

Economic and Social Council
High Level Segment
General Debate

**Statement of the Committee for Development Policy
to the Economic and Social Council on
Accountability for the Post-2015 Era**

by

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Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to present the CDP views on the transition from the current to the post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda. The theme is vast and complex. Thus, we decided to focus our contribution on how to strengthen the accountability framework for the successful implementation of the agenda.

Mr. President,

The CDP has dedicated considerable efforts to the possible contours of the post-2015 agenda for the past years. In 2013, we examined possible principles and suggested alternative policy strategies, at the national level, to make reality the vision of the future we want for all: a just and fair future; a future free from want. But in view of the greater globalization and integration of the world economy, national policies are not sufficient to ensure our shared goals will be achieved. Thus, in 2014 we shifted attention to the international environment, and indicated how inter-governmental cooperation could be further strengthened, and global rules further improved, to better manage the increasing interdependence among countries.

However, identifying national and international policies that are conducive to the implementation of a shared development agenda does not guarantee our common objectives will be met. We need to acknowledge that the commitments Member States will make in September are voluntary in nature, but morally binding. Firstly,

because governments are accountable to the people to whom these commitments are being made. Secondly, because governments are also accountable to each other as partners that are working together for common global goals. Thus, an effective monitoring and accountability mechanism needs to be in place to track policy implementation, to assess progress made, and to hold States and other multiple stakeholders –including multilateral organizations, civil society organizations, the private sector and private foundations– accountable for commitments made.

We also need accountability of a different nature: one that goes beyond the mechanical assessment of how fast countries are closing the gap towards agreed global thresholds. A desirable accountability mechanism should monitor progress towards agreed objectives, examine obstacles to implementation, identify successful approaches, and provide guidance on changes needed to fix ineffective policies.

Mr. President,

While the sustainable development goals (SDGs) are universal in character, countries need to adapt them to their national contexts, taking into account their specific sets of constraints and opportunities. This requires a process of democratic consultation, which should include national parliaments and civil society. Countries also need to specify their global commitments to create an enabling environment for sustainable development worldwide. The adaptation of global goals into national targets ensures ownership and facilitates answerability by all stakeholders to citizens and to the global community. It also enables this accountability framework to be an inclusive, transparent and participatory bottom-up process.

In this regard, the CDP recommends the Council to invite member States of the United Nations to prepare, and make public, their national commitments to achieve the sustainable development goals, adapt the targets to their national context, and design appropriate policies to meet these targets nationally and contribute to their achievement at the global level.

The nature of the goals and targets should also be a subject of concern. We are concerned at CDP with the emphasis on quantifiable targets for monitoring implementation. While quantifiable targets are useful to help monitor progress towards agreed objectives, monitoring should not be reduced to what can be measured. Some of the world's aspirations for the post-2015 era cannot be expressed in numbers; thus, a qualitative analysis of progress, constraints and challenges is also necessary. Without the qualitative analysis, certain crucial issues, such as global

governance and the correction of injustices present in the global economic system, will be sidelined in the development debates.

Mr. President,

How can we create the mechanisms for “accountability for results and constructive change?”

The CDP believes that the follow up, review and monitoring of the implementation of the new development agenda should be a bottom-up process. As such, it should rely on existing national accountability mechanisms, which should also include local and regional governments. The national framework, however, should be fully integrated with the international accountability framework, in a cross fertilization process. This is important particularly in those instances where national accountability systems are not yet fully developed or operational.

At the international level, the regional layer of monitoring and accountability would be, in our view, the best context for peer reviews and other forms of horizontal accountability. This layer should be facilitated by the UN regional Commissions, in the case of developing countries, and by the OECD in the case of developed countries. These peer reviews should not reflect the power imbalances in donor-recipient relations, but constitute a process where partners see themselves “as equals”. In this regard, we recommend the Council to instruct the United Nations Regional Commissions to facilitate the conduct of open, inclusive and participatory regional peer reviews on the implementation of the post-2015 agenda.

The national and regional processes would then converge to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). The Forum has been mandated by the General Assembly to provide political leadership and review implementation of sustainable development commitments. Thus, the Forum should be invited to focus its follow-up and review of progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments on the relevant aspects of the global partnership for sustainable development (SDG 17) that are necessary to support the implementation of those commitments.

Active social accountability, exercised by multiple civil society organizations at the national, regional and global levels, needs to be an essential component of the follow-up process at national, regional and global levels. In turn, it is essential that specific accountability frameworks should be put in place for the civil society organizations and the private sector as well.

Given the complexity of the post-2015 agenda, it would be necessary to undertake the annual follow-up exercises by ECOSOC with a thematic focus, while reflecting the three dimensions of sustainable development. ECOSOC is recognized as the “principal organ in the integrated and coordinated follow-up of the outcomes of all major conferences and summits”. It could mandate its main subsidiary bodies to undertake specific responsibilities for the much closer follow-up of specific development goals, which should be integrated with their own follow-up of the global conference and summits under their purview.

Review and accountability processes must be supported by a strong monitoring system at both the regional and global levels. Because monitoring exercises should have a certain level of independence and impartiality, this responsibility should be given to the UN Secretariat, including the secretariats of the regional commissions and of other relevant organizations of the UN system. The HLPF, including when convened under the auspices of ECOSOC, and the Council’s own Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), should be the “institutional homes” for governments to assess the monitoring reports and the recommendations prepared by the national and regional processes.

A robust information system is required. For a vast majority of SDG targets, reliable timely and accurate information is currently lacking for a large share of developing countries, including most LDCs. This implies, foremost, strengthening the statistical capacities of developing countries to produce basic data about their own economic, social and environmental conditions should take precedence over developing a more sophisticated information system. This is, if I may say, the most important element of any “data revolution” for the follow-up of the SDGs.

Mr. President,

The CDP is aware of the challenges the Council is facing at this historical crossroads for the UN. These are exciting times as governments and their partners commit themselves to a better future for all. The Council has an important role to play in monitoring and in providing guidance for the achievement of our shared aspirations. We at the Committee continue to be at your disposal to support you in this important task.

I thank you for your attention.