

IGN Side Event:

Leaping Into a Bright Future or Jumping in at the Deep End?

Preparing for the Implementation Phase of the Post-2015 Development Agenda: What's Next

30 July 2015

Introduction

Hosted by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Permanent Mission of France to the UN, this side event advanced the discussion of how Member States can begin to best implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) once the Post-2015 outcome document is finalized. As changes to the outcome document come to a close, we must remember that the real action has yet to occur. Member States must utilize the Post-2015 outcome document to forward the SDGs, moving all countries towards a just, sustainable world. This side event, held during the July Post-2015 IGN, examined the complex roadmap of the SDG framework and complementing documents that Member States must navigate over the course of the next fifteen years. The event provided a platform for exchanging viewpoints on the best models and methods to utilize when implementing these ambitious goals.

The panel included:

- **H.E. Mr. Ahmed Sareer**, Permanent Representative, Maldives
- **H.E. Hahn Choong-Hee**, D.P.R. Republic of Korea
- **Thomas Gass**, ASG-DESA
- **Mr. Henry de Cazotte**, Ministry of Foreign Affairs And International Development of France
- **Ms. Louise Kantrow**, Permanent Representative of the International Chamber of Commerce
- **Ms. Constanza Martinez**, Deputy Head of the IUCN Global Policy Unit

Panel moderated by: H.E. Mr. Jeremiah Mamabolo, P.R. South Africa

The following document contains a summary of the statements of the panelists and participants during this side event held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. The event was attended by a wide array of stakeholders, including those from missions, civil society organizations, and the United Nations.

Narinder Kakar of IUCN gave the opening remarks for this side event. He stated that when implementing the SDGs, collaboration is key, and, for maximum effectiveness, institutions cannot work in isolation. Actors from economic, social, and environmental institutions and missions must collaborate to find proper arrangements to ensure that the SDGs are implemented in an effective, integrated manner. Thus, institutions must be ready to adapt and develop new, innovative mechanisms of implementing the SDGs.

H.E. Mr. Jeremiah Mamabolo, P.R. South Africa, moderated the discussion and introduced the panelists. According to Mr. Mamabolo, implementation is the most important part of the Post-2015 Agenda, as, without proper implementation, effective progress cannot be made. He stressed that national ownership of the SDGs is essential. He also emphasized the importance of reaching the most marginalized portions of the population and the importance of access to justice for effective implementation of all the SDGs. He noted that although it is impossible for countries to move at the exact same pace when implementing the SDGs, we need to make sure countries are at least moving in the same, positive direction for powerful progress.

H.E. Mr. Ahmed Sareer was the first speaker to present. He began his presentation by commenting on the recent article on the SDGs released by *The Economist*. According to Mr. Sareer, this article stated that the SDGs were too ambitious and “stupid.” He explained that, rather, the SDGs represent a paradigm shift towards a brighter, more sustainable future free of poverty. He expressed his optimism surrounding the SDGs.

Mr. Sareer then spoke to the importance of implementing a new social contract between national governments and their people. He noted that the Post-2015 outcome document already contains

the idea of national leadership and ownership, yet he stressed the need to further strengthen the relationship between duty bearers and rights holders for each Member State. He said both national and local governments have the responsibility to their people to do their best to implement the SDGs. Accountability of governments for both global and local processes is key.

Mr. Sareer continued by describing that countries must ask themselves two main questions while implementing the Post-2015 outcome document. First, what are we doing to strengthen the relationship between duty bearers and rights holders? Second, who are we leaving behind? According to Mr. Sareer, a significant economic or social group cannot be left behind if countries want to follow the path of successful sustainable development. As reported by Mr. Sareer, these two questions provide effective, general indicators on whether positive steps are being taken towards sustainable development. He finished by explaining that, for successful implementation, the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) needs to have clearly defined measures for follow up and review.

H.E. Hahn Choong-Hee, D.P.R. of the Republic of Korea, was next to speak. He began by explaining the importance of every sector taking national ownership for the SDGs. Without sector-wide participation in the the SDGs, the full impact of the Post-2015 outcome document cannot be recognized. For example, he explained that full involvement of the private sector will play an integral role in implementation of the SDGs. Civil society will also play a significant role.

Mr. Choong-Hee explained that global partnerships and multi-stakeholder engagements must remain “relevant” while implementing the SDGs. Stakeholders should think of how they can help push specific goals and targets forward. He also noted that parliament is critical when implementing the SDGs.

Mr. Choong-Hee continued by explaining that, with 17 goals and 169 targets, developing countries will have difficulty tackling all aspects of the SDGs. He outlined the possibility of a

regional peer review process to enhance accountability, yet he also explained that accountability of Member States should be approached in a fundamentally different way. He noted that, at the HLPF, countries should not be shamed if they have not reached particular targets. Rather, if countries are struggling to make progress on specific targets, collaboration and discussion should be utilized to see how these countries can improve and overcome the challenges they are facing. He said that much of the discussion in the UN is surrounding the concept of “Common but differentiated Responsibilities” (CBDR). Although he acknowledged the importance of CBDR, he said that every country should be willing to give their maximum possible contribution to the implementation of the SDGs. Every Member State has a role and contribution they can make. Mr. Choong-Hee pointed out the significance of national and local leaders in motivating their specific countries or regions to make the largest impact possible.

Mr. Choong-Hee concluded by discussing the importance of SDG16. Without goal 16 and access to peace, sustainable development cannot occur. Thus, SDG16 needs clear indicators of progress. Mr. Choong-Hee finished his presentation by explaining the importance of “dignity” when Member States are implementing the Post-2015 Agenda. Each country must play a role in moving our world towards a just, sustainable, poverty-free society.

Thomas Gass, ASG-DESA, spoke after Mr. Choong-Hee. He began by echoing past panelists affirmation that the Post-2015 Agenda represents innovation and transformation. He explained the importance of all Member States engaging in peer review, and he explained the significance of national accountability and multi-stakeholder engagement for maximum effectiveness when implementing the Post-2015 Agenda. He also explained that all sectors must engage in the SDGs.

Mr. Gass agreed with Mr. Choong-Hee that countries should not be penalized for not hitting certain targets. Rather, positive enforcement must be utilized. If a country is having difficulties with a particular target, other Member States and stakeholders should assist this country and help it improve. He explained the significance of CBDR in the outcome document, too, stating that

countries have vastly different capacities for change. Thus, he advocated for CBDR to remain a strong concept in the text of the outcome document.

He continued by explaining that measuring progress is vital to the implementation of the SDGs. However, he noted that measuring progress is also very difficult. According to Mr. Gass, indicators often pre-judge outcomes and are unfair. He explained that using similar tools to evaluate developing countries and rich countries does not always work. He also discussed how perceptions of the success of many of the targets is subjective. Clear, fair measures of accountability are necessary.

Mr. Gass concluded his presentation by discussing the outcome of Addis Ababa. Although he acknowledged the relevance of the outcome document from the Financing for Development Conference conference in Addis Ababa, Mr. Gass noted that Addis Ababa did not result in as much institutional change as was hoped for, stressing the need for an inter-governmental tax body.

Mr. Henry de Cazotte of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs And International Development of France spoke next. Highlighting the importance of the outcome document from Addis Ababa, he explained that 2015 is not a year about philosophy, even though we are in a new paradigm, but, rather, 2015 is a year about action. Mr. Cazotte explained that Member States are no longer preparing for implementation, but countries are implementing.

Mr. Cazotte continued by acknowledging that most speakers have highlighted the difficulty of this agenda for developing countries. However, he noted that the SDGs are very difficult for developed countries or “rich” countries to implement, too. He explained that France has its own inequalities and social agenda, stating that still 10,000 people sleep on the streets in Paris every night. As stated by Mr. Cazotte, leaving nobody behind is not a walk in the park for rich countries. Shifting gears and agreeing with past panelists, Mr. Cazotte stated that technical assistance should be provided to Member States struggling to implement particular goals and targets.

Mr. Cazotte continued by explaining how France has already developed a new law regarding sustainable development. He said that France would try to implement numerous targets of the SDGs into the new law. He used this example to stress the importance of national “ownership” of the SDGs for each of the Member States.

Ms. Louise Kantrow, Permanent Representative of the International Chamber of Commerce, began her presentation by telling the side event participants to savor this new document of the 17 SDGs. She explained that only the United Nations could create such a lofty agenda addressing the largest problems of this world. According to Ms. Kantrow, however, all stakeholders must be involved in implementation for successful progress on this lofty agenda. As stated by Ms. Kantrow, we are just a tiny blue dot in this universe, and, if we cannot work together, we will not be able survive on this planet.

She then stated that business is more than happy to put together systems of accountability. She noted the importance of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the development of the SDGs, too. Additionally, as reported by Mr. Kantrow, multinationals are already embracing the whole matrix of the 17 goals to see where they can help forward the goals of the outcome document. She pointed out that the UN should embrace the private sector, particularly SMEs, when implementing the agenda for maximum impact of the SDGs.

Ms. Martinez continued by explaining that civil society can help in the monitoring process, too, as well as holding Member States accountable to their goals. Ms. Martinez also explained how civil society can raise awareness for the SDGs. Additionally, she explained how civil society can work with local communities to enhance compliance. She concluded by stating that civil society can participate in the policy formulation processes and helping to set the agenda.

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