming disability, accessibility, equality, affordability, and non-discrimination are all emphasized in needed areas.

Seven focus areas explicitly refer to persons with disabilities. Throughout the document as a whole, nearly all focus areas are formulated to include the concepts “accessible” and “for all.” For example, the document mentions access to food, drinking water, health, energy, property, accessibility in cities and transportation, among other topics. Universal access to education is also an important point made in the document. “Affordable” and “adequate” are often stressed as important principles in a variety of focus areas. The first focus area is eradication of poverty, which strongly calls for addressing inequality; a point that is reiterated several times in other focus areas. Non-discrimination is also strongly highlighted in several

places. Some focus areas include a strong call for social inclusion and social benefits.

The Co-chairs introduced the concept of a stand-alone focus area on promoting equality. The focus area states that inequalities – both national and international – have negative consequences for economic growth. As solutions, the Co-chairs suggest eliminating discrimination in laws, policies and practices, reducing inequalities between social groups (including economic, social, political and environmental inequalities) and empowerment and inclusion of marginalized groups (including persons with disabilities), among other suggestions.

Focus areas with explicit reference to disability:

1. Poverty eradication

Eradication of poverty in all its forms remains the overriding priority and a necessary condition for sustainable development. The pursuit of this would provide a strong nexus to the realization of the unfinished business of the MDGs. Some areas that could be considered include: eradicating absolute poverty; reducing relative poverty; addressing inequalities at both national and international levels; access to property and productive assets, finance and markets for all women and men; providing social protection to reduce vulnerabilities of the poor, including children, youth, unemployed, **persons with disabilities**, indigenous people and local communities and older persons. Since poverty is multidimensional, progress is linked to action in all other focus areas.

3. Health and population dynamics

Healthy populations are important assets for sustainable development. Improving healthy life expectancy is a widely shared endeavor. Therefore ensuring adequate, affordable and accessible health services for all should be progressively realized. Some areas that could be considered include: strengthening health systems, dissemination of medical and public health knowledge and modern technologies; universal health coverage; elimination of preventable child and maternal deaths; preventing and treating communicable diseases, including malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and neglected tropical diseases; eliminating harmful practices; ensuring affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all; promoting healthy diets and lifestyles; addressing non-communicable diseases (NCDs); tackling environmental causes of disease, such as exposure to harmful pollutants and substances; providing for the health needs of **persons with disabilities** and ageing populations; access to sexual and reproductive health; improved indoor and outdoor air quality; and reducing road accidents.

4. Education

Everyone has a right to education, which opens up lifelong opportunities and is critical to achieving poverty eradication across generations. Achieving universal access to and quality of education is also important in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, and in shaping values and creating the necessary skilled and productive labour force. Some areas that could be considered include: universal primary education for girls and boys, significant progress towards ensuring that every child receives at least a secondary education, and

lifelong learning opportunities; ensuring equitable access to education at all levels with focus on the most marginalized; achieving high completion rates at all levels of education; ensuring effective learning outcomes at all levels and imparting knowledge and skills that match the demands of the labour market, including through vocational training; universal adult literacy; improving access to education for **persons with disabilities**; extending where needed opportunities for early childhood education; and integrating sustainable development in education curricula, including awareness raising on how diverse cultures advance sustainable development.

10. Infrastructure

Efficient, productive and globally competitive economies require well-functioning infrastructure. Provision of adequate and reliable infrastructure for water, sanitation, energy, transport and communications is necessary for social and economic development and improvement of quality of life. Infrastructure design and development should aim to promote efficiency, environmental protection and human well-being. In this regard, some areas that could be considered include: improving water supply systems; developing irrigation and water harvesting and storage infrastructure for agriculture; addressing trans-border infrastructure needs for trade and related challenges facing developing countries; developing sewerage and wastewater treatment; provision of infrastructure for access to modern energy services, as well as provision of reliable transport and communications, including road and rail links, ports and ICT connectivity; provision of technical and financial support for adequate operation and maintenance of infrastructure; accessibility to **persons with disabilities**; proper use of urban space and related infrastructure planning; due account for environmental and social impacts of existing and planned infrastructure from a lifecycle perspective.

11. Employment and decent work for all

Inclusive and robust economies and societies should provide employment and decent jobs for all those seeking work. Achieving full employment and decent work is necessary for social inclusion. Some areas that could be considered in pursuit of this focus area include: promoting full employment through macroeconomic policy; addressing youth unemployment; facilitating the participation of women in the labour force; encouraging transition from informal sector to formal sector employment; decent wages aligned with productivity; eliminating gender-based and other forms of labour market discrimination including against **persons with disabilities** and older persons; training and re-skilling for displaced workers; social security for those retired from the labour force, **persons with disabilities** and older persons; supporting small- and medium-sized enterprises; increasing access to credit to the youth, women and other vulnerable groups; protecting the rights of migrant workers in compliance with the ILO norms and standards.

12. Promoting equality

Inequalities within countries can be socially destabilizing and also have negative consequences for economic growth. Inequalities between countries can have negative effects on global solidarity and international cooperation to address shared challenges. Some areas that could be considered in addressing inequality within countries among social groups

include: eliminating discrimination in laws, policies and practices; reducing inequalities between social groups, including economic, social, political and environmental inequalities; empowering and inclusion of marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples, minorities, migrants, refugees, **persons with disabilities**, older persons, children and youth; strengthening social protection systems; promoting differentially high per capita income growth at the bottom of the income distribution; ensuring equality of economic opportunities for all, including marginalized groups.

13. Sustainable cities and human settlements

Building sustainable cities as well as decent and affordable human settlements for all remains an important undertaking. Sustainable cities and settlements, including settlements of indigenous communities, will be central in addressing socio-economic and environmental challenges and in building resilient societies. Some areas that could be considered include: improving the lives of those living in slums, including by provision of adequate and affordable housing, infrastructure and basic services; access to safe public space and services; enhancing capacities for urban planning; strengthening positive economic and social links between cities and peri-urban and rural areas; providing access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport, improving road safety and urban air quality; improving waste and wastewater management; strengthening resilience to natural disasters; enhancing social cohesion and personal security and promoting accessible cities for **people with disabilities**.

Focus areas: (not containing any reference to persons with disabilities)

2. Food security and nutrition
5. Gender equality and women's empowerment
6. Water and sanitation
7. Energy
8. Economic Growth
9. Industrialization
14. Sustainable consumption and production
15. Climate
16. Marine resources, oceans and seas
17. Ecosystems and biodiversity
18. Means of implementation
19. Peaceful and non-violent societies, capable institutions

Missed opportunities to include persons with disabilities

In focus area 5: Gender equality and women's empowerment women and girls with disabilities should have been explicitly mentioned, as well as the inclusion of violence against women and girls with disabilities.

In focus area 6: Water and sanitation ensuring equitable access to water and sanitation for persons with disabilities should have been included.
