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Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 4 November 2013

Excellencies,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to be here to discuss the United Nations post-2015 development agenda. This discussion is very timely. As you well know, at the Special Event of the General Assembly on MDGs held in September, Member States agreed to a clear roadmap towards adopting a post-2015 development agenda. Member States agreed that the agenda should “reinforce the international community’s commitment to poverty eradication and sustainable development”.

During the Special Event, Member States decided to launch the intergovernmental process on the post-2015 development agenda at the beginning of the 69th session of the General Assembly.

The President of the General Assembly was also requested to start intergovernmental consultations to achieve agreement on organizational modalities for a summit at the level of Heads of State in a timely manner.

The outcome document tasks the Secretary-General with preparing a synthesis report of post-2015 proposals to be submitted before the end of 2014.

In addition, the outcome document calls for the conclusion of Rio+20 follow-up, including the conclusion of the work of the Open Working Group (OWG) and the Intergovernmental Expert Committee on Sustainable Development Financing, in a “comprehensive, balanced, and expeditious manner by September 2014”.

In the last year there have been many crucial inputs to the deliberations on the post-2015 agenda. The report from the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons, the reports from the UNDG thematic and national consultations and the Secretary-General’s report “A life of dignity for all”, to name a few. Now it is time to take all these inputs and steer the intergovernmental processes towards the September 2015 Summit where you, the Member States, will adopt a new post-2015 development agenda.

To this end, we have established the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and the Expert Committee on a sustainable development financing strategy.

Both are actively engaged in their work and are expected to report to the General Assembly by September 2014. To support its deliberations, the General Assembly will also have the synthesis report of the Secretary General that will, as stated in the outcome document of the MDG special event, propose a way forward by the end of 2014.

I am happy to say that the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals is off to a good start. Thus far, the Open Working Group has focused primarily on issues that are at the core of the United Nations development agenda, such as poverty, food security, health, education, employment and social protection. These issues enjoy broad international consensus. They are the heart of the MDGs.

Member States have repeatedly stressed that poverty eradication is and will remain at the core of the United Nations development agenda. At the same time, it is clear that in order to ensure that poverty eradication and social development are irreversible, there is a need for a transformative agenda that works towards human dignity for all people, living together on a healthy planet.

The upcoming sessions of the OWG will address less familiar issues. The group will be addressing issues from the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, where there is far less consensus on how to proceed.

It also remains to be seen how we can make sure that the deliberations on issues such as climate change, biodiversity and oceans do not overlap with the ongoing processes and negotiations on these matters but contribute to the discussions and take them one step further.

Before the post-2015 agenda can be adopted, many open questions remain to be tackled. How, for example, can we make sure that we complete the unfinished business of the MDGs through the new development goals? At the same time, how do we ensure that the SDGs will address the questions the world will face in 20 years' time?

One ground-breaking characteristic of the SDGs is their universality. This will be their core strength but also a possible point of weakness unless the question is addressed carefully. How can we define a universal agenda and a set of goals applicable to all countries while taking into account the different stages of development and needs of the Member States? One of the strengths of the MDGs has been that they have included goals, targets and indicators that have been shared and monitored across countries. We want to maintain this strength with the SDGs.

Additionally, the question of implementation needs to be addressed before we can adopt the new agenda. What will a fit-for-purpose global partnership for development look like? In the Open Working Group many have stressed the importance of access to technologies and mobilization of additional financial resources to achieve the SDGs. The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing is expected to provide guidance on how best to address the financing issue. We will need to bring forward that discussion when the time comes.

The question of monitoring and assessment will also need to be addressed. This September we saw the establishment of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. How do we ensure that this forum can effectively carry out its mandate? How do we ensure it effectively

serves as a hub for monitoring progress on the SDGs and on mobilizing the necessary means to that end?

DESA is honoured to offer coordinated support to the Member States in their deliberations in the Open Working Group on SDGs and in the expert committee on financing as well as with the broader discussions on the development agenda beyond 2015.

DESA, as the secretariat of the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development, is committed to assist and support the forum in delivering high-level policy guidance. Such guidance must ensure that mutually supportive relationships at international, regional and national levels are established in the forum's work. We are working closely with the Economic Commission for Africa and other regional and sub-regional partners to ensure that this takes place, through the design of a conducive regional framework that would mirror your aspirations for a HLPF for the Africa Region.

The road towards a transformative United Nations development agenda post-2015 is now clearer than ever. At the same time we all know that difficult questions will need to be tackled. Flexibility will be required from each and every Member State in order to reach an agreement in 2015.

These difficult discussions are a small price to pay for this genuinely inclusive negotiation process. Each and every Member State will sit around the same table to discuss what we all need to do to achieve poverty eradication and sustainable development for ours and for generations to come. I am confident that we will make the most of this historic opportunity.

Thank you.
