

Update on Open Working Group on SDGs

David O'Connor
Division for Sustainable Development
UN-DESA
10 October 2013

SDGs: The Rio Surprise

Timing is everything:

- Green economy discussions bogged down
- Post-2015 discussions heating up

Rio+20 objective

- Renew political commitment for sustainable development

SDGs: concrete expression of that renewed commitment.

-- but, the concrete has not yet set ...

Enter the OWG on SDGs

- Job: to deliver the Rio+20 commitment to propose a set of SDGs
 - by September 2014 ...
...”for consideration and appropriate action”
by the GA.
- 70 members sitting on 30 seats [cozy] ...
but essentially open to all.

Work of OWG

- Two phases:
 - Stocktaking: early 2013 to early 2014
 - 4 sessions to date
 - 4 more to go
 - Drafting of proposal on SDGs, with narrative and goals/targets

Broad agreement

- Poverty eradication overriding priority: “leave no one behind” in words of SG’s HLP report
- Finish unfinished business of the MDGs
 - Build upon, learn lessons from them
 - Question: what have the MDGs meant in your country? How have they shaped your work?

Hope

- SDGs should have at least as much impact as SDGs going forward
- should be ambitious yet feasible

Challenge

- How to keep simplicity and focus
 - sustainable development agenda is complex
 - goals need to address not just the *social* but the *economic* and *environmental* challenges ahead

Broad agreement (cont'd)

- Need single development agenda post-2015; SDGs an integral part
- Relevant for all countries, developed and developing
- With differentiation according to national circumstances, priorities

Big unresolved question

- What does it mean to have *global* goals, yet adaptability to *national* circumstances?
 - Do you have experience from the MDGs in your countries of how this could be done?
 - Where are *global* goals critical? What should be left to *national* gov'ts to define?

Broad support for goals on

- eradicate poverty (zero poverty target for 2030)
- health: universal coverage?
- water & sanitation
- eradicate hunger (but also nutritious food)
- education: access + quality
- employment, esp youth

Still to be discussed: not yet clear

- energy
- growth, prod capacity
- resilience to shocks
- climate change
- biodiversity, forests
- oceans

Areas still contested

- means of implementation
 - finance
 - Technology
- inequalities, including gender-based
- sustainable consumption and production
- human rights, governance
- peace and security

Looking back, ahead

- 1st 4 sessions: productive, engaging: few major disagreements: MDG+ agenda
- Next 4 sessions: uncharted waters
 - Economic and environmental dimensions
 - How to achieve genuine integration?
 - How to treat MOI – cross-cutting, goal-specific? (role of different actors?)
 - How would a strengthened global partnership look?
- Final question: what would it take to make post-2015 agenda truly transformational?