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EXECUTIVE OFFICE
OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Note to the Secretary-General

Seventh session of the Open Working Group on SDGs
(6-10 January 2014)

13/01/14

The Seventh session of the OWG, held 6 to 10 January 2014, focused on sustainable cities and human settlements, and sustainable transport; sustainable consumption and production (including chemicals and waste); climate change and disaster risk reduction. Keynote speakers included: Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN Habitat, on sustainable cities and human settlements; Adriana de Almeida Lobo, Executive Director, CTS Embarq Mexico, on sustainable transport; Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker, co-chair of the International Resource Panel, on sustainable consumption and production; Andrew Steer of the World Resources Institute and Pan Jiahua of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, on climate change. A wide range of expert panelists also made valuable contributions. As in previous sessions, participants expressed appreciation for the issues briefs prepared by the UN Technical Support Team.

Compared with previous sessions, participants focused more on concrete proposals for goals and targets, suggesting that members of the OWG are gearing up for the next phase of the work when they must reach consensus on a proposal on sustainable development goals.

Three main lines of discussion were noteworthy. First, while a number of experts and some Member States argued for an urban SDG, others were of the view that SDGs must address urban and rural development challenges in a balanced and integrated manner, and that an urban SDG might lead to imbalance. Some suggested a sustainable infrastructure goal as an alternative, which would also encompass sustainable transport. Second, participants discussed whether the topics of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and climate change and disaster risk reduction should be the subject of stand-alone goals or dealt with in a cross-cutting manner. Third, there was little support from Member States for a stand-alone goal on climate change, largely out of caution as to not prejudice the outcome of ongoing negotiations under UNFCCC. Yet, there was recognition of the centrality of climate change to sustainable development and that strong actions for tackling climate change in the SDGs could help raise the level of ambition in UNFCCC negotiations. In this regard, developing countries stressed that any discussion of climate change in the SDGs would need to recognize the principle of CBDR and the full range of commitments under UNFCCC, including on technology and financing. Developed countries noted that the interpretation of CBDR was currently under review within UNFCCC negotiations.

Members agreed that, as an immediate next step, the Co-chairs should prepare a summary of the stock-taking discussions of the past year, building on their interim report to the GA of September 2013. The Co-chairs then presented two options for the 3 to 5 March OWG meeting: (i) the Co-chairs prepare an inclusive list of proposals for goals and targets as put forward by Member States and other stakeholders (by third week of February); or (ii) the Co-chairs prepare a narrative that would embed possible SDGs, providing a broad SDG framework and a rationale for the particular SDGs proposed. Member States could not agree on an option. The Co-chairs indicated that an informal consultation with New York-based delegates would be arranged for later this month so that the OWG can agree on the way forward at its February meeting.

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The next OWG session, from 3 to 7 February, will be the 8th and last of the stock-taking sessions. A broad range of challenging topics will be on the agenda: oceans and seas, forests, biodiversity; promoting equality, including social equity, gender equality and women's empowerment; and, conflict prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding and promotion of durable peace, rule of law and governance.

I will continue to keep you fully informed of developments in the Open Working Group.



WU Hongbo
13 January 2014

cc: Deputy Secretary-General

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For DSG's attention <input type="checkbox"/>	For SG's attention <input type="checkbox"/>	Noted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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