

**Concluding remarks by Mr. Andreas Riecken
Deputy Permanent Representative of Austria
at the**

**Expert Group Meeting on the role of the high-level
political forum on sustainable development in the
post-2015 development framework**

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Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hear that you have had excellent discussions during the last day and a half. My colleagues and the Secretariat have updated me. I am quite impressed by the scope of the discussions and the number of ideas you had.

I can sum up by saying that the discussions have been characterized by four dimensions:

First, a great sense of opportunity.

- Clearly, the elaboration of the post 2015 development agenda is generating much enthusiasm. The SDGs are beginning to take shape. They will enjoy broad ownership and be universal.
- The creation of the HLPF modernizes our international institutions so that they keep pace with the changes that the post 2015 development agenda will bring.
- The forum is the natural home for the future SDGs and the post 2015 development agenda. If we get it right, the forum can reinforce the UN. It can contribute to the major reform of the ECOSOC system. A strong forum means a strong ECOSOC.

Second, your discussions were marked by a sense of realism.

- The HLPF has a huge mandate. We must resist the temptation to multiply bureaucratic layers and duplicate what is done elsewhere. Furthermore, we must ensure a proper implementation of the Post-2015 agenda, based on the lessons learned from the MDGs. To enhance integration, the HLPF must engage actors and Government officials and actors from the economic and financial area, such as the World Bank and the IMF, together with those from the social and environmental sphere. This also is hard to achieve, but we have to and we will connect all the different players. We must ensure that the realities of all countries – large and small – are reflected in its work and outcomes.
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Third, your meeting was also characterized by a great sense of optimism.

- With the HLPF, we have a new kind of platform situated under the GA and ECOSOC. A platform that has the potential to rally decision makers and actors at the highest level. A platform that can provide a robust and inclusive review mechanism, thus boosting implementation. A platform that can promote coherence and actions in the UN system and the range of actors.
- Governments, major groups of civil society and other stakeholders are all committed to make the forum work for sustainable development. The business sector itself is increasingly rallying behind sustainable development objectives, as the presentation of the Global Compact showed. Partnerships have become important vehicles to achieve goals. Domestic private sector in developing countries may become the motor for development.

Fourth, one clearly gets a sense of direction from your discussions. Let me mention four points only:

- Firstly, the reviews of implementation which the forum will conduct as of 2016 are a tool not only to assure accountability, but also to accelerate sustainable development progress. They can allow governments to assess how they are organized and function as well as to learn from peers. They should focus on the SDGs and the post 2015 development agenda. As this agenda is universal, all countries, richer and poorer, must engage in the review. The forum can serve as “a locus of accountability” and encourage reviews and accountability in other forums. You spoke of the role of the regional commissions and of civil society in the reviews. We must ensure national ownership to the review, and thus, should build on their experience and the knowledge of domestic institutions such as parliaments and the national Courts of Audit. All actors should be held accountable. Monitoring must be forward looking. We must be ambitious in designing the reviews while learning from existing experiences including the National Voluntary Presentations.

- Secondly, we must build linkages between the forum and national institutions notably the sustainable development councils. The forum could look at how countries are progressing towards integrated policy making and governance.
- Thirdly, the deliberations at the forum must be informed by scientific findings, evidence from the country level and solid data. The Global Sustainable Development Report has a critical role in this regard.
- Fourthly, you discussed ways to engage Major Groups and other stakeholders in the work of the forum. The GA decided on very ambitious mechanisms to do this. We must now translate them into specific arrangements and routine working modalities and practices. We must create spaces in the forum for the major groups, including business, to interact with governments. Multistakeholder dialogues can serve this purpose. Discussions must reverberate in the outcomes of the forum.
- Beyond this, we should innovate and find ways to bring to the forum the voice of those who intervene daily on sustainable development and the concerns of poor people. Technology can help. If the HLPF is owned by many, it can drive change for all. Anyhow, we should be careful not to overload the agenda and leave space for emerging issues.

Your ideas and the directions you gave are very consistent with the way the President of ECOSOC approaches the forum. As you heard yesterday, he is very ambitious and committed to ensuring the success of the forum under the auspices of ECOSOC and the whole ECOSOC system. The President is committed to focusing the programme on issues such as universality and integration, implementation, and accountability. He wants to make sure that the doors are widely opened to civil society.

This is a transition year for the forum. But it is also a critical one, when we must shape the forum to become the robust platform we need under the auspices of the GA and ECOSOC to advance the implementation of the SDGs and the post 2015 development agenda.

Your discussions will help us all do just that

Thank you