

Remarks on the Occasion of the First Meeting
of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly
on Sustainable Development Goals

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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a few brief remarks at this very important first meeting of the Open Working Group. It is a

privilege to contribute to this outcome of Rio, which underscored that sustainable development is the only way forward, both for people and the planet.

We are faced with a tall challenge here – creating goals for sustainable development that will bring together the economic, social and environmental dimensions of well-being in a manner that ensures the progress we make today does not limit our aspirations for a sustainable future. I am sure UN Member States will prove more than equal to the task, and I would reiterate, as UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon underscored yesterday, the UN system is at your disposal in supporting this journey.

As the Open Working Group meets this week, the work that will, I hope, feed your deliberations has been underway for some time. The work of the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on Post-2015; the technical work of the UN Task Team, including its initial report

“Realizing the Future we Want for All”; the results of the UN Development Group-led consultation process on post-2015; the SG’s report to the General Assembly in September 2013: there are many streams of work ready to be tapped.

But drawing on the results of all this work, the need for only one, unified agenda for development after 2015 has become clear.

As part of the commitment of the UN Development Group (UNDG) to support you, on March 21st, the UNDG will present the emerging findings of the national, thematic regional and global consultations. Entitled "The Global Conversation Begins", the report will be made available online at the same time, along with all the raw data on which it is based. I would encourage all Member States to consider this a valuable source of information and insight as you take your work forward.

What we are hearing in through the consultations resonates very strongly with what I heard here in the room yesterday, including that the SDGs should aim towards eradicating poverty and reducing inequality, safeguarding the environmental resources we depend on, and shifting our trajectory to sustainable consumption and production.

Speakers rightly underscored the need to maintain continuity with our current shared agenda for development, expressed through the MDGs, and to build on the lessons learned, experiences, gaps and missed opportunities of the MDGs.

By delivering on the MDGs, the credibility of future goals will be strengthened.

Significant gaps remain, however, between delivering on the MDGs and delivering on the Millennium Declaration from which they were drawn.

And new issues that have gained importance since the MDGs were formulated, not least in relation to jobs and the economy, governance, security from violence and disasters, and a better understanding of our planetary boundaries. Future goals could address these concerns, and what we are hearing so far from the consultations suggests that they should.

A clear value of the MDGs was that they focused our attention on a simple set of concrete goals and targets, that helped establish priorities and rally broad support.

Despite the complexity of the challenge ahead, the post-2015 development agenda, and the goals therein, should strive to retain that same simplicity.

We in the UN system stand ready to support you.