



11 December 2014

UNDG Sustainable Development Working Group (SD-WG) Terms of Reference

I. Institutional context

At its 29th January, 2009 meeting, the UNDG tasked the Working Group on Programming Issues to establish an MDG Task Force (MDG TF) at senior level to move the MD/MDGs agenda forward and provide direction and operational support to UNCTs. At the High-level Plenary Meeting (HLPM) of the 65th session of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG Summit), held in New York in September 2010, the international community reaffirmed the commitment to achieve the MDGs by 2015 and approved the Summit Outcome Document entitled “Keeping the Promise: United to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals” Resolution (A/RES/65/1). At its 6th October 2010 meeting the UNDG endorsed nine recommendations on the follow-up to the outcome of the 2010 MDG Summit. These are aimed at enabling the UNDG to respond more proactively and coherently to the needs of countries, in particular those lagging furthest behind in achieving the MDGs, and steer the implementation of the UNDG Strategic Priorities and Work Plan for 2010-11, which place the acceleration of the achievement of the MDGs and Internationally-agreed development goals (IADGs) at the core of the UN collective efforts to maximize impact at country level, while coordinating with the HLCP. The UNDG meeting reviewed the work of the MDG TF in 2010 and unanimously decided that the Task Force should continue its work.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - or Rio+20 - took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2012. It resulted in a focused political outcome document which contains clear and practical measures for implementing sustainable development. One of the main outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference was the agreement by member States to launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will build upon the Millennium Development Goals and converge with the post 2015 development agenda. The Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG), mandated by Rio+20, produced a report on the SDGs with a proposed 17 goals and 169 targets. The 68th Session of the General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution A/REV/68/309 that welcomed the report of the OWG and decided that its proposal “shall be the main basis for integrating sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda, while recognizing that other inputs will also be considered in the intergovernmental negotiating process at the 69th session of the GA.”. The resolution paves the way for the incorporation of sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda. The post-2015 development agenda is expected to be adopted by UN Member States at the post-2015 Summit in September 2015.

Sustainable development is thus set to become our global guiding principle and operational standard. This universal agenda will require a joined-up UN system response in support of whole-of-government approaches and a new global partnership. In his report “A Life of Dignity for All”, the UN Secretary-General expressed the commitment of the United Nations system to continue its reform and make itself “fit for purpose” so as to respond to the challenges of the



emerging post-2015 development agenda. At the CEB retreat in May 2014, CEB Executive Heads focused on five interconnected elements that anchor sustainable development in any context and which they identified as universality, integration, equality, human rights, and the need for a data revolution.

The UNDG remains committed to supporting countries to accelerate progress to achieve the MDGs and attain sustainable development. It has been supporting an open and inclusive global public consultations and Member State discussions on the Post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs. It is expected that the UN system will continue supporting national efforts to implement the post-2015 agenda, guided by the final agenda agreed by Member States, the 2012 QCPR resolution, and the commitment to ensure that the UN system always lives up to its own core values and its mandate to respect and promote human rights under the UN Charter. For the UN to support national efforts to deliver on sustainable development and poverty eradication it will take distinguished leadership, shared goals and a determined results-focus, plus a level of ambition on policy, programmes and operations that reach the highest standards in terms of accountability, transparency and impact.

II. Overall objective

The overall scope of the UNDG Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) would be the acceleration of the progress towards achieving the MDGs and the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda with its main objective being to formulate policies and strategies which help support the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of the Post-2015 agenda to be agreed by the UNGA. Key on this regard will be to ground its work in cutting-edge analytics and strategies focused on the “dark spot” of inequalities (on gender and others), injustices, lack of rights and heightened vulnerability and risk.

The SDWG replaces the previous UNDG MDG TF.

III. Tasks and expected results

The SDWG will focus on providing coordinated inter-agency strategic policy inputs to the achievement and monitoring of MDGs, the implementation and monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda at country level, as well as following up on concrete activities as associated with the UNDG strategic priorities and work plan for 2012-2016 related to the MDGs and the post-2015 process. To that end, the SDWG will:

- 1) Develop policies and strategies for country development related activities that lead to achievement of the MDGs by 2015 and/or the implementation of the post-2015 agenda;
- 2) Promote positive experiences, lessons learned and practices - through the country level operational focus of the UNDG - in countries which are lagging behind on the MDGs in the context of inequalities, vulnerability, marginalization and discrimination, including on the basis of gender and age. This includes support to the generation and follow up of Action Plans of the MDG Acceleration Framework (MAF);
- 3) Help ensuring that various ongoing related initiatives to support achievement of the MDGs and the post-2015 development agenda are linked and build on each other;



- 4) Develop a instruments and methodologies, drawing on the existing tools of UNDG members, which can help UNDG promote better coordination and collaboration among UN agencies and with other development stakeholders to support countries in planning, implementing and monitoring the post-2015 agenda. These instruments and methodologies should support consistent and coherent action in mainstreaming inequalities (including gender inequality), vulnerability, and risk;
- 5) Oversight of the work of the UNDG Task Team on South-South Cooperation;
- 6) Support the development and implementation of QCPR monitoring instruments related to the MDGs and the post-2015 development agenda;
- 7) Take forward relevant action items of the UNDG biannual work plan which is mandated to implement.

IV. Expected duration and timeline

The SDWG is a standing body in the UNDG architecture. Its ToR are a living document to be adjusted accordingly on the GA resolutions and Member States decisions. They will be reviewed in line with the final formulation of the post-2015 agenda and the review mechanisms and timelines established by the 69th Session of the UN General Assembly for the achievement of the post-2015 development agenda and adopted by the international community, including the High Level Political Forum.

V. Linkages with other (UN) working mechanisms, processes, or institutions

The SDWG will reach out to and work in close coordination with other relevant UN stakeholders and sectorial coordination mechanisms based on the task at hand. The SDWG will work in close contact with the UNDG South-South Cooperation Task Team, which works under the SDWG, in identifying how South-South and Triangular Cooperation can better support the UN country level support to the achievement of the post-2015 agenda. The SDWG will mainly liaise with:

1. Other UNDG Working Groups, such as:
 - The Programmes Leadership Working Groups in matters of the Results Groups' leadership in joint programming and planning;
 - The Programme Working Group (PWG) on matters related to programming and the development of instruments and methodologies which impact the programme activities of the UN;
 - The Communicating as One Working Group in matters of communicating development results, advocacy and public engagement at country level ;
 - The Business Operations working Group to link programmatic and operational work;
 - The Human Rights WG in matters related to integrating normative human right issues in the SDGs, and all human rights dimensions of the Post-2015 agenda, including the accountability and monitoring frameworks;



- The UN Working Group on Transitions on matters related to the post-2015 development agenda in transition contexts;
 - and others as required.
2. The CEB, including High level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) and the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM), to ensure coherence and avoid duplication among the three pillars of CEB with a view to provide effective support to the UNCTs/RCs in the transition to and implementation of the post-2015 agenda; ;
 3. Regional UNDG Teams and PSGs to coordinate support to RCs/ UNCTs;
 4. RCs/ UNCTs for ad hoc support and collection of good practices;
 5. Other UN institutions of importance such as ECOSOC and the HLPF
 6. The Executive Office of the Secretary General (EOSG) and senior coordination groups
 7. and other UN inter-agency bodies when needed

VI. Working methods

The SDWG adheres to the general working methods of the UNDG as standard and agreed for all UNDG Working Mechanisms (refer to document: UNDG Functioning and Working Arrangements, Annex 1: UNDG Working Mechanisms' Working Methods).

The SDWG meets at least four times per year and its work is led by Annual Work Plans, prepared in line with the Work Plan of UNDG and its Strategic Priorities, and adopted by the members of the SDWG. Decision items to be submitted to the SDWG by its members in order to be included in the agenda of the meetings of the SDWG must be accompanied by a one-pager "decision sheet" that outlines: the issue, brief background, and budget implications.

The SDWG reports at minimum annually to the UNDG and as required.

The SDWG may establish time-bound and demand driven Task Teams focused on specific deliverables to provide specialist support. The Task Teams are demand driven, e.g. they do not necessarily meet regularly, unless there are specific tasks to be completed. The main purpose of the Task Teams is to provide specialist support in their respective areas to UN Country and Regional UNDG Teams implementing field solutions in those areas. Task Teams are to be supported by one of their conveners. Additional support could be provided by the respective WG co-chairs in order to implement the activities of the SDWG.

VII. Membership

The SDWG will be open for participation by all UNDG member organizations. The SDWG may invite other participants on a case by case basis. UNDG members' representatives will be senior staff members with the necessary decision-making authority, ideally at the P5 or D1-ASG levels. The representatives in the group will have expertise on the programming policies within their own organization. Each organization will have one voice in the SDWG. Each participating organization will also designate a staff member as an alternate member to the SDWG. The



SDWG may decide to invite colleagues from other UNDG working groups, Regional UNDG Teams and UNCTs to selected meetings.