



SUMMARY OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: 24 SEPTEMBER 2013

The inaugural meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) convened under the auspices of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on Tuesday, 24 September 2013 at 3:00 pm in the Trusteeship Council Chamber at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The meeting followed the closing session of the Forum’s predecessor, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, which took place on Friday, 20 September 2013.

The theme of the session was “Building the future we want: From Rio+20 to the post-2015 development agenda.” A gathering of presidents, prime ministers, ministers and other officials listened to opening remarks from General Assembly President John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda) and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Other opening speakers included: Nestor Osorio, President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); Dilma Rousseff, President of Brazil; Enrico Letta, Prime Minister of Italy; Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank Group; Christine Lagarde, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund (IMF); and Gita Sen, Representative of the Major Groups.

The session was divided into several segments that featured keynote presentations from Heads of State and Government and Ministers and remarks from the floor, on the following themes: “From vision to action,” “Global partnerships for development to create jobs and improve sustainable lifestyles,” and “Mapping the way forward for eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development.” By the time the session concluded at 8:30 pm, many agreed that the inaugural meeting had confirmed global readiness to implement the vision of Rio+20 and the need to put poverty eradication and sustainable development at the core of the post-2015 development agenda.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HLPF

The establishment of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development was called for by the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20) in June 2012 in its outcome document, *The Future We Want*. Paragraph 84 states: “We decide to establish a universal intergovernmental

high-level political forum, building on the strengths, experiences, resources and inclusive participation modalities of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and subsequently replacing the Commission. The high-level political forum shall follow up on the implementation of sustainable development and should avoid overlap with existing structures, bodies and entities in a cost-effective manner.”

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) emerged from Agenda 21, the programme of action for sustainable development adopted in June 1992 by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, also known as the “Earth Summit.” Agenda 21 called for the creation of the CSD to ensure effective follow-up of UNCED, enhance international cooperation, and examine progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 at the local, national, regional and global levels. In 1992, the UNGA’s 47th session adopted resolution 47/191, which established the CSD’s terms of reference and composition, organization

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of work, relationship with other UN bodies, Secretariat arrangements, and guidelines for the participation of Major Groups.

The CSD held its first substantive session in June 1993 and convened annually for 20 years at UN Headquarters in New York. During its first five years, the CSD systematically reviewed the implementation of all chapters of Agenda 21. The second five-year programme of work was organized around sectoral, cross-sectoral and economic thematic issues: industry, strategic approaches to freshwater management, and technology transfer, capacity building, education, science and awareness raising (CSD-6); tourism, oceans and seas, and consumption and production patterns (CSD-7); sustainable agriculture and land management, integrated planning and management of land resources, and financial resources, trade and investment and economic growth (CSD-8); and energy and transport, atmosphere and energy, and information for decision-making and participation and international cooperation for an enabling environment (CSD-9).

Following the 1994 UN Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) held in Bridgetown, Barbados, the CSD was given the responsibility to follow up on the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) for the Sustainable Development of SIDS and review progress in the context of the CSD's Multi-Year thematic Programme of Work.

CSD-10 served as the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which convened in Johannesburg, South Africa in September 2002. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) reaffirmed that the CSD was the high-level forum for sustainable development within the United Nations system. At CSD-11 in 2003, in response to the JPOI, the Commission adopted a new multi-year programme of work to be organized as a series of two-year implementation cycles. Each cycle consisted of a Review Session and a Policy Session and considered a thematic cluster of issues and crosscutting issues. The CSD 12 and 13 cycle adopted recommendations to address water, sanitation and human settlements. CSD 14 and 15 considered energy, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change, but did not reach agreement on recommendations for action. The CSD 16 and 17 cycle adopted recommendations related to drought, desertification, agriculture, land, rural development and Africa. The CSD 18 and 19 cycle focused on the thematic cluster of transport, chemicals, waste management, mining, and sustainable consumption and production (SCP), but was unable to adopt any recommendations.

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (Rio+20): During ten days in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012—the third and final meeting of the Preparatory Committee, Pre-Conference Informal Consultations facilitated by the host country, and the UNCSD—government delegations concluded negotiations on the Rio+20 outcome document, titled *The Future We Want*. The outcome calls for the UNGA to take decisions on, *inter alia*: designating a body to operationalize the 10-year Framework of Programmes on SCP; identifying the format and organizational aspects of a

high-level political forum on sustainable development to replace the CSD; strengthening the UN Environment Programme (UNEP); constituting an Open Working Group (OWG) on a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) to be agreed by the UNGA; establishing an intergovernmental process under the UNGA to prepare a report proposing options on an effective sustainable development financing strategy; and considering a set of recommendations from the Secretary-General for a facilitation mechanism that promotes the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies.

In addition, the UNGA was called on to take a decision in two years on the development of an international instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea regarding marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The UN Statistical Commission was called on to launch a programme of work on broader measures to complement gross domestic product (GDP), and the UN system was encouraged, as appropriate, to support best practices and facilitate action for the integration of sustainability reporting.

The outcome document also includes text on trade-distorting subsidies, fisheries and fossil fuel subsidies. On SIDS, the text calls for continued and enhanced efforts to assist SIDS in implementing the BPOA and the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation and for strengthened UN system support to SIDS to address ongoing and emerging challenges. It also calls for the Third International Conference on SIDS to be held in 2014.

UNGA-67: The 67th session of the UNGA adopted a resolution on the implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of Rio+20 (A/RES/67/203), which outlines the negotiation process for the creation of the HLPF, and recommends that the CSD hold a “short and procedural” final session following the conclusion of negotiations on the HLPF. The text also calls for the OWG on SDGs to report to the UNGA at its 68th session and to report regularly, taking into account the convening of the first HLPF, and for a special event in 2013 to follow up efforts made toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

RESOLUTION 67/290: The President of the 67th General Assembly called on the ambassadors from Brazil and Italy to conduct informal consultations on the format and organizational modalities of the HLPF. These consultations began in January 2013 and concluded with the adoption of resolution 67/290 on 9 July 2013. Resolution 67/290 decided that the HLPF, consistent with its intergovernmental universal character, will:

- provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development;
- follow-up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments;
- enhance the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development; and
- have a focused, dynamic and action-oriented agenda, ensuring the appropriate consideration of new and emerging sustainable development challenges.

The meetings of the Forum will be convened:

- every four years under the auspices of the General Assembly at the level of Heads of State and Government—for two days at the beginning of the General Assembly session; and

- every year under the auspices of ECOSOC—for eight days, including a three-day ministerial segment.

Both meetings will adopt negotiated declarations.

The Forum, under the auspices of ECOSOC, will conduct regular reviews, starting in 2016, on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the post-2015 development agenda. The resolution also considers the arrangement of a 2015 HLPF meeting, under the auspices of the General Assembly, to launch the post-2015 development agenda.

HLPF REPORT

OPENING OF THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM

In his opening remarks, General Assembly President John Ashe said the Forum aims to deliver more effectively on aspirations and agendas at a time when the practice of sustainability provides the only real bridge from the past to the present and the future. The Forum must make accountability a hallmark, and employ tools for enhanced multi-stakeholder participation. Ashe noted that within this Forum, participants will craft specific goals, which when adopted in 2015, will help create broad structural and transformative change in how we live, consume and do business in all countries and societies. If properly used, he said, the Forum will become a tool for embedding sustainability at all levels. Ashe said the Forum represents a “rare opportunity to get things right from the start,” and a new institution is a clean slate with no historical reference point, on which we can write its purpose and its future.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the inauguration of the HLPF as a significant step in recognizing the outcomes of Rio+20. He said that he was pleased to see high-level representatives of governments, as well as Major Groups. Saying the Forum should review progress and launch partnerships and actions to achieve shared goals, Ban looked to the Forum to bring wisdom to the deliberations on sustainable development goals (SDGs). He announced the establishment of a Scientific Advisory Body, to be housed in the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to strengthen the interface between science and policy.

Néstor Osorio, President of ECOSOC, said that the meeting’s high-level attendance demonstrates commitment to sustainable development, especially when countries are faced with many challenges. He said the HLPF, situated under the auspices of the General Assembly and ECOSOC, is well placed to spearhead change in the UN. He noted that the UNGA had adopted a resolution for strengthening ECOSOC three days ago, and that the relationship between the HLPF and ECOSOC is symbiotic—both will strengthen each other. He expressed hope that the Forum will have a solid preparatory process and address issues inspired by the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda, as well as issues that do not have a home in the UN system.

Dilma Rousseff, President of Brazil, said that at Rio+20 governments had reached consensus on the objective of a development model that balances all three dimensions of sustainable development. She said that eradicating poverty and

tackling climate change are essential conditions for sustainable development, adding that just as poverty is not a problem particular to developing countries, environmental protection is not a goal to be pursued only when poverty has been overcome. Rousseff concluded that the goal of eradicating extreme poverty is within reach for the first time in human history, noting that this is already being achieved in Brazil.

Enrico Letta, Prime Minister of Italy, said that it was an honor for his country to lead the consultations that defined the format and organizational modalities for the HLPF, along with Brazil. He said the Forum should provide for stronger global political leadership on sustainable development, including issues such as the green economy and an updated global consensus on food security. Letta emphasized the need for transparency in the Forum, a strong review mechanism, and the active involvement of stakeholders. He expressed hope that the HLPF will be a place where Member States and civil society can share experiences and develop follow-up mechanisms for sustainable development.

World Bank President Jim Yong Kim said sustainable development is at the core of the struggle to end poverty. Over the last 20 years, many have been lifted out of poverty, but millions have been left behind and economic gains have come at a cost to our environment. Environmental degradation costs countries 8% of GDP. Climate change threatens to roll back gains, and those least able to adapt—the poor—will be hit hardest. Kim called for commitment, resources, the best data and evidence, new coalitions, innovation and courage, and said that we need one set of goals to fully respond to the intimately linked challenges of poverty and climate change. Making progress on both will be the most important legacy we leave to our children and grandchildren.

Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), said policies for the 21st century “must get economic foundations right.” She called for: monetary and fiscal policies adjusted to each economy; completed reform of the financial sector; and removal of barriers to growth by reforming job markets and insisting on job creation. She identified pricing for the green economy as another priority, saying, “The harm we do must be reflected in the price we pay.” Lagarde called for a more balanced distribution of income, via greater inclusion in economic life, particularly for women.

Gita Sen, Representative of the Major Groups, spoke from the perspective of women and girls around the world who have been “too long subordinated, burdened with work and responsibility,” without the freedom to make choices. She called for the HLPF to be robust in four areas: ensuring well-regulated global financial and economic systems; upholding human rights at the center of sustainable development; transparently providing information in regard to multilateral partnerships with the private sector; and allowing the participation of civil society in shaping the post-2015 development agenda.

The remainder of the session was divided into a series of leaders’ dialogues. Each dialogue opened with panel presentations, which were followed by remarks from the floor.

LEADERS' DIALOGUE: HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM: FROM VISION TO ACTION

Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of Fiji, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, called for the HLPF to be a more vibrant and robust platform for sustainable development than the CSD. He said we must commit political weight at the highest level to enhance international cooperation on sustainable development, address challenges from the prism of poverty eradication as its overriding objective, and follow up on means of implementation, while addressing all three dimensions of sustainable development in a holistic manner. He also called for the HLPF to take a leading role in designing the post-2015 development agenda. He stressed the importance of the participation of Major Groups and called for multi-stakeholder dialogues to reflect geographical balance. He concluded that this meeting gives hope that we will begin anew and work together for a better future.

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, said sustainable development should be at the center of a better coordinated UN. He noted that fighting poverty and advancing sustainability are two sides of the same coin, and while poverty and environmental degradation are morally wrong, they are also economically destructive. Barroso called for a single comprehensive, ambitious post-2015 framework. To make the HLPF a success, he said it should feature: a strong review and accountability mechanism; strong input from civil society, science and other key stakeholders; and flexibility to tackle new and emerging challenges.

Abdullah Gul, President of Turkey, said that although the international community has been discussing sustainable development for the past forty years, only now does it cover the environmental, social and economic dimensions. He said good governance, peace, and security have grown more important than ever, as have social welfare and gender equality. Gul expressed support for those most in need, including least developed countries (LDCs), and offered to host the mid-term review conference of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, pointed out her country's vulnerability to climate change. She said that the Forum must provide leadership to achieve common goals, recognizing the special needs of LDCs, Land-Locked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and SIDS. She called for increased official development assistance (ODA) to these countries, and said we need to make the right choices for future generations, in the face of the new challenges of our time.

Didier Burkhalter, Vice President of Switzerland and Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, said sustainable development should receive political priority within the UN. He called upon five forces: interaction with other processes to define the sustainability agenda—noting that the post-2015 agenda and SDGs should converge into one agenda; integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development; science; openness and dialogue with other stakeholders; and effectiveness of action. He welcomed the Forum's focus on implementing commitments.

The Chair then then invited remarks from the floor.

Belgium said that all countries have common, interconnected, and complementary problems that an ambitious development framework must address. He called for convergence of the OWG and post-2015 development agenda in terms of process and content. He highlighted four themes for the agenda, including: combating inequality; changing current modes of production and consumption; achieving equality between men and women and respecting sexual and reproductive rights; and ambitious financing.

Greece said it is important to focus on the top priority of eradicating poverty within the broader context of sustainable development. He said that a new agenda should address the socio-economic differences within and among countries through simple and measureable policies. On the green economy, he said that it is necessary to engage both public and private sectors and support the development of international standards.

Peru called for SDGs to include ethical principles for present and future generations. He said that the SDGs must be concise, easy to communicate, action-oriented, and based on the capacity of each country.

China made the following proposals: strive to promote ecological progress and foster strong interaction between the three dimensions of sustainable development; foster a favorable climate for sustainable development, including a free, open and non-discriminatory trading system; adhere to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR); put social issues high on the agenda; and create a more innovative method and model of development.

Japan said the HLPF is the compass to guide us to 2015, while the OWG is the only ongoing intergovernmental negotiating process to discuss the development agenda beyond 2015. In the intergovernmental committee of experts on sustainable development financing, he pledged to promote mobilization of domestic resources and private finance.

India said sustainable development is needed to lift people out of poverty and raise their quality of life, and the post-2015 agenda should focus on ending poverty and hunger once and for all, and completing the unfinished business of the MDGs. He said the agenda should be based on the Rio principles including CBDR, address disparate global consumption of natural resources, and work towards enhanced means of implementation for developing countries. India also said intra-generational equity—not just intergenerational—is needed to achieve sustainable development.

Slovakia said that multilateral institutions must become more effective, and strengthening the framework for sustainable development in the UN system is crucial. He added, "Building a more sustainable future cannot be achieved by diplomats and negotiators alone," and expressed hope that the Forum would generate new ideas and concrete measures.

Indonesia stressed the need to pursue a development model for sustainable, inclusive, and equitable growth. She said that this is a momentous occasion, as the HLPF can commit to the "comprehensive integration" of the sustainable development agenda and participation of stakeholders. Calling for an

inclusive, authoritative body on sustainable development, she said that the HLPF should be an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda.

Egypt said that the implementation of the MDGs has been difficult because of poverty, unemployment, and the food, energy and financial crises. He called for the SDGs to be global and give new life to the development process.

The United Kingdom welcomed the Secretary-General's report, "A Life of Dignity for All" (A/68/202). She said that gender must be a key focus in the post-2015 framework, which she said must have sustainable development at its core. She added that peace and security and human rights must be development outcomes, not just enablers. She said that the HLPF should be at the heart of the post-2015 development agenda, and that the poorest must have a voice in developing the agenda.

Venezuela said sustainable development must be sensitive to the needs of human beings. She stressed respect for the state, as it is within that framework that commitments are assumed and followed up. She added there must be space for countries to formulate national policies and choose the principles they want to adopt.

LEADERS' DIALOGUE: GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEVELOPMENT TO CREATE JOBS AND IMPROVE SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES

Baron Waqa, President of Nauru, referenced the Rio+20 online database of more than 300 global partnerships working in areas related to sustainable development, and emphasized the need to better define what is meant by "partnerships" to make them more effective. He said that donor relationships are most successful when they take the interests of all parties into consideration, that general budgetary support is often more effective than project-based funding, and that partnership objectives should be defined from the start.

Jens Stoltenberg, Prime Minister of Norway, said the inauguration of the HLPF is a chance to put climate change at the top of the international agenda, and called for a focus on carbon pricing, climate financing—without which he said a new agreement in 2015 will not be possible—and emissions cuts to reduce global warming. He said Nordic countries have proven that it is possible to achieve economic growth while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan, called for the HLPF to address employment issues. He outlined policies that have advanced job creation in Pakistan, including micro-financing for small businesses, empowerment of women, and rural support, but noted that these are just transitional solutions, and do not create sustainable livelihoods. He conveyed his decision to raise education spending in Pakistan from 2% to 4% of GDP, and health spending from 1% to 2%, despite fiscal constraints.

The Chair then invited remarks from the floor.

The Prime Minister of Curaçao, also on behalf of the Netherlands, said it is essential that the HLPF's agenda address the three dimensions of sustainable development and strike a good balance between them. He added that it is important to focus on "the here and now," while also considering the global

impact of development on future generations. He called for one single framework for the post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs, and said the HLPF must have a role in monitoring the future goals. He also called for a special focus on helping islands in the Caribbean region.

Montenegro called for an action-oriented post-2015 development framework that includes all countries, and asked for analysis of why MDG 8, on a global partnership for development, has not yet been achieved. He encouraged the creation of innovative forms of development financing, a renewed global partnership, and capacity building. He gave particular emphasis to the need to reduce youth unemployment and improve entrepreneurship and education.

Samoa spoke of its sharpened focus on development and the creation of opportunities for young people. As the host of the Third International Conference on SIDS in 2014, Samoa will launch a "youth for youth" partnership initiative, focusing on youth employment and involving young people, governments, civil society and the private sector. He noted the need to advance legal, social and economic empowerment of young people, as well as empowerment opportunities for women.

Benin, on behalf of LDCs, said this meeting is a good starting point to make sure the HLPF will be an effective, dynamic and successful entity. He said LDCs would like to see the Forum be "a genuine platform for mutual responsibility." Saying that the international community should work with a stronger and bolder feeling of responsibility, he expressed hope that mankind would be able to "understand the stakes of this new era."

South Africa said the Forum is an opportunity for leaders to affirm their commitment to sustainable development, and stimulate timely and effective follow-up to Rio+20, and to ensure all three dimensions are addressed in a balanced and coherent manner. She noted the importance of job creation as recognized in the outcome of Rio+20.

Sri Lanka called for respect for CBDR as a guide toward a new sustainable development framework. He highlighted four areas of importance: efforts to eradicate poverty; the need to give youth a greater voice in the global dialogue on sustainable development; seeking financing, fulfilling commitments and reforming international financial structures; and recognizing the critical lead of middle income countries, which need financial and technical cooperation to avoid reversing achievements.

Malaysia said the HLPF can play a central role in strengthening global partnerships for development, including by creating jobs and sustainable lifestyles. He noted that the national efforts of developing countries need international support, and that changing global consumer attitudes is key to creating a sustainable lifestyle. He called on the HLPF to promote SCP.

France said that the objective of the HLPF is not only to create a more effective institutional framework for sustainable development, but to build prosperity and preserve natural environmental capital. He pointed out the impossibility of choosing between eradicating poverty and sustainable development, noting that we must have a unified agenda that covers the three dimensions of sustainable development and our shared responsibility to achieve SCP so that all humans can have a dignified lifestyle.

Finland said that countries must feel a strong sense of urgency in order to address the sustainable development agenda, and must have political will to take on these challenges. He said that governance, human rights, and peace and security are prerequisites for sustainable development, and that an inclusive green economy is necessary to create green growth. He highlighted the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on SCP to accelerate lifestyle shifts in all countries.

Lithuania spoke of the need to reinforce the international commitment to poverty eradication and sustainable development, while accelerating the achievement of the MDGs. He said that governments should incentivize a bottom-up approach to sustainable development by providing equal opportunities for women, young people and local communities.

Germany said human rights are needed to achieve sustainable development, particularly for women, children and people with disabilities, but “responsible, high-quality” economic development and decent jobs also are needed. On economic development, she said the incomes of resource-rich countries must benefit their people. Decent jobs require high-quality education, she said, adding that a sustainable and inclusive green economy can lead to job creation in environmentally friendly industries.

Ecuador highlighted the need for developed countries to comply with climate commitments and greenhouse gas reductions. Denouncing transnational corporations’ impunity for environmental crimes, he said sustainable development is not just about the environment but also about changing the relationship between capital, labor, nature and politics. He highlighted two proposals from Ecuador: on a universal declaration on the rights of nature; and on net avoided emissions.

Colombia recalled that our challenge is not only the eradication of poverty, but also ensuring the well-being of an emerging global class. She called for a post-2015 agenda that is universal and has commitment at the highest political level to build the future we want. She said the HLPF is a cornerstone of the institutional framework needed in order to implement and monitor the post-2015 development agenda, and should accomplish the work started by the CSD, recognizing its achievements as well as its failure to balance the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Bolivia said that humanity and nature must be considered together, with the concept of Mother Earth as the center of development efforts. He added that: humanity should not be separated from nature; restoration and regeneration must be part of concrete policies; and CBDR, the right to development, and equity are important in a world where so many in developing countries are in poverty. He concluded by noting that climate change adaptation is a big challenge and that without peace, it is impossible to have sustainable development.

Kazakhstan spoke of its national and regional measures to create new green jobs by investing in sustainable energy and low-carbon development. As the Chair of the 20th and final session of the CSD, he welcomed its replacement by the HLPF. He said the post-2015 agenda should be mainstreamed through the UN system, and that any MDG targets not yet reached should be included in the new agenda.

SHORT KEY MESSAGES ON SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

Wu Hongbo, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, said that the HLPF will be at the forefront of analysis and policy on sustainable development. He called for strengthening the science-policy interface, and announced a prototype version of the Global Sustainable Development Report. Wu called for a new international initiative to improve the quality and quantity of data on sustainable development and integrate statistics into decision-making.

Guy Rider, Director-General of the International Labour Organization, said despite tradeoffs between environmental sustainability and economic or social goals, we must focus on their “trade-ins.” He noted that investments in a cleaner, greener economy can generate decent jobs, but the transition must be made in a socially just manner, and social protection floors are a key component of this. He recalled the tripartite agreement on a just transition to sustainable development, reached at the June 2013 ILO Conference.

The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said trade is a necessary condition for achieving sustainable development goals, but it is not a sufficient one, and the potential positive contribution of trade to international development requires institutional support at the national and international levels.

Kadir Topbaş, Mayor of Istanbul, reported on the Special Event on Sustainable Cities held on 23 September 2013. He said well-managed urbanization and bridging the rural-urban divide are the keys to achieving the new development agenda. He stressed the paramount role of the sub-national level in job creation and provision of basic services that are essential for reducing poverty and disease. He called for urbanization in its broader sense to be embodied in a stand-alone SDG. He added that the post-2015 agenda will also have to address who will implement policies, and, therefore, there is a need to strengthen multi-level governance structures and new urban partnerships and make them more democratic.

Miguel Pestana, Unilever, said social, economic and environmental challenges demand new leadership. He explained that business has to reflect limited planetary resources and grow differently in the 21st century, noting that to tackle climate change, growth must be carbon-free and halt deforestation. He said business cannot succeed in societies that fail, and called for a transition from shareholder-led to stakeholder-led business, as well as new public-private partnerships like Grow Africa and the Tropical Forest Alliance. Business has the technology, skills, expertise, geographic reach, and marketing to improve the well-being of billions of people, he added.

Phillipa Gardner, Youth Representative, stressed that decisions made by the HLPF would have a strong impact on young people, as half of the global population is under 30 years old. She said that young people protest when they perceive disconnects between policies and their realities, and that they should have opportunities for meaningful engagement in policy-making. Speaking of the abilities of youth to “translate international objectives into national projects,” she urged participants to think of the possibilities when young people’s potential is realized.

LEADERS' DIALOGUE: MAPPING THE WAY FORWARD FOR ERADICATING POVERTY AND ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Donald Ramotar, President of Guyana, said that although the international community has made important strides against poverty, they “haven’t been uniform, and they are not irreversible.” He said many pledges for climate change mitigation and adaptation funding had not been kept. He also spoke of trade systems that “seem to be stacked against developing countries.” Calling on developed countries to remove food subsidies, he said that this is the best support that developing countries could get to fight poverty.

Anote Tong, President of Kiribati, spotlighted two issues that challenge small islands the most: the low rate of return on their resources, and climate change. He said that US\$400-500 million worth of fish—the country’s largest resource—is taken out of its exclusive economic zone each year, of which the country receives 8%. He noted that a more equitable share would help Kiribati’s efforts on poverty eradication and achieving the MDGs, lessening its need for foreign assistance, and pleaded with participants to deliver on their commitments, “because we need it. Otherwise it will be on your conscience.”

Danny Faure, Vice President of Seychelles, said one thing all SIDS have in common is heavy dependence on oceans, and called for discussion of the blue economy, an oceans-based green economy. He highlighted the proposal for an SDG on oceans, or for oceans and SIDS to feature prominently in one of the SDGs. He also highlighted the need for: differentiated treatment for SIDS in trade and access to financing, and an alternative to GDP-based assessment of economic growth.

The Chair then invited remarks from the floor. Denmark welcomed the HLPF to provide political leadership for sustainable development and to hold nations accountable for their commitments. He called for global partnerships for green jobs, a solid enabling environment, new sustainable technology, trade, agricultural development to promote poverty eradication, and a strong, comprehensive and transparent review mechanism. He called on governments to stand by their development finance commitments and to join Denmark in the “exclusive club” of five nations that have met the target of 0.7% of GDP for ODA, which Denmark has done for 34 years.

The US called for a unified approach to end extreme poverty while the climate is changing. He said issues like poverty, conflict, and environmental degradation are increasingly intertwined, and we cannot end poverty without addressing deforestation and desertification. He noted the ability of public-private partnerships to tackle poverty and environmental sustainability simultaneously.

Saudi Arabia expressed its commitment to the process, and welcomed the opportunity to strengthen cooperation for development. She said that the country hopes to be an active member in the formation of the sustainable development agenda, and said that with cooperation, sustainable poverty eradication will be achieved in our lifetime.

Laos, on behalf of LLDCs, said that Rio+20 recognized constraints that LLDCs face in sustainable development, and reaffirmed global commitment to addressing them. He said that

the resilience of LLDCs and their ability to cope with external shocks are especially important, and looked forward to the “full and meaningful integration of LLDCs into the global economy.”

Ukraine highlighted three components for a new agenda: protecting human rights, lowering inequality, and promoting sustainable economic development. He said the ongoing recession shows that a focus on growth is not an end in itself, and must be complemented by investment in people, stressing that individuals’ capacities are of greater value than economic resources.

Qatar said the Forum offers a chance to learn from past experience and is based on the strength of the two convening bodies, the UNGA and ECOSOC. He welcomed the Forum’s universal nature, and emphasized the importance of coordination.

UN-HABITAT noted the important role of well-planned and developed cities in promoting sustainable development, noting that they can deliver economic development, more sustainable lifestyles and lower levels of environmental degradation. However, she said, 60% of the world that will be urban in 2030 remains to be built. She said cities are where the battle for sustainable development will be won or lost, calling urbanization “not a mega-trend but a giga-trend” facing immense challenges.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) Office for Asia and the Pacific described UNDP’s national and thematic consultations on the post-2015 agenda. He said that more than 1 million people have voiced their views on the world they want, and that they want governments to do a better job, be honest in creating a better world, and be held accountable. He added that UNDP looks forward to integrating people’s voices in the work of the HLPF.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) said that the international community must shape the sustainable development vision into a life of dignity for all. As climate change and biodiversity loss demand collective global action, he said, partnerships at different levels will be necessary. He emphasized that while UNEP is charged with advancing the global environmental agenda, projects must be integrated across all dimensions of sustainable development.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said that with new momentum for the agenda of sustainable development, its three dimensions must be integrated in a balanced manner. This is achievable, he said, if political will is present and means of implementation are put in place. He expressed IUCN’s belief in “a sustainable future that recognizes the intimate interconnectedness between man and nature.”

TEDx UN Plaza explained their work to bring to life stories from communities around the world and to leverage “the power of ideas.” They noted their collaboration with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the MY World survey to provide the first overview of local issues at a global scale, and to connect the survey data with relevant TEDx stories, in order to inspire and engage more people for the post-2015 discussion.

CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

In closing, John Ashe, in a statement read by the Chair, said the Forum's first session had confirmed leaders' readiness to implement the vision of Rio+20 and to put poverty eradication and sustainable development at the core of the post-2015 development agenda. Everyone agrees, he said, that poverty eradication must be the overriding objective in moving toward the new agenda. He noted calls for a single set of goals, and for a strengthened global partnership on finance and capacity building. He expressed hope that by the time the Forum meets again, it will be with a sense of accomplishment for achievements already realized. In closing, he noted that GA President Ashe would prepare a draft summary of the day's discussions that will be distributed. He closed the meeting at 8:30 pm.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE CSD AND THE HLPF

"So if you're tired of the same old story, turn some pages."
REO Speedwagon, "Roll With the Changes"

Every story has a beginning, a middle and an end. But in life, every ending is a new beginning, and this was demonstrated at the United Nations this month. On 20 September 2013, the United Nations closed the book on the Commission on Sustainable Development after 20 years, as called for by Rio+20's outcome document, *The Future We Want*. In fact, the future we wanted in Rio in 2012 was a new forum to follow-up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments. And so, on 24 September 2013, the United Nations wrote the first pages of a new story: the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

This brief analysis will look at the end of the CSD era and the beginning of the HLPF.

CHAPTER 1: THE WAY WE WERE

The CSD opened in June 1993 on the first anniversary of the Earth Summit, with a level of enthusiasm and energy rarely seen at UN Headquarters. Yet, when the discussions began in plenary, the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* described the scene: "it was almost as if the balloon of hope had suddenly deflated... Delegates seemed to lose sight of the environmental and development problems that are facing the world today. Agenda 21 language was being recycled rather than enhanced in a tedious process of diplomatic exegesis. Dispirited NGOs and delegates commented that maybe the CSD was not going to be special and that the so-called Spirit of Rio had been lost in the bureaucratic morass."

However, the mood did improve during the two-day high-level segment. Over 50 ministers participated and focused on translating the Rio commitments into concrete action. They made a number of specific suggestions for the work of the CSD, including: holding country-hosted intersessional meetings; holding the ministerial segment around a large table to create an environment conducive to dialogue; and recognizing that sustainable development is not just the job of environment ministers, but that development, finance, economic and other ministers should participate in the work of the CSD as well. They underlined the dynamic role of the Commission as a

central political forum for monitoring and review of Agenda 21 and other outcomes of UNCED, and stressed the need to provide further political impetus and profile to the activities of the Commission. They announced initiatives and programmes to show that Agenda 21 was alive, and not just a document collecting dust on a shelf.

Thus, the first substantive session of the CSD ended on a positive note. There was a sense of community and partnership in the Trusteeship Council Chamber. The Spirit of Rio had returned and it appeared as though the CSD was on the right track.

CHAPTER 20: TURN AROUND AND THE FUTURE IS THE PAST

Over the 20 years of its existence, the CSD became known as a valuable platform for addressing all sustainable development issues, for exchanging success stories, engaging with Major Groups and forging partnerships. During the closing session of CSD-20, many delegates took the floor to acknowledge these ground-breaking accomplishments. As panelists noted, the CSD had become one of the few places in the international community where linkages and cross-fertilization between the dimensions of sustainable development could be identified, explored and exploited. So what went wrong?

The CSD was created in 1993 at a time of extreme international optimism and hope following the end of the Cold War. However, terrorism, war, crises of food, energy, climate and finance, and other political and cultural realities had a major impact on how issues of sustainable development were addressed. But while external factors had an impact on the work of the Commission, there were also internal shortcomings.

For example, the CSD proved unable, in most cases, to attract the participation of ministers of economy, finance and trade, who exercise the most influence over national budgets and development plans, strategies and priorities. Instead, the CSD turned into a gathering of representatives from environment ministries, leading to criticism that there was an imbalance in addressing the three dimensions of sustainable development.

CSD decisions and outcomes, especially in its second decade, were largely ignored by governments. In the view of many, the inability of the CSD to ensure national implementation was its weakest point, followed closely by the absence of review of past decisions. Both problems led some to discount the usefulness of the Commission.

Another shortcoming was the politicized nature of the sessions themselves, which led to a well-known UN phenomenon where carefully crafted language, such as "new and additional financial resources," acquires a life of its own. As the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* noted in 2011, "Divorced from reality on the ground, the formulations live in a virtual reality, passing from one UN document to another. Their rank is almost biblical, and any semantic infringement can make or break a conference."

Finally, in spite of the fact that the CSD pioneered the use of multi-stakeholder dialogues, as some Major Groups commented at CSD-20, the dialogues gradually diminished both in stature and attendance. The Secretary-General's 2013 report on "Lessons Learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development"

(A/67/757) noted these and other issues, which were also reflected in many comments at CSD-20. In the end, the CSD's shortcomings—particularly as evidenced at CSD-19 in 2011—exceeded its successes.

A NEW CHAPTER 1: EVERY ENDING IS A NEW BEGINNING

The inaugural meeting of the HLPF presented an opportunity to open a new chapter in sustainable development governance. In many respects, delegates agreed that the Forum got off to a rousing start. With the participation of presidents, prime ministers and vice presidents, it was truly a “high-level” meeting. And, in a change from the CSD, environment ministers were not the only ones in the room. Speakers included ministers of foreign affairs, development cooperation, multilateral affairs, irrigation and water resources management, social development, and trade, leading to more of a balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development. The presence of the President of the World Bank Group and the Managing Director of the IMF provided a level of gravitas, and demonstrated the importance that the financial institutions will lend to the process.

Leaders articulated a number of concrete proposals on the role of the HLPF: it should include stakeholders; it should emphasize accountability; it should review the post-2015 development agenda and the implementation of the SDGs; and it should examine issues from scientific and local perspectives. There was also general agreement on the need for a genuine balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development, and for the HLPF to seek to integrate these dimensions throughout the UN system.

Yet, underlying the many positive comments, there is still much uncertainty about the future of the HLPF and what it can actually accomplish. Will the HLPF learn from the CSD's shortcomings and move the sustainable development dialogue forward? What will be the relationship between the HLPF, the post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs? Will it be able to maintain a balance between economic and social development and environmental protection? Will its high-level nature be maintained or will it devolve into just another UN body?

As afternoon turned into evening, the Trusteeship Council Chamber began to empty out, as presidents, prime ministers and ministers left to attend receptions and other meetings in honor of the opening of the 68th session of the General Assembly. Yet those who remained behind largely were inspired by what they heard, and expressed hope that the initial excitement of the Forum would continue. As UNGA President John Ashe put it in his closing remarks, “The decision of Rio+20 to establish a high-level political forum is a powerful step in mainstreaming sustainable development in the post-2015 agenda. The Forum will be a home for the international community to address and coordinate the entirety of sustainable development issues. As guardian of sustainability, it can provide a platform for leaders to reflect on today's priorities, not in isolation but holistically.”

The next step in the process will be the eight-day session of the Forum convened under the auspices of ECOSOC in late June or early July 2014. In the meantime, it will be up to governments

and UN officials to ensure that momentum continues to build and that the HLPF writes a truly new chapter in the story of sustainable development governance.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development: The UN General Assembly will hold this High-Level Dialogue to identify concrete measures to strengthen coherence and cooperation at all levels, with a view to enhancing the benefits of international migration both for migrants and countries, and its important link to development, while reducing negative implications. The two-day Dialogue will address: the effects of international migration on sustainable development, and relevant priorities for the post-2015 development framework; human rights, trafficking, and safe migration; partnerships and cooperation; and labor mobility and development. **dates:** 3-4 October 2013 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** Joao Dourado Quintaes **phone:** +1-212-963-4767 **fax:** +1-212-963-3301 **email:** douradoquintaes@un.org **www:** <http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/HLD2013/mainhld2013.html>

Third Global Green Growth Forum: The third Global Green Growth Forum (3GF) aims to be a platform for developing new or enhancing existing public-private partnerships for promoting green growth and will be hosted by the Danish Government in partnership with the Governments of China, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Mexico and Qatar. With an overall focus on improving resource efficiencies in the value chain, the event will also focus on the following thematic areas: energy, water, food and greening the value chain. It will also provide an opportunity for green growth leaders to discuss ways to finance green growth, create demand for green growth and enhance economic incentives for the transition to a green economy. **dates:** 21-22 October 2013 **location:** Copenhagen, Denmark **contact:** 3GF Secretariat **phone:** +45-3392-0000 **email:** 3gf@um.dk **www:** <http://3gf.dk/en/>

High-Level Symposium on Development Cooperation in the Post-2015 Era: Sustainable Development for All: The High-Level Symposium will contribute to international discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and prepare for the 2014 ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum (DCF). The meeting will bring together experts from donor and programme countries, international organizations, civil society and the private sector to discuss: how development cooperation can advance equitable and sustainable development; how funds should be allocated among countries and sectors; how aid funds can mobilize additional sources of financing; and how aid effectiveness and accountability can be improved. This is the second in a series of preparatory events for the DCF. **dates:** 24-25 October 2013 **location:** Montreux, Switzerland **contact:** DCF Secretariat **email:** dcf@un.org **www:** http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunct/pdf13/one_pager_switzerland_hls.pdf

Intersessional Meeting between Major Groups and other stakeholders and the Open Working Group on SDGs: The Co-Chairs of the UN General Assembly's Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will convene at least two intersessional meetings between OWG members and stakeholders, to facilitate the participation of Major Groups

and other stakeholders. The first multi-stakeholder event will take place on Friday, 22 November, just before the fifth session of the Open Working Work on 25-27 November. The second multi-stakeholder event will take place in early 2014. **date:** 22 November 2013 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** Chantal Line Carpentier, UN Division for Sustainable Development **phone:** +1-917-367-8388 **email:** carpentier@un.org **www:** <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=13&nr=484&menu=1544>

Fifth Session of the OWG on SDGs: OWG-5 will focus on sustained and inclusive economic growth, macroeconomic policy questions (including international trade, international financial system and external debt sustainability), infrastructure development, and energy. **dates:** 25-27 November 2013 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **phone:** +1-212-963-8102 **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** dsd@un.org **www:** <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549>

Second Session of Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing: The second session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing is tentatively scheduled for December. **dates:** 2-6 December 2013 (tentative) **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **phone:** +1-212-963-8102 **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** dsd@un.org **www:** <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1558>

Sixth Session of the OWG on SDGs: OWG-6 will focus on means of implementation; the global partnership for achieving sustainable development; needs of countries in special situations: African countries, LDCs, land-locked developing countries, and SIDS as well as specific challenges facing middle-income countries; and human rights, the right to development, and global governance. **dates:** 9-13 December 2013 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **phone:** +1-212-963-8102 **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** dsd@un.org **www:** <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549>

Seventh Session of the OWG on SDGs: OWG-7 will focus on sustainable cities and human settlements, sustainable transport, sustainable consumption and production (including chemicals and waste); and climate change and disaster risk reduction. **dates:** 6-10 January 2014 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **phone:** +1-212-963-8102 **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** dsd@un.org **www:** <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549>

Eighth Session of the OWG on SDGs: OWG-8 will focus on oceans and seas, forests, biodiversity; promoting equality, including social equity, gender equality and women's empowerment; and conflict prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding and the promotion of durable peace, rule of law and governance. **dates:** 3-7 February 2014 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **phone:** +1-212-963-8102 **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** dsd@un.org **www:** <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549>

High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development:

The next meeting of the HLPF will take place under the auspices of ECOSOC for eight days, including a three-day high-level ministerial segment. **dates:** June-July 2014 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **phone:** +1-212-963-8102 **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** dsd@un.org **www:** <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1556>

For additional meetings and updates, go to <http://post2015.iisd.org/>

GLOSSARY

CBDR	Common but differentiated responsibilities
CSD	UN Commission on Sustainable Development
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
GDP	Gross domestic product
HLPF	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
LDCs	Least developed countries
LLDCs	Land-locked developing countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
ODA	Official development assistance
OWG	UN General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals
Rio+20	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (or UNCED)
SCP	Sustainable consumption and production
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small island developing States
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly