Summary of Report by UN Secretary General (SG) on Progress toward the Millennium Development Goals – for presentation to the UN General Assembly in September 2013

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‘A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015’

This is the latest in a series of annual reports by Ban Ki Moon that detail progress on each of the Millennium Development Goals but also take into account the fact that we are looking now at those goals that will be recommended as key components in the post-2015 agenda. The 19 page report is particularly useful as it highlights the successes and failures of certain goals and policies and offers ideas and tools to “put this right” post-2015. From the outset, however, it is important to note that the SG can only make recommendations and it is up to the Member States to finally agree on the post-2015 goals and framework.

The SG states that ‘Sustainable development-enabled by the integration of economic growth, social justice and environmental stewardship-must become our global guiding principle and operational standard’. Therefore he accepts the recommendation of his High Level Panel in this regard. He goes on to say that ‘As we make the transition to this new era, we need to continue the work begun with the Millennium Development Goals and ensure that extreme poverty is ended within a generation’.

Introduction

The SG repeats the statement ‘Global challenges, local solutions: Shared burden, shared gain: This remains the credo of international action for our collective well-being’. The report states that ‘the prospects for achieving all of the goals differ sharply across and within countries and regions’. It is noted that a billion people still live in extreme poverty, too many still do not have adequate health or education, and disparities related to income, gender, ethnicity, disability, age and location remain large. In addition ‘The prolonged global economic downturn and violent conflicts in recent years have exacerbated poverty, inequality and exclusion’. Other problems that have increased include biodiversity loss, the degradation of water, dry lands and forests. On top of all of this ‘the world has changed radically since the turn of the millennium. New economic powers have emerged, new technologies are reshaping our societies and new patterns of human settlement and activity are heightening the pressures on our planet. Inequality is rising in rich and poor countries alike’

The report maintains that a new guiding economic, social and environmental framework ‘can bring together the full range of human aspirations and needs’, ‘Sustainable development is, in short, the pathway to the future. So the challenge remains, even as it has taken on new complexity and increased in scale; we must fulfill our promises and meet the aspirations of the world’s peoples, and we must summon the unity to realize the dream of the Charter and the
Millennium Declarations. Ours is the first generation with the resources and know-how to put our planet on a sustainable course before it is too late.

The SG is explicitly clear that ‘the transition to sustainable development must not mean any diminishment whatsoever in the commitment to ending poverty’. He mentions what is said in the concluding document of the Rio Conference ‘poverty eradication is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development’. The report says in a world of great wealth and technological advances, no person should lack for food, shelter, clean water or sanitation. Similarly, people should not face social or economic exclusion, nor live without human rights such as health and education which ‘form the foundations for a decent life’ … ‘Nor can progress be achieved or sustained amid armed conflict, violence, insecurity and injustice’. The SG recognizes that these conflicts often have their roots in deprivation and inequality: ‘poverty can be a precursor and a breeding ground of instability’.

Ban Ki Moon mentions a process that is underway in which a million people have fed in their ideas for the post-2015 agenda via global, regional and national consultations and through social networking. ‘I am profoundly grateful to all who expressed their hopes and expectations and offered ideas and constructive criticism. The United Nations is strongly committed to not just listening to those voices, but also to amplifying and acting on what we have heard and learned’.

The SG makes clear that he is not just relying on his High Level Panel report in order to shape the post-2015 agenda but also mentions reports by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the Global Compact Office, the United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda as well as regional commissions and partners in civil society and academia.

**Achieving the Millennium Development Goals and accelerating progress**

The SG noted that remarkable progress has been made and that many countries, including the poorest, ‘have aligned their policies and resources with the Goals in order to make unparalleled gains. Several critical targets have already been met or will be met by the end of 2015, both at the aggregate level and in individual countries. Sizable gains have occurred, even in the poorest countries. However progress has been insufficient and highly uneven. Rural areas and marginalized groups continue to lag behind on virtually all goals and targets. Countries in, or emerging from, conflict, disaster or instability face significant challenges. In addition, the economic and financial crisis has complicated efforts’.

**A. Where do we stand on the Goals**

‘At the global level, poverty and hunger have been reduced significantly’. The proportion of people living on less than $1.25 a day has reduced from 47% in 1990 to 22% in 2010. However the report notes that much of this progress has been made in a few large countries, primarily
China and India. 1.2 billion People still live in extreme poverty around the world and the number continues to rise most notably in sub-Saharan Africa.

The SG states ‘The target of halving the percentage of people suffering from hunger by 2015 is within reach. This has fallen from 23.2% in the early nineties to 14.9% in the period 2010-2012. ‘However one in eight people remain chronically undernourished, and one in four children suffers from stunted growth because of malnutrition’. The SG is also concerned that we will miss the target for the number of children enrolled in school since the number of children not attending primary school decreased from 102 million to 57 million between 2000 to 2011, but recently the decrease has slowed considerably. New efforts are needed if the target of universal primary education is to be reached, particularly in conflict-torn countries of sub-Saharan Africa, the region which is “home” to half of the children who do not attend school. Stronger efforts are needed to improve education and lifelong learning opportunities for females, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and children living in areas of conflict, rural areas or urban slums.

The report makes clear that women and girls are the ‘major drivers of development’ but ‘challenges to achieving gender equality and women’s rights remain significant’. Such challenges include violence: ‘Gender- based violence contravenes women’s and girl’s rights, undermines development and is an affront to our common humanity’ as well as denial of the right to primary education for girls as well as according less social benefits to working women than to men.

The SG calls for a renewed commitment to improve the health and life prospects of mothers and children. Mortality of children under 5 dropped by 41% between 1990 and 2011 ‘a significant achievement, yet far short of the target of a two-thirds reduction’ The maternal mortality rate fell by 47% over two decades, but, once again, this is far short of the 75% target. The report then mentions that ‘Intensified efforts are needed to reach the most vulnerable women and children and ensure their sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, including full access to basic health services and sexual and reproductive education’.

The panel states ‘New HIV Infections declined by 21 per cent globally during the past decade, and close to 10 million people living with HIV are receiving life-saving antiretroviral treatment. Expanded treatment and prevention yielded a 25 per cent reduction in AIDS-related deaths between 2005 and 2011’. However, 2.5 million new infections occur every year and ‘in many parts of the globe, millions lack access to treatment.’ Malaria has seen a 25% global decrease in mortality rates globally; this has saved an estimated 1.1 million people from dying. ‘Between 1995 and 2011, 51 million tuberculosis patients were treated successfully saving 20 million lives’.

200 million slum dwellers now benefit from improved water, sanitation, durable housing and living space, which is double the original target. However the number of slum dwellers globally is on the rise, and 2.5 billion people still lack access to improved sanitation and 1 billion people still defecate openly leading to illness and disease.
Goal No 7 on ensuring environmental sustainability ‘remains at significant risk because of the profound and urgent challenges posed by climate change. Carbon dioxide emissions are more than 46 per cent higher than in 1990 and the 400 parts per million level of atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide was recently reached. ‘A level not seen in millions of years and threatening the existence of the planet’.

The SG reports that the MDG Gap Task Force Report 2013 will show ‘progress towards a global partnership for development has fallen short of expectations’. Aid flows have been declining recently following an ‘encouraging rise in development assistance since 2000’. ‘Despite significant debt relief for many countries, the debt-servicing burden of some low-income countries remains intolerably high’. This is alongside the slowness in improving market access for developing countries and the fact that ‘aid for trade’ has not escaped the impact of reduced development assistance’ and a ‘substantial digital divide remains between developed and developing nations’.

**B. What policies and programmes have driven progress?**

The SG then turned to the crucial task of looking at what worked, what did not, and what lessons we can learn going forward from these successes or failures. ‘More than a decade of experience has painted a revealing picture. Strong national ownership and well-managed policies, supported coherently by partners at all levels, has underpinned progress in achieving the millennium development goals. Policies that foster robust and inclusive economic growth, accompanied by measures to improve the access of poor and excluded people to quality basic services, have produced the gains in many countries’.

**Emphasizing inclusive growth, decent employment and social protection**

The report noted strong progress in East Asia, in several countries in Latin America and Africa which ‘have successfully combined economic growth and redistributive policies’. Inclusive economic growth with decent employment and decent wages has proven to be a prerequisite for achieving the Millennium Development Goals’. ‘Targeted investments in public health systems, fighting disease, education, infrastructure and agricultural productivity have all played important roles. These interventions work in a synergistic way and are therefore highly effective in integrated development programs. Cash transfers targeting poor and marginalized families have also bolstered progress’.

A number of examples of good practice are cited, such as reforms to the agricultural sector in East Asia which ‘have lifted hundreds of millions out of extreme poverty’. This is alongside increases in social spending, expanded social protection and a raising of the minimum wage in the region. Also policies promoting rural development have reduced poverty, increased food consumption, increased household spending on health and education as well as debt reduction.
and asset creation. Programmes that ‘have combined increased food production and distribution with skills training, microfinance, land distribution and nutrition education programmes have had positive impacts on child mortality and maternal health’.

Allocating more resources for essential services and ensuring access for all

‘To accelerate progress on education, some countries have eliminated school fees and reduced the indirect costs of schooling’. Programmes targeting orphans and other vulnerable children with vouchers for books and uniforms have been useful in Africa and the Middle East. In West Africa investments in infrastructure with female literacy programmes helped ‘to overcome resistance to girl’s education in rural areas’ and ‘led to a significant increase in the rate of enrolment of girls in primary schools’. ‘Achieving the parity target by 2015 is within reach if entrenched gender disadvantages can be overcome, particularly in countries where early marriage remains pervasive’.

The SG also described how ‘Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have launched nationwide midwifery schemes to train and deploy tens of thousands of front-line health workers to accelerate progress in preventing maternal and child mortality. Improved national strategies, supported by additional financial resources, have contributed to faster progress on the Millennium Development Goals in the area of health, in many countries’. The SG cites the Global Fund to fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Global AIDS Vaccine Initiative (GAVI) Alliance and the United States Presidents Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR) as having ‘played a major role, complementing national efforts’.

Policies such as providing access to healthcare at facilities nearby and free of charge in South Asia are mentioned, as well as similar programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa, which have helped to reduce child mortality in some countries. ‘Especially when special attention is given to reducing deaths from malaria, pneumonia, diarrhea and measles and to rapidly scaling up the provision of insecticide-treated bednets, measles vaccine and vitamin A supplements’.

The SG mentions that ‘National Initiatives have proven to be effective in achieving water and sanitation targets particularly in South-East Asia where partnerships between local governments, builders and community leaders have been launched. ‘Access to latrines has increased significantly, driven by community empowerment activities, strengthened institutions and a community hygiene campaign’.

Strengthening political will and improving the international policy environment

Ban Ki Moon identified a few of the dangers, such as ‘an urgent need to stop and reverse the two-year contraction of official development assistance and aid for trade, especially for the least developed countries’. This should be combined with cracking down on illicit money flows, returning stolen assets and stemming tax avoidance and evasion. The next danger he cites is the lack of progress in the Doha World Trade round. He urged members to ‘redouble their efforts to
reach a development-oriented conclusion’ and ‘improve duty-free, quota-free market access for products of least developed countries’. The third key area of concern states ‘A stronger partnership is also needed among governments, pharmaceutical companies, research facilities and philanthropic organizations to make essential medicines more affordable and available in public health facilities. Fourthly ‘Limiting and reversing the increase in the global temperature to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels in line with international agreements demands bold, coordinated national and international action’. The UNFCC provides the means to do this and ‘to negotiate an ambitious, legally binding global agreement by 2015 that will cover all countries of the world in a fair way. The situation calls for full and urgent adherence to what was agreed’.

Bolder measures are needed in relation to other environmental sustainability targets, such as biodiversity, water, land use and forests. The international community also needs to support efforts ‘to improve the transfer of and access to information and communications technology, as well as to lower its cost’. ‘The institutional and human capacity gaps will have to be addressed at the local level’.

‘The multi-stakeholder partnership model has emerged as a promising way to share burdens, catalyze action and bring all relevant actors to bear in addressing specific problems. We need to mobilize more action to deliver on commitments and exploit the full potential of the partnership approach’.

C. Accelerating progress towards the Goals to 2015

Ban Ki Moon states that, between now and 2015, we must focus on the ‘Goals that are most off-track and on countries that face particular development challenges, including the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing states and countries affected by or recovering from conflicts or disasters’. We must pay particular attention to the needs and rights of women, children, elderly, indigenous people, refugees, displaced families, people living with disabilities, those living in rural areas and urban slums.

For the SG, the Millennium Development Goals Acceleration Framework ‘is firmly rooted in national ownership and supports the systematic identification of bottlenecks and local solutions’. The report refers to a sub-Saharan African country where ‘an acceleration plan on maternal health is being implemented through the revised national reproductive health policy and protocol’. This plan is witnessing clever innovations such as the use of mobile phones to aid diagnosis and referrals and a partnership with the local transport associations to facilitate women in labour.

The SG points out an example where the sub-national level also can be highly effective. ‘In one South American country, provinces and municipalities are implementing acceleration plans to address local priorities, such as poverty reduction and the economic empowerment of women, where progress lags behind the national level’. The 1 Billion MDG Initiative of the European Union which supports countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific countries is helping those
countries that are seen to be most off track in terms of meeting the goals related to eradicating hunger, improving maternal health, curbing child mortality and improving access to water and sanitation. ‘Nearly 50 have been supported to date’.

The SG singled out local initiatives, such as the African Union Commission Roadmap, adopted in 2012, which is based on ‘shared responsibility and global solidarity to accelerate progress in the response to HIV, tuberculosis and malaria. The actions in the roadmap are organized around three strategic pillars: diversified financing, access to medicines and enhanced health governance’. ASEAN also adopted a similar roadmap for the attainment of 5 MDG goals ‘focusing on five key areas: advocacy and linkages, knowledge, resources, expertise and regional cooperation’. Another programme he mentions is the ‘Every woman - Every child’ multi-stakeholder partnership which ‘seeks to save the lives of 16 million women and children by 2015’. $20 billion in funding was secured by the UN from 250 different partners ‘including governments, multilateral organizations, the private sector and civil society. There is also the ‘Committing to child survival: a promise renewed’ partnership between UN and Governments which ‘was launched to reduce the under-5 mortality rate to fewer than 20 deaths per 1,000 live births in all countries by 2035’.

Examples of good practice cited by the SG in other fields include the ‘Sustainable Energy for All’ initiative launched in 2011 which ‘aims to provide universal access to modern energy, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency and double the share of renewables in the global energy mix, all by 2030’. $50 billion dollars has been committed so far and over 70 countries have signed up. Another example is ‘The Zero Hunger Challenge’ that ‘calls for universal access to adequate food year round, steps to prevent childhood stunting, a sustainable transformation of food systems, a doubling of productivity and incomes among small farmers and drastic reductions in food losses and waste’. A complementary effort in dealing with malnutrition and child stunting is the ‘Scaling up Nutrition’ Movement, which has engaged governments, civil society, the UN system, business and researchers and is operating in more than 40 countries.

Other projects mentioned in the report include the “Global Education First’ Initiative and ‘The Call to Action on Sanitation’ which ‘has provided new momentum on an area that has received inadequate attention’. The SG then mentioned the inroads made in tackling malaria through the campaign for universal access to bednets and the ‘One Million Community Health Workers Campaign’ in sub-Saharan Africa which ‘is expected to be critical in generating gains across the health-related Millennium Development Goals’.

Ban Ki Moon made an urgent plea: ‘The replenishment of the Global Fund in the third quarter of 2013 will be of decisive significance for continued progress against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. I call upon all donors, public and private, to do their part to support the fund at this moment of utmost urgency as well as opportunity’. He then highlighted a new initiative: ‘Multi-stakeholder arrangements have proven successful because they expand on traditional partnerships by significantly increasing available resources, improving the effectiveness of their use and
increasing policy and operational coherence. To build on these advantages, I have put forward a proposal to Member States for a United Nations Partnership Facility, which would aim to enhance the Organization’s ability to facilitate delivery at scale at both the global and country levels’.

D. Making the transition to a new sustainable development agenda that builds on the Goals

‘Since the Millennium Development Goals were devised, major new challenges have emerged, while existing ones have been exacerbated. Inequality has deepened. Environmental degradation has increased, threatening our common future. People across the world are demanding more responsive governments and better governance and rights at all levels. Migration challenges have grown, and young people in many countries face poor prospects for decent jobs or livelihoods. Conflicts and instability have halted or reversed progress in many countries, affecting primarily women and children. Organized crime, including trafficking in people and drugs, violates human rights and undermines development. The deepening ways in which the lives of people and countries are linked demand a universal agenda addressing the world’s most pressing challenges and seizing the opportunities of a new era’.

III. Advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015

A. Vision and transformative actions of the agenda

Ban Ki Moon maintained, ‘The articulation of a post-2015 agenda provides an opportunity to place sustainable development where it should be: at the core of humankind’s pursuit of shared progress. With a new sustainable development agenda, the world can make historic achievements: eradicating extreme poverty by 2030, protecting the environment and promoting social inclusion and economic opportunities for all’.

The SG strongly acknowledged: ‘Decisions on the shape of the next agenda rest with Member States’. He also mentioned his High Level Panel report ‘and recommends it as an important contribution to this process’. He alluded to ‘consultations in nearly 100 countries, global thematic conversations on 11 issue areas and a global online conversation and ‘My World’ survey. These efforts have reached more than a million people. A large number of civil society organizations and academic institutions worldwide have also actively participated in the discussions’.

The expertise of the scientific and technological community is being harnessed through the ‘Sustainable Development Solutions Network’, the expertise of the International Business community through the ‘Global Compact’ and all of these help to feed into the work of the ‘Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals’. Ban Ki Moon stated, ‘The common ground in the findings of these processes is encouraging. Discussions point to the importance of arriving at a single and coherent development agenda centered on sustainable development, applicable to all countries while taking into account regional, national and local circumstances and priorities’.
'The key elements of the emerging vision for the development agenda beyond 2015 include: (a) universality, to mobilize all developed and developing countries and leave no one behind; (b) sustainable development, to tackle the interlinked challenges facing the world, including a clear focus on ending extreme poverty in all its forms; (c) inclusive economic transformations ensuring decent jobs, backed by sustainable technologies, to shift to sustainable patterns of consumption and production; (d) peace and governance, as key outcomes and enablers of development; (e) a new global partnership, recognizing shared interests, different needs and mutual responsibilities, to ensure commitment to and means of implementing the new vision; and (f) being fit for purpose, to ensure that the international community is equipped with the right institutions and tools for addressing the challenges of implementing the sustainable development agenda at the national level’.

“Bringing this vision to life will require a number of transformative and mutually reinforcing actions that apply to all countries’. They are the following:

- Eradicate poverty in all its forms;
- Tackle exclusion and inequality;
- Empower women and girls (The SG states that women and girls must have equal access to all services and mentions sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights);
- Provide quality education and lifelong learning;
- Improve health (again reference is made to ‘realize women’s reproductive health rights and interestingly road accidents are mentioned among the issues that need to be addressed in future in this area),
- Address Climate Change;
- Address environmental challenges;
- Promote inclusive and sustainable growth and development;
- End hunger and malnutrition;
- Address demographic challenges (It is mentioned that ‘More than a billion people rely on international and domestic migration);
- Enhance the positive contribution of migrants;
- Meet the challenges of urbanization;
- Build peace and effective governance based on the rule of law and sound institutions;
• Foster a renewed global partnership.

‘The transformative actions of the post-2015 agenda should be supported by multi-stakeholder partnerships that respond to the sustainable development agenda. These should include not only governments but also businesses, private philanthropic foundations, international organizations, civil society, volunteer groups, local authorities, parliaments, trade unions, research institutes and academia’ (NOTE: No specific mention is made of Faith Based Organizations).

The SG said. ‘Official development assistance will remain crucial’ and ‘In addition to delivering on past commitments, it will be critical for donors to establish a timetable for meeting official development assistance targets and enhancing development effectiveness, including through the principles and actions set out in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. The impact of official development assistance can be magnified by other sources of finance, including innovative sources’.

Ban Ki Moon stated that a robust network of both public and private finance will be necessary to fund Sustainable development. ‘International efforts are needed to create an environment conducive to business and thus capital flows and portfolio investments to the sustainable development agenda, to eliminate illicit financial flow, to enhance the regulation of secrecy jurisdictions and to promote asset recovery. Multilateral development banks have an important role to play in identifying novel sources of sustainable development financing’.

‘At the same time, the financing framework for the post-2015 period will require the mobilization of domestic resources, including by broadening the tax base and improving tax administration, including in developing countries, and improving corporate and public governance of extractive industries in resource-rich countries’ The SG acknowledged that this ‘will require commitment by the public and private scientific and research communities to develop new and transformative communities. Harnessing science, technology and innovative methods will be central in areas ranging from information and communications technology to transportation, the environment and life-saving sciences’.

The SG calls for more ‘South-South’ and ‘triangular cooperation,’ as well as strengthening the international development cooperation framework. ‘Both national and international institutions need to be strengthened to overcome the institutional and operational separation between economic, social and environmental responsibilities’.

**B. Comprehensive monitoring framework and robust accountability mechanisms**

Ban Ki Moon clearly stated: ‘Strong monitoring and accountability will be crucial for the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. Governments, especially parliaments, will play a crucial role. The monitoring and accountability framework can be strengthened through the direct engagement of citizens and responsible business making use of new technologies to expand coverage, to disaggregate data and to reduce costs’. He pointed out that ‘there is an urgent
need to further improve data collection, dissemination and analysis’. Better baseline data and statistics are needed because, for post-2015, a broader range of indicators will be measured ‘requiring new and disaggregated data to capture gaps within and between population groups. ‘Assessing the quality of outcomes should also feature more prominently in a results-based framework. As suggested by my High-level panel, targets will be considered to have been achieved only if they are met for all relevant income and social groups’.

‘In this context, the advances in information technology over the past decade provide an opportunity for a ‘data revolution’, which should enable countries to strengthen existing data sources and develop new and participatory sources of information. Many developing countries will require technical and financial support to build solid statistical systems and capacity’.

C. Setting goals for the agenda

‘Experience with the Millennium Development Goals show us that goals can be a powerful way of mobilizing common action. To be effective, they need to be limited in number, measurable, easy to communicate and adaptable to both global and local settings’. ‘The many consultations and reports suggest that a single, balanced and comprehensive set of goals, universal to all nations, which aims to eradicate all forms of poverty and integrate sustainable development in all its dimensions, should form the core of the agenda. ‘The framing of the set of goals for sustainable development will inevitably need to be broader than that of the Millennium Development Goals in order to reflect new challenges’. ‘Goals and targets should take into account cross-cutting issues such as gender, disability, age and other factors leading to inequality, human rights, demographics, migration and partnerships. The new goals should embrace the emphasis on human well-being and include the use of metrics that go beyond standard income measures, such as surveys of subjective well-being and happiness, as introduced by many countries and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’.

D. Towards the formulation and launch of the agenda

The SG requested that the 2013 General Assembly consider all the different reports submitted from both within and outside the UN system. He also expressed the wish that Member States will call a summit in 2015 to take final decisions on the agenda and will request another interim report to be submitted by March 2014. Ban Ki Moon suggested that the upcoming UN meetings and summits should be perceived as venues for these ideas to be discussed and formulated since ‘Our goal must be to make 2015 a defining moment for people and the planet and to show that the United Nations and Member States, working together, can achieve’.

IV. Recommendations

Ban Ki Moon made 4 specific recommendations:

(1) ‘I call upon all Member States and the entire international community to take every step possible to achieve the Millennium Development Goals’;
(2) ‘I call upon Member States to adopt a universal post-2015 development agenda, with sustainable development at its core;

(3) ‘I call upon the international system, including the United Nations, to embrace a more coherent and effective response to support this agenda;

(4) I encourage Member States to provide clarity on the roadmap to 2015.

**V. Conclusions**

‘Acting upon the common challenges demands a renewed commitment to international cooperation. Multilateralism is being tested. The United Nations as a global beacon of solidarity, must do its part to strengthen collaboration and show that it can be effective in building the just, prosperous and sustainable world that people want and have a right to expect. Defining the post-2015 development agenda is thus a daunting yet inspiring and historic task for the United Nations and its Member States. In so doing we must continue to listen to and involve the peoples of the world. We have heard their calls for peace and justice, eradicating poverty, realizing rights, eliminating inequality, enhancing accountability and preserving our planet. The world’s nations must unite behind a common programme to act on these aspirations. No one must be left behind. We must continue to build a future of justice and hope, a life of dignity for all’.