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## Concept Note

### **The Seoul Post-2015 Conference: Implementation and Implications**

**The Plaza Grand Ballroom, Seoul, October 7, 2013**

*The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) of the Republic of Korea will host an international conference in Seoul on October 7, 2013. The conference will further the post-2015 development discourse emphasizing implementation challenges by bringing together intellectual leaders and leading development practitioners from around the world. The conference will be held in the wake of the September 2013 General Assembly which will focus on efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and will precede the 7th Seoul International ODA Conference on October 8, 2013. The insights and analysis presented in this conference will provide a critical cornerstone for the post-2015 deliberations and will further the process to refine the building blocks for an implementation framework to anchor the Post-2015 development agenda.*

## Background

### **Turning the Key: the Challenge of Implementation in a Post-2015 Development Agenda**

Governments and international organizations across the world have made significant and widespread progress in engineering policies and frameworks to meet burgeoning social, economic and environmental needs. Development approaches have been tested in a global context where implementation modalities contend with a dense and complicated socio-political structure, pressed by multiple crises and instabilities such as the economic downturn, food insecurity, disasters linked to extreme weather events and climate change and the impacts of population dynamics.

Looking ahead, the debate for a post-2015 development framework will need to balance globally agreed, locally actionable goals with implementation approaches that move policy to actualization.

### **MDGs and Other Implementation Frameworks in Mentoring a Successor Development Agenda**

In order for the post-2015 development to have any meaningful impact, it is important to take stock of the lessons learned from implementing existing frameworks that have been shaped by the global development stakeholders.

## *The MDGs*

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been a driving force in mobilizing global attention, resources and modalities to accelerate the implementation of the agreed targets. The MDGs provided a clear and concise template with the Millennium Declaration setting the guiding principles.

## *Parallel Initiatives*

Parallel discussions have been held on critical issues of finance (Monterrey Consensus), integrating sustainability (Rio+20), harmonizing approaches (Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action), forging commitments to shape the overall context for international development (Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation) and meeting the specific needs and contexts of developing countries (Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs; and the New Deal for fragile states).

## *Critical Gaps*

A new agenda should build on the strengths of the MDGs and other implementation formats while also making refinements and additions that help trace an even more relevant outline towards sustainable human development.

The architects of the post-2015 framework will face a number of conceptual and methodological challenges. The MDGs played a major role in galvanizing actors around a common and meaningful set of common goals, but the focus must now move us towards the world we want.

In areas such as poverty, health, and education, which were covered by the MDGs, there is a need to revisit targets and indicators to ensure that they can be relevant for all regions and countries, and within countries; that they capture not only quantitative information but qualitative, too; and that they monitor not only aggregate data but also disaggregated data which can bring inequalities of all kinds into view.

Areas which were at the heart of the Millennium Declaration also need to be better reflected in the next global development framework, including issues of governance, voice and participation, peace, security, and national self-determination; and a fuller embrace of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Looking ahead to implementation, a debate is needed to contribute more to the definition of policy that enables a focus on the achievement of priorities for a post-2015 development agenda. Development cannot be achieved by governments alone. Sustainable human development requires the joint efforts of all stakeholders – nationally, regionally, and globally.

## **Korea's Empirical Leadership towards Post-2015**

The Government of Korea is well positioned to host a discussion on implementation. It has shown its clear commitment to accelerate the achievement of the MDGs until 2015 through the UNDP-Korea MDG Trust Fund and has supported thinking about the post-2015 agenda through various discussions with academia and civil society, particularly through recent events such as "Asian Perspectives on Post MDGs Development Agenda: Taking Stock, Harnessing Knowledge, Assuming Responsibility" (July 2012), "6<sup>th</sup> Seoul International ODA Conference: Links between the Global Partnership Implementation and the Post-2015 Development Framework" (Oct 2012) highlighting the outcomes of the Busan HLF-4 in the Post 2015 context, and "the North-East Asian Youth Conference: 'The World We Want'" (Jan 2013).

## Deliberations for Post-2015 – a Snap Shot

### The Process to Date

The post-2015 agenda is driven by the search for a successor framework to the MDGs and the follow-up to the Rio+20 conference on Sustainable Development, where the decision was taken to negotiate concrete SDGs. There are a number of different processes providing input into the post-2015 dialogue.

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Open Working Group (OWG), established in response to recommendations from Rio+20, will present its final recommendations to the UN General Assembly in September 2014.
- The Expert Committee on Sustainable Development Financing has also convened and will likely deliver a report and recommendations in time for the September 2014 General Assembly.
- The Sustainable Development Solutions Network released a report on 7 May 2013 entitled “An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development.”
- The High Level Panel on a post-2015 development agenda released its final report entitled “A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development,” in May 2013.
- The UN Global Compact (UNGC) released a report on 17 June 2013 entitled “Corporate Sustainability and the United Nations Post-2015 Development Agenda.”
- The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) has led over 88 national consultations in Member States; eleven thematic consultations on issues such as inequalities, food security, and access to water; and through online platforms such as the World We Want 2015 Website and the MY World survey, people are able to continue to contribute their ideas and articulate their priorities. To date over 1 million people have been engaged in the dialogue. While a final synthesis report will be released in time for the September 2013 General Assembly, an initial document was released on 20 March 2013 entitled “The Global Conversation Begins.”

These consultations are generating dialogue around priorities for the new development agenda. While in many cases efforts were made to keep the focus on ‘issues’ and the rationale for their inclusion in a new development framework, those engaged in the consultations have consistently moved the discussions into more operational debates.

### Emerging Implementation Priorities

Defining the post-2015 implementation agenda can use the MDGs as a starting point. The MDGs had important implications on development investment and the conditions and incentives for governments to increase their capacity to deliver on them, and as a point for advocacy for dialogue with governments and donors.

What has emerged from the deliberations to date is the view that all development is interconnected. In particular the next development framework must reflect the inter-dependencies of social, economic, and environmental sustainability. This is of critical importance as the post-2015 and SDGs processes begin to come together as one.

At the national level, questions around partnership and the revision of MDG 8 have surfaced across Asia in many countries as they have transnational cooperation issues such as global trade and the role of the private sector among others.

In Africa more than half of the national consultations have included discussions around the ‘means of implementation.’ Several of the thematic discussions included operational aspects in their discussions, such as finance (Education and Growth and Employment consultations), accountability mechanisms (Governance consultation), among others.

Most thematic consultations have addressed measurement issues in some form or another in the course of their 2013 engagement.

The Co-Chairs of the OWG have provided remarks on how to build data and statistical capacities along with the financing issues in thematic areas such as social protection and education. The OWG will continue to discuss ‘means of implementation’ in December 2013 with a special focus on science and technology, knowledge sharing and capacity building, and a global partnership for achieving sustainable development, in addition to relevant discussions on the thematic areas in the course of their work.

The High Level Panel report has included various ideas and references on the implementation of the Post 2015 agenda, including a call for a revolution in data and effective monitoring and accountability systems.

## Objectives and Outcomes of the Conference

Against this backdrop, there is a need to gather all these implementation concerns and channel thinking about “how” the post-2015 agenda is going to be implemented. As highlighted, the ongoing business of MDGs implementation is a departure point to consider other development processes and commitments, their implementation bottlenecks and the lessons learned from their execution. Factors such as political will; institutional and systemic capacity at global and local levels; financing for development; partnerships and cooperation challenges; and widening the window of opportunity for the inclusion of technology, knowledge and innovation applications can all be deliberated.

### Objectives

The Seoul Post-2015 Conference is a forum to submit additional evidence and analysis for continuing the discussion on how to better design key building blocks of the post-2015 framework implementation. The conference will serve as a stock-taking and analytic exercise and an opportunity to discuss the means of implementation based on the lessons learned from predecessor frameworks including the MDGs and other international development processes.

The conference aims to:

- Provide space for a diverse range of leading stakeholders (governmental and non-governmental) to voice their expert opinions, proposals, analysis and aspirations for the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda;
- Help defining specific sectoral concerns and how they contribute to the overall framework for the discussions how to implement the post-2015 development agenda.

## **Focus Areas**

Questions have already been raised in the post-2015 consultations. They have implications for the delivery and implementation of a new development framework. They can serve as the basis for presentations and debate on how to operationalize issues such as the universality of the agenda, the connection between sustainable development and poverty, the need to increase the quality of social services, the presence of new development actors, the need for inclusive institutions, and the possibilities of new forms of accountability.

The conference will focus on the following topics so as to facilitate the discussion of the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, bearing in mind that some of the discussions would be linked with further deliberation at the Seoul ODA International Conference on the following day:

- Helping to strengthen capacities and institutions
- Partnerships for implementation (MDG 8 and beyond)
- Monitoring and new forms of accountability
- Resources for development

The discussions should build on the reports and recommendations from parallel post-2015 processes as outlined above.

To this end, the discussions from each session of the conference are closely intertwined, building on the tangible evidence from national implementation experiences of the MDGs and other international development commitments. The conference should foster ideas, identify trends, note challenges and project future scenarios for implementation instruments in support of an overall post-2015 framework.

## **Guidelines for Participation**

A working agenda has been annexed to this concept. The suggested format for the conference will have a moderator guiding the discussions over the course of the agenda. Speakers will present on different implementation frameworks followed by expert panel discussions which will then be opened to the wider audience. Speakers are expected to provide analytical notes in advance, drawn from their own expertise and respective mandate of the session.

In preparation for the discussions, speakers are requested to consider some guiding questions drawing from implementation modalities used to support development commitments.

- What characteristics should be considered in the next iteration of a global development framework?
- What approaches should be considered in setting goals within the new framework for effective development implementation?
- How do we address universality while taking into account countries' different levels of development and national circumstances?
- How to address the means of implementation/enablers in challenging contextual situation?
- How could the goals balance and integrate three dimensions of sustainable development?
- How to build on existing goals and targets, and ensure the complete implementation of the commitments?
- How to measure and monitor progress built upon the existing partnership mechanisms and instruments?

- What would be the innovative breakthrough of the financial resources for development?

### **Envisaged Outputs and Results**

The outcomes of the conference, analytical papers, presentations and rapporteur summary will be hosted on the post-2015 secretariat web platform for post-2015 consultations [www.worldwewant2015.org](http://www.worldwewant2015.org)

The discussions emerging from the conference will inform the work of UNDP on the post-2015 agenda and furthermore, enhance that of UNDG and the UNTT going forward.