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HLPF-2 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY 7 JULY 2014

The second High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF-2) under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) began its high-level segment during its second week. The opening session was followed by a high-level policy dialogue on “Macroeconomic policies in support of a post-2015 sustainable development agenda,” and ministerial dialogues on: “A universal integrated policy agenda to implement Rio+20 and realize the future we want”; and “Weaving regional realities and regional priorities into the post-2015 development agenda.”

OPENING OF THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF ECOSOC AND OPENING OF THE MINISTERIAL SEGMENT OF HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM

Ambassador Martin Sajdik (Austria), ECOSOC President, formally opened the high-level ministerial segment. He emphasized the need to: complete the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); address persistent poverty and inequality and sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns; address good governance, rule of law and decentralization for building resilience; and strengthen review and transparency systems.

UN Secretary-General (UNSG) Ban Ki-moon called for a strong successor framework to address areas not covered by the MDGs, stressing the connections between development, peace, security and the rule of law and the need to tackle inequalities. Launching the new *Millennium Development Goals Report 2014*, Ban said it shows many key targets have been met, but there have been uneven achievements between goals among and within countries, regions, and population groups. He informed delegates that his post-2015 synthesis report will outline a broad vision for the post-2015 development agenda and be influenced by the various post-2015 processes.

Ambassador John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda), UN General Assembly President, lauded the HLPF as a credible umbrella where stakeholders can work towards sustainable development and poverty eradication. He called for the Forum to be nimble in order to be able to address emerging issues.

Esther Agbarakwe, Youth Climate Coalition, Nigeria, underscored the role of youth in producing innovative solutions and their future role in implementing the SDGs.

HIGH-LEVEL POLICY DIALOGUE: “MACROECONOMIC POLICIES IN SUPPORT OF A POST-2015 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA”

Sajdik introduced the panel, noting that while concerted macroeconomic policy should continue to focus on recovery, other actions such as minimizing the risk of recurrent financial crises and ensuring sufficient resources, are available for countries to meet the MDGs.

Moderator Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General, UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs, posed three questions for the panelists: key features of a broad coherent and integrated macroeconomic framework to support the three dimensions of sustainable development; how to ensure economic and financial stability with macroeconomic policies that foster robust, inclusive economic growth; and challenges faced by financial, development, and trade institutions in coordinating policies for the post-2015 agenda.

Noting that financial globalization alone cannot be the basis for a sustainable global economy, Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, proposed: focusing on the real economy instead of intermediate targets like inflation; working towards rebalancing growth with greater emphasis on domestic demand; and initiating an inclusive dialogue on the regulation of financial institutions.

Achim Steiner, Executive Director, UN Environment Programme, highlighted: inequality in the context of access to environmental services; the importance of natural capital accounting and SCP; and social and economic opportunities generated by environmental solutions, such as employment generation by the renewable energy sector.

Guy Ryder, Director-General, International Labour Organization, outlined the importance of, *inter alia*: addressing the needs of the unemployed; social sustainability, including the role of work in self-esteem and social protection floors; environmental sustainability; and appropriate policy packages to reduce poverty and inequality.

Min Zhu, Deputy Managing Director, International Monetary Fund (IMF), recommended: diversifying trade; strengthening resilience through fiscal and foreign reserve positions and structural transformation; strengthening investment and debt management strategies; and supporting inclusive growth.

Reaffirming the importance of the multilateral trading system in achieving post-2015 goals, Yonov Frederick Agah, Deputy Director-General, World Trade Organization (WTO), called for facilitation of technology, entrepreneurship, and technical capacity, and making goods cheaper and more widely available.

Calling for investment in quality data to monitor progress, Mahmoud Mohieldin, Special Envoy on MDGs, the post-2015 process and financial development, World Bank, reiterated the Bank’s commitment to ending extreme poverty, promoting shared prosperity, and supporting partnerships with stakeholders.

In the discussion, SOUTH AFRICA said developed countries must exercise caution when implementing economic policies that affect economic growth in developing countries. SUDAN highlighted restrictions on international movement of labor. CHILDREN AND YOUTH called for ecological tax reform, towards approaches that tax resource degradation and pollution. Kituyi supported internalizing the adverse spillovers of economic policies.

Steiner noted the role of enabling environments to attract capital. Ryder called for a rights-based approach to migration in the post-2015 agenda. Zhu called for greater coordination of

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monetary policies to reduce spillover effects. Mohieldin stressed the importance of domestic financial development to achieve the SDGs.

In summary, Wu highlighted the need to learn from past financial crises, and incorporate inequality into the macroeconomic framework.

MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE: “A UNIVERSAL INTEGRATED POLICY AGENDA TO IMPLEMENT RIO+20 AND REALIZE THE FUTURE WE WANT”

Opening the dialogue, Sajdik asked delegates to consider how the post-2015 processes can develop coherent, integrated elements that ensure implementation and universality.

Helen Clark, Administrator, UN Development Programme (UNDP), moderated the panel. Noting biodiversity loss and climate change threaten development gains, she said the post-2015 agenda must tackle emerging challenges and reflect the shared aspirations of people and countries while differentiating between countries.

Janez Potočnik, European Commissioner for the Environment, stressed the importance of SCP for a transformative agenda. He said the global partnership should focus on coherent enabling policy environments; mobilization of all available resources, including private finance; and a strong accountability framework.

Nana Oye Lithur, Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, Ghana, highlighted, *inter alia*: an effective and efficient coordination mechanism; investment in social development; and inclusion of civil society, youth, the private sector, and women in the planning process.

Yoon Seong Kyu, Minister of Environment, Republic of Korea, stressed poverty eradication, ecosystem resilience building, and enhanced gender equality as part of the SDGs. He urged differentiated and customized national approaches, and accountable, effective, and transparent governance.

Silvia Velo, Under-Secretary for Environment, Land and Sea, Italy, noted that the interconnected challenges facing the world require an innovative culture of governance, based on policy coherence, inclusiveness, and accountability. She called for new ways of understanding and measuring progress, beyond GDP.

The dialogue included four lead discussants. Palouki Massina, Minister, Secretary General of Government, Togo, called for a 3-5 year window for countries in special circumstances to build capacity, before implementing a universal development agenda. Federico Ramos de Armas, Vice-Minister for Environment, Spain, called for common global objectives with differentiated national goals; viewing poverty and sustainable development together and focusing on peace, security, good governance, and democracy; and mobilizing financing beyond ODA. Ambassador Liu Jieyi (China) noted the role of the HLPF in monitoring and integration. Martin Chungong, Secretary General, Inter-Parliamentary Union, called for a social contract that leads to development of all, and a democratic governance goal.

In the discussion, AUSTRIA said democratic governance and rule of law should be the backbone of the post-2015 agenda and welcomed the multi-stakeholder approach, especially the inclusion of Parliamentarians. SOUTH AFRICA drew attention to means of implementation.

Potočnik stressed trust building. Lithur prioritised the strengthening of policies that meet the needs of people and preserve the environment. Seong Kyu explained that the “no one left behind” philosophy refers to addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, small island developing States and Least Developed Countries in the present, and the needs of the youth in the future. Velo highlighted universality, integration, and differentiation.

In summary, Clark stressed the importance of global partnerships in implementing the SDGs.

MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE: “WEAVING REGIONAL REALITIES AND REGIONAL PRIORITIES INTO THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA”

Ambassador Oh Joon (Republic of Korea), ECOSOC Vice President, opened the dialogue, noting it is essential to understand regional perspectives, hindrances, and solutions to attain sustainable development.

Juan Somavía, the UNSG’s Special Adviser on Interregional Policy Coordination, framed the discussion with two questions: what are the commonalities and priorities between various regions and how can we assure their implementation; and how will the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda impact policies and trends.

Olga Marta Sánchez Oviedo, Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy, Costa Rica, highlighted increasing inequality and vulnerability to climate change, and the need for a new global alliance to achieve sustainable development.

Shamshad Akhtar, Executive Secretary, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, identified regional priorities to complement universal goals, such as population dynamics and natural disasters; the role of regional commissions; and the importance of long-term planning, policy coordination, and the private sector.

Marcin Korolec, Special Envoy for Climate Change, Poland, supported, *inter alia*, addressing SCP in line with the Ten-Year Framework Programme, and engaging city leaders to tackle climate change.

Anthony Mothae Maruping, Commissioner for Economic Affairs, African Union Commission, described alignment between the Common African Position on the post-2015 agenda; Africa’s Agenda 2063; and the SDG process.

The dialogue included four lead discussants. Sihanak Phuangketkeow, Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Thailand, called for addressing the development gap in the Asia-Pacific region by enhancing development cooperation, and increasing means of implementation. Shahidul Haque, Foreign Secretary, Bangladesh, proposed a hybrid regional organization to manage the implementation of the SDGs, stressing connectivity to unlock regional cooperation, and enhance peace, stability, and regional progress. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, noted the urgency of addressing inequalities and peace and security.

Gigi Francisco, Major Group for WOMEN, called for: addressing systemic challenges such as distorted trade balances; binding corporate accountability to share risks and returns of public-private partnerships; and implementation of commitments on women’s rights.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION emphasized its commitments towards regional initiatives and recommended a prominent role for regional commissions in the post-2015 agenda. CHILDREN AND YOUTH supported the integration of regional concerns into the global agenda even if it led to a greater number of targets.

In closing statements, Akhtar emphasized the importance of integrating regional perspectives into New York dialogues. Korolec said energy efficiency, new technologies, and investments in renewables can help to meet emissions reductions goals. Maruping called for addressing illicit financial flows. Noting the asymmetrical nature of development, Oviedo recommended strengthening institutions, spreading democratic relationships between States and citizens, and fighting corruption.

In conclusion, moderator Somavía highlighted the UN’s “enormous installed capacity” at the regional level.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The HLPF’s convening power has been lauded as an indicator of its potential role as an integrator or orchestrator of the three dimensions of sustainable development. The level of representation sent by the economic dimension for the opening of HLPF-2’s high-level segment, however, did not overly impress participants. They pointed out that while social and environment organizations sent their heads, the IMF, WTO and World Bank sent deputies. A comment by the WTO representative in his address, that sustainable development cannot be achieved when economic growth takes a back seat to social and environmental issues, was seen as an indication that while all dimensions are equal, some may still be more equal.