

World Economic and Social Survey 2015

PROCEEDINGS

Of the

Expert Group Meeting

On

MDG Lessons for Post-2015

Thursday 26th and Friday 27th of February, 2015

Development Policy and Analysis Division

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

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Background and Context

The Development Strategy and Policy Analysis Unit (DPAD) of convened an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on 26 – 27 February, 2015 at the United Nations Secretariat in New York in preparation of the *World Economic and Social Survey 2015* (WESS 2015). The meeting brought together scholars and practitioners, as well as UN staff members, to review and discuss key policies and strategies that contributed directly or indirectly to the achievement of the MDGs as the global community prepares to enter the post-2015 era and transition from the MDGs to the SDGs. A list of participants is attached as Annex 1, and the Agenda of the EGM is attached as Annex 2.

Introduction and Objectives of the EGM

Comments by Mr. Pingfan Hong, Director, Development Policy and Analysis Division, UN-DESA

Mr. Hong welcomed participants to the meeting and apologized for the unanticipated absence of Mr. Lenni Montiel, ASG for Economic Development, DESA who was scheduled to offer introductory remarks to the group.

In presenting the broad background for WESS 2015, Mr. Hong stated that deliberations for post-2015 began about three years ago and that to date, three major milestones had been achieved: (1) the establishment of the Open Working Group (OWG) of the General Assembly on SDGs which, after one year of inclusive and intensive consultation had by the end of 2014 proposed 17 specific goals with 169 targets. Among these goals and targets there was a focus on sustainable development and eradication of poverty; (2) the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Finance had also delivered its report putting forward to policy makers more than 100 strategy options for effective sustainable development finance for policy makers, as well as recommendations for renewed global partnership for post-2015; (3) towards the end of 2014 the SG presented to the General Assembly his Synthesis Report which provided the full range of inputs available at that time for the post-2015 development agenda. Based on these achievements, the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 agenda had already started, with two sessions completed to date (each session being attended by a large group of member states and civil society.)

Mr. Hong stated that 2015 would be a critical year for global action regarding the transition from the UN development goals to the new regime of the SDGs. Three important high-level, international events will be held this year: the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (13-16 July, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia); the UN Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda (25-27 September, UN Headquarters, New York); and the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (30 November – 11 December, Paris, France). In order to support member states in their

discussions and decisions, the WESS 2015 (one of UN-DESA's flagship publications) has taken up a highly relevant and challenging topic – MDG lessons for post-2015 – the purpose of which is to answer two broad questions: (1) what policies and strategies have worked during the period of the MDGs, and (2) what lessons do they offer for the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda. Mr. Hong stressed that the focus of the publication was neither to formulate the development goals nor to evaluate the progress of the MDGs. Rather, it would analyse the key policies and strategies that contributed directly or indirectly to the achievement of the MDGs and draw policy lessons from the MDGs that could be used as a reference for implementation of the SDGs. There is no concrete attempt to formulate or prescribe policies for the SDGs; this is the primary task of member states and the national community in the years to come, and a process to which future issues of the WESS will contribute.

Mr. Hong continued by highlighting to the participants that the WESS team had reviewed some 700 to 800 MDG-related papers and reports in preparation of its current draft. The team did not aim at an exhaustive study of MDG experience, but rather at more of a meta-analysis (an analysis of the analyses that already existed) and, more importantly, to present this meta-analysis in an integrated framework.

A brief description of the layout of WESS 2015 and of each of the six chapters followed. Chapter 1, the introduction, gave a historic background of the MDGs and the linkages to global development thinking and practice, and defined the issues for the following five chapters. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 focused on economic, social and environmental policies for the achievement of the MDGs, respectively. Chapter 5 focused on governance institutions, peace and stability issues related to poverty reduction and attainment of other MDG targets, particularly health, education and gender related MDGs., and finally, chapter 6 related to global partnership for achieving MDGs. Mr. Hong pointed out that the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) were represented in the publication, and that the policy lessons of all the chapters were being laid out in this framework.

Mr. Hong explained that there were three levels of collaboration in the production of the WESS 2015. Firstly, a small team of DESA-wide focal points provided inputs from their respective divisions. At the second level, the wider UN-system was consulted on for its input, and on the last and very broad level, experts from outside the UN were engaged through meetings such as this. He reiterated that the key task for this two-day expert group meeting was for the participants to help the WESS 2015 team identify the major gaps in the analyses presented in this preliminary draft, from where the team would incorporate the comments and suggestions and submit a fully-revised draft to the DESA Editorial Board for a further round of comments. The final document was scheduled to be completed by early May 2015 and launched at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July.

First session: History, impact and framework of analysis

Summary of Presentation by Mr. Nazrul Islam, Team Leader, WESS 2015

Mr. Islam stated that the objectives of his presentation were to provide the historical background of the MDGs, explain the analytical approach that WESS 2015 was taking and finally, to give an overview of the lessons that had emerged thus far from the meta-analyses undertaken by the WESS 2015 team. The presentation was structured as follows:

1. Background of the MDGs
2. MDG implementation efforts at global level
3. MDG implementation efforts at national level
4. Analytical framework
5. Overview of lessons: (a) MDG impact on Development Thinking; (b) MDG lessons for data and statistics.

In summarizing the background of the MDGs, Mr. Islam stated that the MDGs were associated with and could be seen as representing a culmination of several processes that transitioned over the years from an exclusive focus on economic growth to human development and broader development outcomes. From the early years of UN engagement with development issues, to the decade of the 1990s which saw a number of related UN conferences, and thence to the formulation of the International Development Goals (IDGs), the Millennium Declaration and eventual MDGs, often a back and forth movement was observed among the various components. Mr. Islam posited that the MDGs had led to constructive and widespread discussion, whether they were agreed upon or not, and in spite of complaints of omissions and commissions. The discussion focused on important issues of universal poverty versus poverty in developing countries only; global versus national development; and implication of strategies.

Due to time constraints, Mr. Islam briefly touched on five key components of MDG implementation efforts at the global level (the work of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDG indicators and data development; discussions on financing MDGs, for example, at the Monterrey Conference; the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002; the 2005 World Summit; and the UN Summit on the MDGs in 2010) but spoke more in-depth about MDG implementation efforts at the national level. In this regard, he presented a graphical description of what he referred to as a fairly complicated process of adoption of the MDGs, with no one component of the process being more important than another and all interacting with one another. These lateral sub-processes were: (a) the decisions by the political leadership; (b) consultation with stakeholders and advocacy groups to forge consensus on data issues, renew political commitment, and enhance awareness and mobilize public support; (c) legislative changes to facilitate initial adoption and subsequent implementation of the relevant MDG; and (d) the incorporation of MDG goals and targets into national development planning and financing.

With respect to the analytical framework presented by the preliminary draft of WESS 2015, Mr. Islam stated that a close look at very important studies by notable experts revealed three main features of each: a focus on the impact of the MDGs; a before-and-after time comparison (either straightforward or using regression); and an exclusive focus on the final outcome of the MDG indicator, ignoring intermediate causal links. This, in his opinion, represented a “reduced-form” analysis. While there were notable strengths of these studies on MDGs, their narrowly focused reduced-form statistical approach made it difficult to determine causal connections and isolate the impact of the MDGs from other confounding factors. More specifically, Mr. Islam spoke of the overlapping effects on the MDG outcome from three sources: (A) policies prompted by the MDGs, (B) policies not prompted by the MDGs, and (C) changes in general conditions (for example, the global financial crisis of 2007-2008). Due to these multiple and overlapping determinants, it was difficult to isolate the effect of the MDG-prompted policies from that of others. In short, the problem lay in finding a way to correctly identify and place credit for development where it belonged, whether to the MDG policies or to other policies and conditions.

Mr. Islam said that in order to avoid these difficulties, WESS 2015 adopted a multidimensional framework of analysis focusing on MDG outcomes. It is aimed at delivering lessons for post-2015 development from MDG experiences regarding the following dimensions: development thinking (chapter 1); resource mobilization (chapter 2 on economic policies and chapter 6 on development cooperation and partnership); resource utilization (chapter 3 on social policies and chapter 5 on governance and institutions); integration with environment (chapter 4 on environmental policies); data, statistics and monitoring (chapter 1 on development thinking); and development cooperation (chapter 6 on development cooperation and partnership). While there were both strengths and weaknesses of the WESS approach, its largely descriptive discussion and qualitative analyses were better suited to derive policy recommendations and lessons, emphasizing the positive impacts the MDGs had on development thinking and outcomes.

Comments from Discussants

Ms. Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, New School for Research

Ms. Fukuda-Parr stated that the chapter was nicely written and read very well, but had some interventions that she felt could be strengthened in certain areas. She took the point that the purpose of the chapter was to frame the whole report and draw the lessons of the MDGs, but the purpose of the WESS should not be to applaud the MDGs as having done wonderful things but rather to identify what precisely were the actual strengths of the MDG instrument. The MDGs were a policy instrument, so analytically it would be helpful to think through the elements of the instrument and the ways in which they made a positive contribution, as well as those in which they might have detracted from the general purpose of development (sustainable, economic, social and environmental).

Ms. Fukuda-Parr raised the following issues: firstly, in general, the chapter should be harder-hitting on and less defensive of the MDGs. The MDGs would be used in the SDGs process, but the chapter needed to be more straightforward about critiquing their weaknesses. The other aspect of this was that conceptually the chapter seemed to suggest that the MDGs were planning targets when in Ms. Fukuda-Parr's opinion they were instead benchmarks for progress. The MDGs were objectives, not specific targets. This was an important distinction to make because the targets in themselves did not tell the whole story of what the priorities were, and further, no set of measurement indicators could adequately reflect a complex development objective.

Secondly, the chapter sought to identify the policy impact of the MDGs, but Ms. Fukuda-Parr stated that the MDGs were not supposed to have any kind of direct policy impact because they were not that kind of policy tool. The MDGs were more of a global, normative announcement and should be looked at in a broader, aspirational way. Analytically this needed to be clarified in the chapter.

Thirdly, regarding the lessons of the MDGs, the attempt by the chapter to use the MDG targets as national planning priorities and actual planning targets introduced confusion and distortion. As far as the future was concerned, one of the critical issues in the debates about the SDGs was figuring out how to marry nationally-relevant objectives and universal goals. So, the process of adapting the universal goals into some kind of national priority-setting was the key issue, and in this regard the chapter needed to be much clearer in identifying the lessons of the MDGs because in Ms. Fukuda-Parr's opinion the process was a failure and involved a lot of confusion (for example with respect to the Millennium Villages project). There should be a clearer message about the notion of national and global. The chapter talked about what individual countries did, but stopped short of actually identifying the lessons.

Finally, regarding the conceptual framework and thinking, Ms. Fukuda-Parr disagreed with the assertion in the chapter that the MDG framework was rights-based or that it promoted the agency aspect of capability. On the contrary, she felt that it submerged and subdued the agency aspect of capability and human rights, and argued that the MDGs basically represented a commodity framework that harkened back to basic needs and were a cover for neo-liberal policies.

Ms. Fukuda-Parr concluded by saying that WESS 2015 report presented a perfect opportunity to be much more clear and precise about positive and negative aspects of the MDGs.

Mr. Sanjay Reddy, New School for Research

Mr. Reddy stated that he agreed with all the points raised by Ms. Fukuda-Parr, but added a word of praise for the report as a meta-analysis of UN-led development efforts, which is not an easy endeavour. Although he agreed that the report is too gentle with the MDGs in various respects, since this was only a first draft, there was an opportunity to become less gentle, more of a truth-teller and less of a cheer-leader where the MDGs were concerned, which he saw at the role of the Division and of

the report in general. This would also serve to present a more proportionate and balanced basis for discussion.

Mr. Reddy also stated that the report stood in a great tradition of UN development research in that it was institutionally-aware, pragmatic, put human beings at the centre and was intellectually sophisticated and multidisciplinary, and that this was greatly appreciated. The report made a number of distinctions which were pertinent and ought to have been made a long time ago, for example the distinction between MDG-prompted policies versus those which were not. This was an elementary but important consideration to assessing whether the MDGs were a success. To some experts it was self-evident that they were, but if success were that obvious on some particular criterion, then it stood to reason that there ought to be a successor, so both sides had to be carefully addressed from a methodological standpoint because the thought that a comparison of trends in development performance before the MDGs were announced and adopted and after did not lead to the unqualified view that the MDGs had been responsible for any positive shifts. There were many other factors that could go into the analysis because as was pointed out in Mr. Islam's presentation there were ambient conditions that played a part, and these conditions were favourable in the first part of the MDG period and unfavourable toward the end.

One thing the report could do even if it did not take such a critical stance against the MDGs was to ask the question of what was the theory underlying the MDGs exactly. Why were development goals needed at all? Why were they needed then, and why are they needed now? It seemed to Mr. Reddy that it was not very clear what that theory was, but it seemed to have something to do with the idea that it was either the case that efforts to achieve certain desirable things were inadequate previously, or would have been inadequate in their absence, or that coordination was necessary and would take place to a greater extent in the presence of such goals. Mr. Reddy thought that clarifying what the implicit theory was would be useful in terms of analysing whether or not MDGs were successful in those particular respects, in particular because the authors champion such a process-centred view.

Mr. Reddy believed that the excellent history of the MDGs presented in the chapter was itself an important contribution because it brought out the fact that there were roots of the MDGs in the call for accountability in the way development resources were expended, and in the idea that there could be an expert-led theory of how to achieve development which was associated with the international development targets of the 1990s. Mr. Reddy posited that the crucial difference between defining what the SDGs might be and subsequently achieving them and what has happened with the MDGs was that a more democratic conception of how that specification was to take place and how they were to be gone about ought to be put more to the centre, and this first chapter as well as the report as a whole can, for that reason, make a very useful contrast and contribution.

Mr. Reddy suggested what he thought was the key methodological contribution of the chapter: the distinction between what the chapter called reduced-form and structural approaches to interpret whether or not the MDGs were successful. The essence of the distinction was that the structural

approach was one which attended to the causal mechanisms through which a particular outcome was generated as opposed to merely looking at what the outcome was. This was a very important contribution but was still somewhat inadequate because the idea of structural estimations still involved some notion of simultaneity, whereas what was put forward in the chapter was attending to the processes by which different outcomes emerge, which could involve enormous complexities that were not easy to specify or fully characterize (especially when dealing with the high level of interconnectedness of the MDGs). As such, what might be more useful for the chapter was “process-tracing”, something social science had proposed in recent years that went beyond the econometric approach of merely tracing presumed causal relationships between data or observations at different times, to attending to the processes often involved in the relations between different kinds of qualitative variables passing through institutions and political or other factors. Another concept drawn from social science that might be useful for the analytical aspect of the chapter was that of “analytical narratives”, which lend themselves to extracting a narrative from inextricable judgements about whether or not particular policies or goals have been effective. In any event, even analyses of the simple before and after kind, or more sophisticated ones involving controls did not seem to show definitively that the MDGs had been a success. So, from this standpoint it was far from obvious that an approach involving process tracing and case-study analysis would lead to widely-varying results.

Finally, Mr. Reddy addressed what he thought was a more technical concern in the chapter regarding the implicit theory of the MDGs: that the MDGs and development goals of this type in general ultimately involved a finite time horizon, but defining where one needed to be by a certain point in time was difficult to do given that one intended to exist beyond that point in time. This issue pointed to the need to embed appropriate development goals in the broader conception of the ultimate ends of development.

Ms. Nicole Rippin, German Development Institute

Ms. Rippin was unable to attend the meeting in person but offered the following comments based on the full draft of chapter 1 that was emailed to all participants in advance of the meeting:

- Page 3, second paragraph: In the sentence “The UN General Assembly has formulated the draft of a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals...”, “The UN General Assembly” should be replaced by “The Open Working Group (OWG)”. Also, reference to the report of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), *Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for the Sustainable Development Goals: Launching a data revolution for the SDGs*, which provided detailed suggestions for indicators for the 160 targets of the OWG, should be made.
- Pages 11 and 12: Try to avoid the title “In defence of MDGs” by using different/simpler sub-headlines, for example, “Weaknesses of the MDGs”, “Strengths of the MDGs” and “Lessons learned” to describe the advantages and disadvantages of the MDGs.

- Page 14, end of the first paragraph: In pointing out how the “one-size-fits-all” interpretation of the MDGs had been disadvantageous to those countries that were farthest behind, it could be interesting to also refer to Klasen and Lange’s 2012 document, *Getting Progress Right: Measuring Progress Towards the MDGs Against Historical Trends*. In their paper, the authors evaluated the progress that countries made towards the MDGs against the progress that could be expected according to the transition path, that is, the path that every country followed more or less strictly on its way towards increasing development. They found that many African countries made considerable achievements. For instance, Angola, Ethiopia, Guinea, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique and Niger were clear over-performers with regard to under-five mortality (MDG 4) as their achieved progress distinctly exceeded expected progress. Nevertheless, due to their unfavourable starting conditions, they were still considered as failures according to the current formulation of MDG 4.
- Page 15, last sentence of the first paragraph: To further substantiate the statement, “This is all the more important because the post-2015 goals are also likely to be put forward without any accompanying recommendation regarding strategies and policies.”, reference should be made to the “Means of Implementation” that had been suggested for every SDG by the Open Working Group (OWG) as a recommendation for the implementation of the SDGs. The Technical Support Team (TST) defined these “Means of Implementation” in *Means of Implementation; Global Partnership for achieving sustainable development* as “the interdependent mix of financial resources, technology development and transfer, capacity-building, inclusive and equitable globalization and trade, regional integration, as well as the creation of a national enabling environment required to implement the new sustainable development agenda, particularly in developing countries.”
- Page 20: Under the heading “Incorporation of MDGs in national plans, strategies, visions, and budget”, it might be worthwhile to mention that almost all of the countries that were mentioned in this chapter were donor-dependent. It had often been questioned whether the implementation of the MDGs in these countries were a result of real national commitment or rather, an effort of “speaking the language” in order to secure donor support. For instance, ECA’s note for the High Level Panel discussion on “Articulating a Post-2015 MDG Agenda” (2012) came to the conclusion that the lack of ownership in many developing countries had hampered progress towards the MDGs. Especially with regard to the PRSPs mentioned on page 21 of Chapter I, ECA stated that, “Although many low-income countries have linked their national strategies and PRSPs to the MDGs, their focus has often been found to be selective at best, suggesting that this compliance could be for mere ‘political correctness’.”
- Page 22: Under the heading, “Difficulties in assessing MDG achievement”, the chapter should include a sentence explaining that due to the lack of a counterfactual all assessments of MDG achievements could only be rather rough estimates.

- Page 24, first paragraph under the heading “Multidimensional framework for assessment and lessons of MDGs”: The statement, “It does not matter much whether the policies that helped to achieve MDGs were MDG-prompted or not.” was unfounded. As such, reference needed to be made to the focus of WESS 2015 in support of such a statement.
- Page 25, Figure I.2: Ms. Rippin stated that she was uncomfortable with the use of the terms “Resource mobilization” and “Resource utilization” because they represented a rather money-centred perspective. What about policies that were crucial for the achievement of the MDGs but required virtually no financial resources, such as the removal of severe discriminatory laws against women in Afghanistan, or laws to address violence against women in Bangladesh (both mentioned on p. 19), or the recognition of the “Rights of Nature” in the Constitution of Ecuador (mentioned on p. 21)? Such policies were, of course, part of the adoption of the MDGs rather than the implementation. However, on page 18 of the report, MDG adoption was treated as the first step in MDG implementation, and thus far it was not clear how these important MDG achievements were taken care of in the analytical framework as illustrated in Figure I.2.
- Page 26, second paragraph under the heading “Correspondence between the analytical framework and the chapters”: It was noticed that “chapter II focuses on MDG lessons regarding economic policies; chapter III focuses on MDG lessons regarding social policies...” and in Ms. Rippin’s opinion such a clear distinction between economic policies for resource mobilization and social policies for resource utilization sounded like economic growth was boosted in order to mobilize resources that were afterwards redistributed in order to promote social development. However, such a point of view did not sufficiently account for concepts such as inclusive growth that combined economic and social policies in an effort to increase economic growth in a way that was directly beneficial to the worst-off (rather than indirectly beneficial through redistribution).
- Page 26, under the headline “MDG impact on Development Thinking”: Ms. Rippin stated that it was not so clear, firstly, what was understood by the term “development thinking” (the headlines suggested evaluative and agency aspects, “rights-based” approach, “political economy” and unwarranted impact) and how the MDG influence on development thinking was measured. An elaboration on the latter in particular was crucial as many of the impacts that were identified in this chapter were in direct contradiction with the findings of other studies. For instance, Jan Vandemoortele, in his *If not the Millennium Development Goals, then what?* (2011), claimed that “the MDGs were meant to broaden the development narrative beyond the narrow growth paradigm”. However, he found that “[w]hile the rescue [of the Millennium Declaration] has been quite successful, the search for a broader interpretation of development has failed.” Also, the conclusion that the MDGs advanced the “agency” aspect of development and emphasized “national ownership” (p. 27) was

contradictory to the general impression that, due to their top-down approach, the MDG framework undermined ownership of and commitment to the goals (e.g. Vandemoortele, 2011; ECA, 2012).

- Page 29, sub-section “MDG lessons for data and statistics”: Ms. Rippin felt that this sub-section was rather brief and lacked some important aspects. For instance, according to the analytical framework on page 25, the focus of the sub-chapter should not only be data and statistics but also monitoring. Also, there was no reference to the 100 indicators suggested by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) that would be part of the negotiations in New York City. Also, it could be mentioned that the MDGs had to cope with whatever data were available when they were formulated. This could have serious implications. For instance, due to a lack of data, the initial MDG target that sought to increase the “proportion of households with access to secure tenure” was replaced by the target to achieve a “significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers”. Due to its unspecific formulation, the latter even implied human rights violations, for instance in the case of Vietnam whose Fourth MDG Report (*Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*, 2005, p. 48) listed slum clearance among the country’s efforts in achieving the MDGs. As a consequence, in the post-2015 agenda the selection of indicators was not primarily based on data availability but rather on finding appropriate indicators for which data would be gathered in case they were not yet available. This resulted in the SDSN report often suggesting indicators that were “to be developed”. Finally, the MDG concentration on national averages proved disadvantageous as the MDGs were unable to catch whether progress had been achieved through improvements of the situation of the poor or through additional improvements of the situation of the wealthy and privileged. As such, the UN Secretary-General’s synthesis report (*The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet, Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda*) required that each target should only be considered ‘achieved’ if it were met for all relevant income and social groups – meaning for the poorest and most socially-disadvantaged parts of the population as well as for the richest ones. This implied a disaggregation of all relevant indicators with respect to income, gender, location, age, people living with disabilities, and relevant social groups.

Open discussion

Before opening the floor for general discussion, Mr. Hong stated that the purpose of the report was to be as objective as possible without being unduly flattering or critical of the MDGs. He also reminded the in meeting that the report did not seek to evaluate the formulation of the MDGs per se but to focus on the implementation.

Mr. Binayak Sen

Mr. Sen offered what he called views from the ground level. There were some positive externalities of the MDGs discourse, especially in the way they catalysed the political imagination at the ground level. Prior to that, the approaches to development were more market driven/globe driven, but when it came to basic targets like reducing infant mortality or improving girls' schooling, one had to think about service delivery. In this regard, the MDGs leveraged increased attention to three aspects: (1) most of the MDGs goals and targets required some pronounced participation of women and the population at large, so they indirectly paid attention to the social and economic empowerment of women, even in conservative cultures; (2) in spite of weak states and problematic governments, the MDGs were still able to leverage greater attention to sectoral governance issues and attempted to fix some political goods. One could say that the MDGs became like political goods. So, for example, even if an entire education system was not fixed, at least some part of the system that intended to deliver increased education to girls was greatly improved; and (3) the deficiencies of the MDGs led to greater awareness and knowledge of what needed to be done in the next stage. So, in a way, the MDGs motivated further discussion on what needed to be taken up in the later stages. The MDGs did not declare themselves the ultimate end or final product, but they leveraged processes that could lead to other goals like better agencies or better political buy-in and political agreements around the MDGs.

Mr. Ivo Havinga

Mr. Havinga stated that with respect to data issues, it was important for chapter 1 to raise the issue that policy and data were more or less on par with each other in terms of the discourse that we should have on the MDGs. It was important to reposition data, statistics and information to form part of the broader context of all countries' discussion on development.

Further, an important aspect in terms of elaborating on the preliminary draft of WESS 2015 was that we know where we are now with respect to the MDGs and the universal agenda on the whole and try to enhance our input to move beyond current MDG positions. For example, Mr. Havinga was of the opinion that the desire to move towards a universal rights-based agenda was born out of the discourse on the universal agenda, and that moving forward it was important to establish whether the MDGs represented a technocratic approach to development or a political economy approach. Experts had not yet agreed on this fundamental issue, but it was now widely accepted that there was a different way of looking at development in that it was no longer an issue around developing or transition countries, but more of an inclusive development in which the interconnectedness had now reached a level that required global actors to understand that development could not be achieved alone. Mr. Havinga agreed that education, for example, should not be looked at from a single dimension or in a technocratic way, and that countries should not pursue targets but rather the broader issues surrounding them. They should understand the universality of the problem. In this regard, he stressed the importance of raising the influence of globalization very early in the report because it showcased more clearly the interconnectedness of the problem that was critical to the understanding of the report itself. The idea was really about an understanding of broader global partnership (and not a technocratic approach to targets) that countries now had to embrace at the national level, realizing that choices had to be made in an interconnected world. Without this, the opportunities for the kind of development that

was sought would be missed. It was this interconnectedness of the universal agenda that needed to be pushed in the report.

Mr. Laszlo Pinter

Mr. Pinter spoke of the importance of bringing out at the beginning of the report that the MDGs were a product of a process at a certain point of time when globally speaking society was at an age where the human system and the physical system were already very strongly coupled, but the political process was decades back in terms of understanding that close coupling and the risks associated with that. It was important to show that kind of disconnect in the report. What was done in the case of the MDGs was what was politically feasible at the time. Now, more was being done in the SDGs because more was understood about the risks of the underlying physical realities. The MDGs were an early, fragmentary attempt to build up governance systems and a wider system to deal with issues. Further, what was important to raise in chapter 1 was that going back to the first global summit on sustainable development, the MDGs did not even reflect much of the early thinking of the early 1990s on the systems perspective.

Ms. Inga Winkler

Firstly, with respect to the MDGs promoting a rights-based approach, Ms. Winkler saw the issue as being more complex than what was portrayed in the draft chapter, and that there was a lot of overlap that needed to be acknowledged about what human rights and the MDGs sought to achieve. However, on the other hand, she hesitated to add more of the issue to the body of the chapter for fear of complicating it. Still, she mentioned the large body of literature from the human rights perspective looking at, inter alia, what was included and not included in the MDGs. These pointed to the fact that while the MDGs and human-rights approaches may have been developed simultaneously, they were not the same thing.

Ms. Winkler's second point concerned the important and much-appreciated distinction between MDG-prompted policies and those that were not prompted by the MDGs. This she said was a great starting point, but that she was unclear as to where this was to lead. She was not proposing quantitative arguments about what could and could not be attributed to the MDGs, because this was impossible in her opinion, but there needed to be some way of making these linkages because just speaking to all that happened during the MDG period may result in an over-optimistic view of the MDGs. In this regard, she agreed with Mr. Reddy about the need to trace the processes at a deeper level in an attempt to determine what the narratives were. From the perspective of agency and human rights, the crucial question was whose narrative was it, keeping in mind that more than one narrative perhaps existed due to the complicated nature of the issues. This would be a great contribution of the report.

Mr. Michael Cohen

Mr. Cohen stated that he was struck by the assumptions of rationality in the story presented in chapter 1, that there was some sort of logical process about how things developed. However, as was raised by Mr. Reddy earlier, the question of what were the underlying theories of development behind these could be brought out more, giving a more heterogeneous picture of what was happening. There was a diversity of opinion, even within the UN system. It seemed to him that the narrative presented could be one of more diverse and heterogeneous experiences. This led him to the question about the choice of individual MDGs. He said that he was particularly offended by what he saw as arbitrary decisions made by technocrats at a given point in time that were not based on theories of development. He stated that part of the problem of putting the story together and understanding it lay in understanding the multiplicity of influences which generated what we had now.

Mr. Pingfan Hong

Mr. Hong took a moment to reiterate that there was a difference between goals and targets.

Mr. Casper Edmonds

Mr. Edmonds started by saying that the MDGs were many things to many different groups of people, and this was an important consideration for the SDG talks currently underway. We ought to acknowledge the multidimensional nature of this beast that was being negotiated and created now. He strongly supported two comments raised earlier, about being mindful in saying that the MDGs promoted a rights-based approach. While there were some overlaps with social and cultural rights, there were many other rights that were not promoted. Again, we needed to distinguish between two levels: one was the recognition that this corresponds to a rights-based agenda that was already in existence and the other, the implementation of certain national goals and national plans where the rights-based approach was, in most instances, dropped.

Mr. Edmonds noted the attempt by the report to look into the translation of MDGs into national plans and policies. He thought it could be interesting to see how these were just translated into the UN's own development assistance framework. Another important aspect that needed to be highlighted more in the chapter was to address what the MDGs did for institutions of development. He agreed that they did a lot to the development thinking, although not necessarily positive since they seemed to promote a technocratic approach, but what have they done for institutions and offices that had been set up around different goals to pursue different things?

Finally, Mr. Edmonds stated that we live in a very different world from when the MDGs were defined and adopted, and this links to earlier comments on globalization and technological change. So while some of these policies were certainly relevant, a lot more has changed and future policy recommendations would have to reflect the changing times.

Ms. Shahrashoub Razavi

Ms. Razavi agreed with a lot of the points raised by the discussants but wanted to raise again the debate about the MDGs as ends and the outcomes that were expected to be achieved and did not say much about policies or how to get there, and the argument that this was not possible because we did not want to be prescriptive and take a one-size-fits-all approach. However, in a sense, there had been a debate in the literature that in doing that the MDGs did not want to enter the very contentious area of discussions around macro-economic policies and economic policies in particular on which the Bretton Woods and the UN were not in agreement and in a way plastered over the debates and just spoke of the end points. In effect, what happened was that it reinforced the common sense that was the default position and which was very much aligned with what the Bretton Woods institutions were already putting in place through PRSPs and other means.

In that sense, Ms. Razavi was curious about what the report wanted to achieve, and whether it wanted to stretch a bit further out from prescribing blueprints for policies and trajectories or whether, as a UN report we would dare to go a bit further and, based on normative principles, set out some policy principles in terms of what can be done. If we were to take human rights seriously, this approach had implications for what could be said if the objective were to achieve universality of rights and inclusiveness. Furthermore, in order to address implications in terms of macroeconomic and social policies and the role of the state and the kinds of resources that would have to be mobilized to enable the kind of public service reach that was envisioned in the MDGs, then she suggested that the report might go a little bit further than just endorsing the idea that goals were about end points and step out into the policy arena by at least spelling out some policy principles for member states with the caveat that the intention was not to offer a prescriptive formula for development. This would be a good way to bring some of the UN experiences to bear on what could be put on the table for national governments to keep in mind.

Mr. Joreon Kwakkenbos

Mr. Kwakkenbos felt that an important challenge posed by the MDGs was the idea that “if it is not counted it does not count”, but went on to say that this challenge presented itself whenever targets were involved because they essentially limited the ability to be flexible. What would be particularly interesting in this conversation is an investigation of what the MDGs did for donor-funded policy coherence. There were many different goals and aspirational targets, but when we looked at the global economic system and macro-economic policies, how the MDGs were integrated into decisions and policies that donors have regarding these issues. Mutual accountability structures were critical to ensure that the achievement of the MDGs was done in a fair and structured manner, with accountability on both the partner side and the donor side. This should be reflected in any new framework that was developed.

Mr. Jos Verbeek

With respect to lessons learned, Mr. Verbeek raised three points. Firstly, the MDGs followed a sort of silo approach, trying to solve problems through separate goals and target, and one of the lessons

that came out of their implementation was that one could not just solve one issue without looking at how it interacted with another. One of the lessons going forward for the SDGs coming from the MDG era would be to pay greater attention to the interrelatedness of things and have a much more integrated approach to problem-solving. Secondly, going forward, for the SDGs to be universal, the targets should not be set at a minimum level of achievement. Otherwise developed countries could feel disenfranchised and opt out of the process altogether. Instead, the targets should aim at all children, or all women, for example. The targets should be as ambitious as possible, or at least have different benchmarks for different income groups of countries. Thirdly, regarding the framework of analysis, we saw from the MDGs that there were monetary and non-monetary targets, and while they required different approaches, it was also important to recognize that even within the monetary-based targets there was a distinction to be made because some required more action than just growth of income. For example, a farmer in a malaria-prone country could increase his economic standing if he received a higher income, but if service delivery was lacking in the health sector then he was still just as vulnerable to contracting Malaria. Mr. Verbeek hoped to see this kind of distinction made in the framework of analysis in the report.

Mr. Babatunde Omilola

Mr. Omilola raised two points: firstly, that after the MDGs were formulated it took several years in some countries before they were mainstreamed into national development strategies and policies, and an explanation of why this occurred was noticeably absent from the report. He called on the team to undertake such an investigation. Secondly, he thought that the report focused too much on the historical value of the MDGs, looking basically at what happened in the past and at the policies that were introduced. Instead, the report should be more forward looking. Granted, the SDGs would be formulated in 2015 whether we like it or not, so the key challenge was to determine the lessons to be learned from the MDGs that could be used to help properly define the SDGs and to clarify the connections between national development priorities and the global development agenda and how the latter would be mainstreamed into national priorities.

Mr. Brian Tomlinson

Mr. Tomlinson believed that the most positive thing about the MDGs was that they initiated a normative discourse that could be referenced for policy development by civil society activists and government actors alike. Frankly speaking, however, he felt that in the case of Canada (the vantage point from where he spoke) too much time had been spent fighting the MDGs. The Canadian government used the MDGs essentially as rhetoric to package what they had already been doing, which in some cases were good things like moving towards a social agenda in the late 1990s. So, trying to disaggregate this and say that the MDGs were meaningful in the context of policy development in Canada was impossible in his opinion. What could be more useful was to analyse how the MDGs affected the capacity to make more holistic advances in development, including a rights-based approach which in his view did not exist anywhere in most donor agencies or even in civil society in terms of the way in which they actually carried out development practice. As such, he

thought the report could tease out some of these issues in ways that would benefit the SDGs, which he feared could end up being like the MDGs, with hundreds of goals and targets reinforcing simple-minded results that already existed and that were politically motivated. He urged against just making assumptions about a holistic agenda because there were now many more goals and targets in the SDGs.

Mr. Nazrul Islam

Mr. Islam thanked the participants for their valuable comments and suggestions, and offered the following holistic response: (1) while the intention was not to be a cheerleader of the MDGs, one still had to keep in mind that this was a UN report. Nevertheless, a bigger effort will be made to strike a more balanced position; (2) similarly, regarding the influence of the MDGs on development thinking, the issues of agency and rights-based approach could be complicated in many respects; the same thing could mean completely different things to different people, so in this regard it was a rather subjective issue that depended on the vantage point from which people looked. Some experts may still argue that MDGs represented a top-down way of thinking, but from the viewpoint of a desperate young lady sitting in a remote village in Bangladesh or in Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, waiting for ante-natal care, the fact that her government and community were paying attention to her needs in terms of helping to give her the best chance at safe childbirth showed that the MDGs had a real and profound effect on advancing the development agenda. As such, instead of pursuing a romanticized view of agency and rights-based approach, perhaps we needed to consider for whom the MDGs were originally intended; (3) on the issue of MDG-prompted versus not-MDG-prompted policies, the idea was not to attribute all success to the MDGs but in fact the opposite. The distinction was introduced to show the difficulty of attribution and its implication for the methodology to be adopted..

Second session: MDG lessons regarding economic policies

Summary of Presentation by Mr. Pingfan Hong, Director, Development Policy and Analysis Division

Mr. Hong started by identifying the concepts behind sustained, inclusive and equitable growth as well as the nexus among growth, inequality and MDGs. In this view, sustained growth could be understood as robust and stable growth, and lasting for 2-3 decades. Inclusive growth implied that the majority of people participated and benefited from economic growth. Equitable growth meant the promotion of equality in opportunity and income. He added that there was an interdependency among these three features.

Mr. Hong demonstrated the nexus among growth, inequality and MDGs, through the use of several figures. The first showed the inverse correlation between under-5 mortality rate (per 1000 births) and GDP per capita (at PPP constant 2011 international \$) for different regions. More specifically, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia showed a relatively high under-5 mortality rate and low GDP per capita, while the opposite was the case for Middle East and North Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean: relatively lower under-5 mortality rate with higher GDP per capita. The

second figure showed a general positive correlation between GNI per capita (at PPP, constant 2-11 international \$) and access to improved sanitation facilities (% of population with access) for three groups of countries: resource-rich Sub-Saharan Africa, resource-poor Sub-Saharan Africa, and the 'Rest of the world'. Although, obviously, countries in the 'Rest of the world' had both higher GDP per capita and access to improved sanitation than Sub-Saharan Africa, on average, for every additional dollar in GNI per capita, resource-poor Sub-Saharan African countries had higher probability of access to improved sanitation facilities than resource-rich Sub-Saharan African countries. The third figure for the same country groups also indicated that, given positive growth in GNI per capita, resource-poor Sub-Saharan Africa would make relatively more progress on primary completion rate than resource-rich Sub-Saharan Africa. The fourth figure showed the non-linear relationship between the poverty head count change per person and the percentage of the initial poverty head count.

Mr. Hong continued with a framework to analyse the effect of economic growth on poverty reduction. Using poverty lines of \$1.25 and \$2.50 and the density functions for Sub-Saharan Africa, India and China (whose shape and area were partly defined by their respective poverty rates), simulation exercises showed the effects of a 20 per cent and a 50 per cent change in GDP growth on poverty reduction over time for the three regions, as well as the growth effect on poverty with improved inequality for Sub-Saharan Africa. Those exercises served to demonstrate that: (a) growth effect on poverty reduction in a country varied over time, (b) growth effect on poverty reduction varied across countries, (c) the estimates of "growth elasticity on poverty" by cross-country regression were biased, (d) headcount poverty underestimated the growth effect on poverty reduction, (e) meaningful poverty reduction required sustained growth, and (f) improved equality could enhance the growth effect on poverty reduction. Mr. Hong also presented a set of four figures indicating that lower levels of inequality (measured by the Gini coefficient) correlated positively with economic growth, while higher levels of inequality were associated with lower growth levels.

Following up on the analysis of conceptual issues and the dynamics among growth, poverty and inequality, Mr. Hong focused on the necessary conditions for sustained growth. He identified three elements: (a) high-level investment in physical capital, (b) investment in human capital, and (c) technological innovation, the analysis of which showed that investment/GDP ratio (%) correlated positively with GDP growth, with developed countries and leading developing economies having high investment/GDP ratios (25-35%), while on average most developing countries had relatively lower GDP growth rates and investment/GDP ratios (15-20%). He also underlined that managing broad macroeconomic stability was important for sustained economic growth, low inflation rates and building resilience to crisis.

On the policy side, Mr. Hong identified three areas to build macroeconomic stability: domestic stability, external shocks and stable international economic environment. Accordingly, policies would vary; for example, for domestic stability there were two types of policies to be considered: (1) monetary policy, encompassing a policy objective, instruments, and inflation targeting; and (2) fiscal policy, from pro-cyclical to counter-cyclical measures, fiscal rules and medium-term expenditure frameworks. Interventions for effective management of external shocks included a stabilization fund to

deal with volatile commodity prices; capital management to mitigate surge and reversal in capital flows; capital and financial account openness; and d) exchange rate policy and foreign reserves. To build a stable international economic environment, two main policies were suggested: international macroeconomic policy coordination, and reforms to the international financial system and global governance.

Mr. Hong also presented figures to demonstrate the adverse consequences of non-inclusive economic growth on limiting the progress of poverty reduction and MDGs such as access to improve sanitation and primary education completion rate. He suggested that inclusive growth could be achieved through the creation of productive jobs and cited three policy categories to make growth inclusive: (a) boosting labour demand by improving the business environment, reducing hiring costs, supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and supporting of aggregate demand; (b) building human capital by enhancing education and skills training, and matching skills with labour demand; and (c) lifting labour income and labour productivity through structural transformation, enhancement of labour-intensive sectors, and raising agricultural productivity. To make economic growth equitable, Mr. Hong proposed that there should be further improvements in the equality of opportunity and outcome. For example, between 1950 and 2010, the Gini coefficients of educational inequality by sex had been reduced in many regions in the world, although inequalities by sex remained higher in developing regions than in developed ones. More broadly, three categories of domestic policies could make economic growth more equitable: (a) improving equal opportunity through skills training, women's opportunity to employment, and equal access to capital, land, the justice system, infrastructure and jobs; (b) reducing income inequality through redistributive measures, and (c) social safety nets and social protection floors. Internationally, the improvement of equal opportunity for developing countries was suggested.

Mr. Hong remarked that there was a need for transforming the MDG growth pattern if one wanted to achieve the SDGs. In particular, current growth patterns had correlated with growth in CO₂ emissions in high-income and upper-middle income countries, and in order to effect this transformation countries first needed to account the full value of the environment by, for example, mainstreaming the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA). Secondly, there was a need for getting the prices right for environmental goods and services through taxes and regulations. Thirdly, the world needed effective, inclusive, equitable and environment-protecting institutions. Mr. Hong also underscored that the transition from *sustained*, inclusive and equitable growth to *sustainable*, inclusive and equitable growth reminded us that people-centred policies would continue to be important; high-level investment, human capital and technical innovation would have to be more focused on sustainable development; and the building of sustainable development infrastructure should be able to create green jobs. Accordingly, challenges and questions remained regarding policy prioritization and coordination, policy integration and the inclusion of environmental factors in macroeconomic policies.

Comments from Discussants

Mr. Sen noted that progress had to be reimagined at every stage of development before one could talk about achievement of progress. In this sense the three attributes of growth that the chapter presented – sustained, inclusionary and equitable – made important exclusions such as participation, cohesion and liberty. There were other important exclusions linked to the concepts proposed. For example, Mr. Sen asked why should 7% of GDP/GNP sustained growth over 2-3 decades be used as a cut-off point, an important question since only 12 countries met the criteria and in two separate periods since the end of the war. He remarked that a realistic target should be based on actual growth episodes of developing economies since 1990, using per capita GDP growth to set the cut-off point and not simply GDP growth. Moreover, growth should be distinguished from “transformative growth”, which could affect poverty reduction through enforcing pro-poor institutional and structural changes. Ultimately, was it the growth rate or the social changes unleashed by growth that needed to be sustained?

Mr. Sen added that the relationship between growth and growth elasticity needed to be taken into account. In fact, some countries had lower growth but higher growth elasticity and vice versa, and for poverty reduction (MDG 1), both growth rate and growth elasticity were important. In reference to the figure on poverty and density functions presented in chapter II, he questioned the usefulness of regional variation in growth elasticity? Why did high initial inequality in conflict countries have low elasticity? How much policy leverage was necessary to influence growth elasticity? A mere statistical explanation in terms of median income and density function was inadequate, and discussion should be on net and not gross growth elasticity because net elasticity took into account elasticity of change in inequality with respect to growth.

Mr. Sen also noted that the question on the elasticity of social indicators to growth should be worth pursuing. Even when growth mattered for social MDGs, more clarification was needed to identify whether growth or other factors were the drivers of development. Those factors included poverty, governance, citizenship, gender and public investment, e.g. on education and health. He also noted that more analysis on growth under unfavourable environments such as conflict, natural disasters and geographical disadvantages would be needed. Similarly, the importance of the middle class for sustained growth should be taken into account.

On inclusive growth, Mr. Sen requested more discussion and asked whether inclusiveness should be defined in terms of employment and “productive jobs”, citizen participation in decision-making, or what happens to inequality of outcomes. In addition, a more nuanced discussion of labour status such as own account versus wage labour was necessary, with special focus on vulnerable groups. Similarly, he suggested more discussion on inter-sectoral labour mobility, urbanization, international migration and formal/informal divide in labour markets. On equitable growth, he asserted that the Kuznets process was not inevitable, and that the chapter would need to summarize the most recent evidence and explain why inequality was not declining at a faster rate. He added that inequality of opportunities and outcomes must have equal weight in rating an economic growth regime.

On the policy side, Mr. Sen asserted that further attention should be given to inequality in completion rates and learning outcomes as well as to the problem of compensatory land distributive reforms. He wondered whether educational equality could compensate for land inequality in the long-run. Similarly, more discussion on wealth tax, inheritance tax and other direct tax instruments might be needed.

Mr. Sanjay Reddy/Ms. Ingrid Kvangraven, New School for Social Research

Ms. Kvangraven suggested expanding the time frame chosen for surveying the MDG experience, particularly because many indicators had already been performing well before the MDGs, particularly with respect to poverty. Moreover, experiences of higher growth could be found during the 1970s, so good policies should be found there. He suggested a more extended discussion on the theoretical foundations of the MDGs since the presentation of chapter II used theory. A shorter version of the many lessons drawn would also be advisable.

On economic growth, Ms. Kvangraven remarked that more space should be given to policies and the linkages between policies. Similarly, the chapter should assess the relations between different sectors of society such as between health and labour, and education and poverty, and that the description of these linkages should be part of the lessons learned. Finally, growth should be part of economic development and not the other way around.

Open discussion

Mr. Joroen Kwakkenbos

Mr. Kwakkenbos asserted that the creation of decent jobs was more important than productive jobs, and that in the chapter inclusive growth had not been fully defined in terms of how it should be placed within the MDGs context. He also suggested further discussion of fixed capital investments and the extent to which these can be done by public and private actors.

Mr. Cohen

Mr. Cohen argued that more discussion of wealth inequality was needed in the chapter. He warned that since high growth would not be possible due to environmental constraints, growth would be low while inequality would continue to increase.

Ms. Fukuda-Parr

Ms. Fukuda-Parr remarked that the rate of hunger reduction had not matched the rate of poverty reduction and this gap had not been duly addressed in the chapter. She also felt that there was too much emphasis on income poverty, while omitting non-income poverty.

Mr. Ivo Havinga

On the other hand, Mr. Havinga asserted that analysis of the environment was missing from the chapter and suggested a more universal perspective through the use of available data for OECD countries, and stated that the lessons should not rely too much on backward-looking analysis.

Mr. Casper Edmonds

Mr. Edmonds asserted that the chapter would benefit from equal attention to the demand side of growth, since the version circulated focused mainly on the supply side. He also suggested that the chapter complement pro-growth policies with social policies such as minimum wage and collective bargaining as well as focus more on youth, women and entrepreneurship. The chapter should also include references to the WDR2013 on Jobs and the Global Wage Report, both World Bank publications, and analyse the kind of policies needed in the context of low growth (stagnation) at the beginning of the SDG period. He remarked that a discussion of green growth was missing, although 52 countries already had ‘green job’ programmes (WB report).

Mr. Jos Verbeek

Mr. Verbeek suggested that chapter would gain in substance by including urbanization in the analysis, focusing on only 3-4 aspects of the MDG period and presenting a summary of critical messages for sustainable development.

Third session: MDG lessons regarding social policies

Summary of Presentation by Mr. Marco Vinicio Sanchez-Cantillo, Economic Affairs Officer, Development Policy and Analysis Division

Mr. Sanchez began by introducing the objective and scope of the chapter, which were to identify the policies and programmes that enabled MDG progress over the MDG period. These were then used as the basis for drawing lessons for the post-2015 period. The overarching focus of the chapter was on social policies, particularly those that had the potential to both help complete unfinished business from the MDG period and to be effective in the post-2015 period. A key issue with this was that it was difficult to deal with the issue of attribution – in other words, whether MDG achievements came as a result of MDG-related policies or of other more general policies. Many policies that were effective in meeting MDGs were in place before the MDG period, but saw their resources scaled up during the MDG era.

The chapter focused on the MDGs grouped into three areas – poverty reduction and hunger (MDG 1), sectoral goals (MDGs 2, 4, 5 and 6), and overarching connections such as gender (MDG 3)

and synergies between all other MDGs – and identified policy instruments and interventions, and spending issues that were important for MDG achievement. When data permitted, correlations were shown between policies, indicators and achievement. Examples of programmes were used to illustrate various policies. The chapter began with a framework of social policies divided into social protection policies, sectoral policies and policies for social promotion. Social protection policies were further divided into contributory and non-contributory policies. For the purposes of the chapter, the focus was mainly on non-contributory policies and sectoral policies, particularly those that dealt with building human capital such as investments in education and health.

In general, there were a series of overarching lessons that emerged out of the analysis of the policies that applied to all MDGs and that would be useful for the post-2015 period. First, no single social policy approach was applicable in all circumstances. Policies and interventions needed to be tailored specific populations to overcome constraints at the country and community levels. Second, policies were most effective when they covered the poorest and most vulnerable populations. Third, it had been proven that even the best policies sometimes became ineffective. There was a need to monitor effectiveness and complement these policies with innovative policies in order to fill in achievement gaps. Fourth, communities played a critical role in implementing integrated solutions and in reaching critical populations. Finally, the policies identified in the chapter frequently resulted in progress towards more than one goal simultaneously.

An important issue for social policies overall had been the interaction between spending on social protection and MDG outcomes: spending on social protection had increased rapidly over the MDG period in developing countries, but that was much more due to changes in middle- and upper middle-income countries. There were much lower increases in low income countries.

Mr. Sanchez elaborated on the main findings, lessons to be learned and key interventions regarding MDGs 1 through 6, a summary of which was as follows: regarding **MDG 1**, the main findings were that countries with stronger social protection systems had lower levels of poverty and less vulnerable populations. Three main interventions had proven successful in reducing poverty in developing countries – transfers, subsidies and workfare programmes – but it was important to note that problematic issues with some of these programmes existed. Suggested key lessons and implications for poverty reduction in the post-2015 period were that there would be considerable challenges to implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems, requiring the consolidation of numerous small programmes into larger overarching programs as well as non-contributory programmes integrated into the contributory part of the social protection system. Financial and technical support would continue to be required in low-income countries and CT programmes were the most effective social assistance instrument when tailored to specific developmental and institutional conditions. In LDCs, programmes with low or no conditionalities worked best and helped avoid potential resource misallocation, while in higher-income developing countries, fully-fledged CTs were better suited to reducing poverty. These interventions would need to be supplemented with supply-side interventions as well. In addition, it would be important to extend social protection to informal workers.

With regard to **MDG 2**, the following interventions were considered the most effective: expansion of school construction; provision of adequate levels of staffing, training and retention; elimination of school fees and the provision of free textbooks; capitation grants to schools; and school feeding programmes, which held beneficial synergies with nutrition and health. Generally speaking, evidence showed that increased spending on education had long-lasting and far-reaching positive effects. Some lessons for MDG 2 were that spending on education remained effective and the point of diminishing marginal returns was still far off for many low income countries that had high population growth rates that required increased spending just to keep up with existing demand. Sizeable parts of the population still remained unreached and would remain so for some time without exceptional efforts. Schools needed to be adapted to students' needs; the presence of effective teachers in classrooms was vital; and countries charging for education would need to eliminate the practice to achieve universal access to education at all levels. In the post-2015 period there needed to be a greater focus on completion rates, and while investments in human capital were a legacy of the MDGs, there had been insufficient creation of skilled jobs.

Key measures undertaken to deal with gender issues (**MDG 3**) included legal changes to enshrine and protect gender equality, formalizing legal structures around property sharing and inheritance, legalizing the initiation of divorce proceedings by women and allowing women to work outside the home without specific authorizations from the head of household. Greater efforts to expand girl-friendly education would be necessary as well. The chapter also raised the issues of existing CCT programmes that had been successful in raising girls' enrolment and completion rates, labour market policies to ensure gender balance and the potential for programmes which allowed women to work shorter hours to balance their schedules. Finally, while there had been some successful applications of quotas for women's representation, further efforts to increase women's political participation in many regions were necessary. Lessons for MDG 3 were that broader approaches to deal with gender equality were necessary and further efforts must be taken to ensure that women's work, particularly those important for social reproduction and those frequently categorized as informal, were taken into account. Mr. Sanchez reiterated that quotas for women's representation must be increased, expanded and enforced.

Lessons for the health-related **MDGs 4, 5 and 6** followed. For reducing child mortality, some interventions were cost-effective but inaccessible by some affected populations. Other important programmes were those geared towards reducing child under-nutrition; efforts to promote early and exclusive breastfeeding; and micronutrient supplementation through facilities and community-based interventions. Measures to curb ambient and household air pollution had been effective at reducing respiratory ailments, and antibiotic therapy for pneumonia was effective but costly and could be hampered by low-technical levels in administering community health workers. Mr. Sanchez also highlighted a number of effective ways of reducing maternal mortality. Some lessons for health for the post-2015 era included: (a) building health policies into integrated mother and new-born child health (IMNCH) strategies; (b) combining massive outreach programmes such as national immunization days (NIDs) with integrated health events; (c) addressing the shortage of skilled health workers; (d)

constructing new and improving inadequate health facilities; and (e) addressing effective but costly policies. A key issue for all of these was the sustainability of these interventions, particularly with regards to investment and operating costs as well as the cost of maintaining the appropriate qualified health professionals at these locations.

Comments from Discussants

Ms. Lynn Freedman, Columbia University

Ms. Freedman stated that in her view, the biggest concern regarding the health section was that it missed the overall narrative of the actual lessons from our experience in working towards MDGs 4 and 5. This was important because these lessons were leading even the supporters of the MDG approach of discrete interventions towards a different perspective that considered the entire lifecycle.

Current practice had moved away from looking at child and maternal health as separate problems. It was clear that improving health outcomes required a continuum of care across lifecycle and of home-hospital care. Specific interventions were clinically effective, but to just deliver them was acknowledged as grossly inadequate for MDG achievement. Such integration of interventions was only briefly mentioned.

The interaction between child and maternal mortality was clear in the chapter. New-born mortality currently represented 40 per cent of under-5 mortality rate and was increasing as interventions became more successful in preventable diseases for children. However, the causes of new-born deaths were very different from other childhood deaths, and required very different interventions. New-born mortality was much more closely linked to maternal mortality as most deaths occurred during childbirth or during the first day of life of the child. This was a very different problem from caring for the child's health after birth.

For older children, she recommended that the chapter consider the Integrated Community Case Management (ICCM) strategy. However, for maternal and new-born health, the focus should be placed on a facility-based system and not antenatal care because the latter had zero effect on neonatal deaths. Complications during birth could be prevented, but could be treated given appropriate facilities and trained personnel. What was clearly needed was greater access to emergency obstetric care, which was not factored into MDG5 as a critical intervention.

Ms. Freedman suggested three lessons from the experience during the MDG period: (1) the Millennium Declaration did not consider the new-born, which we now know was the key to child mortality; (2) health care during delivery was key, which meant that improving health systems and access to them were very important; and (3) today, embracing the role of the health systems which was considered too difficult in 2000, was now recognized as important. Health systems were more than just delivery systems. They were part of the social fabric and were reflected in the call for universal health coverage. But health systems struggled to deliver services with quality and appropriate interventions.

High coverage of non-effective interventions did not have the expected impact on mortality. Clearly a more holistic approach to care was needed, not just slices of interventions. There should be a new call for quality of care, clinical and non-clinical. We needed hardware (medicines, infrastructure, human resources), and software (ideas, management, less corruption, etc.).

One key feature of development discourse that had an important impact on health outcomes missing from the chapter was the disrespect and abuse of women at childbirth. Quality was about more than just having medicines and personnel training; it was also about how people were treated when they sought the services of these institutions.

Regarding interventions, there must be a strong move away from top-down levers. Rather, we must focus on systems and solving problems from the ground-up, and consider the perspective of both policy makers and those who used and worked in the system. Without that, CCT and other programs would not succeed. For example, the JSY program in India paid women to deliver in facilities, and while it was arguably the largest CCT in the world and greatly raised the rate of delivery in facilities in India, it had no effect on reducing maternal mortality in that country. Did policymakers fail to attend to supply side? Were there quality issues? Clearly people were getting to facilities, but were still dying. In that regard Ms. Freedman stated that she agreed with the supply-side message in the chapter.

Ms. Freedman was sceptical about the conclusion presented in the chapter that public spending was losing effectiveness, given that countries were at different levels of mortality rates and absolute reductions were harder to achieve when the rate was already low. She reminded the group that people in low income countries died from different causes from those in other countries, and thus needed different interventions. Even if the chart in the chapter were generally correct, she expressed doubt over whether it proved the point about ineffectiveness.

Ms. Freedman also pointed out the importance of linking the discussion in chapter 3 with the information in chapter 5. The issue of national governance presented in chapter 5 had emerged as a key point, beyond specific interventions discussed in chapter 3.

Mr. Birger Fredriksen, formerly with Human Development in Africa Division, World Bank

Mr. Fredriksen highlighted a few things of importance for post-2015 that he suggested might be covered better throughout the whole report. First was the striking divergence in experience between regions and countries. In the past, there were certain general characteristics across all developing countries that allowed some generalization of approaches and some stylized facts that provided some insight. Today, general characteristics seemed limited to a smaller subset, mainly Sub-Saharan African countries, where the challenges in post-2015 were significant.

Secondly, population growth was an important driver of expected development outcomes and must be addressed. It required an increase in provision of primary education by approximately 30 per cent. Sub-Saharan Africa needed to address the backlog of students; most of the world's 58 million

school-age children not attending primary school were in Africa, and this number was not declining. Mr. Fredriksen said that this education backlog, together with other demographic characteristics, brought to light the poor allocation of resources. There were almost no resources devoted to literacy programs and education – less than 2%, in budgets. Donor budgets also had very little allocated to literacy.

Thirdly, Mr. Fredriksen pointed out that issues of political economy were very important if we were to understand the lack of provision for illiterate women in budgets. Illiterate women were politically involved to various degrees, and if they could not increase their skills, how would their needs for the next decade be met? How were they to find sustainable employment? He pointed out that beyond education, in the informal sector; learning skills were about more than just secondary education.

Finally, as global institutions focused on other regions, it raised questions about the international community's understanding of the problem and of the comparative advantage of aid to enact change. Mr. Fredriksen pointed out that there was no global leadership in education, which hurt allocation of aid to education. He pointed out that tackling the problem of equity required a focus on literacy and on the productivity of women.

Mr. Babatunde Omilola, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP

Mr. Omilola began by stating that while the chapter looked at many MDGs, there were ways to improve the analysis by going deeper into methodology innovations. The chapter had not looked at the quality of investments in education, or at technical and vocational education, and felt that it was important to tease out what low-income countries could learn from other countries' experience of how policies related to these were implemented.

Mr. Omilola took issue with the characterization of a causal relationship between policies undertaken and MDG achievement. He pointed out that it was more interesting to look at the effect of policies on the MDGs regardless of whether policies were MDG-prompted or not.

He stated that the chapter did not make sufficient use of available evidence during MDG-experience period. For example, the UNDG approved the MAF which tried to understand bottlenecks, solutions and funding. During their exercise, they generated much evidence that the chapter could use to draw lessons from.

Regarding the framework of analysis, Mr. Omilola thought that the chapter did not look at interaction of social policies, the labour market and the economy. The issue of adaptation of the MDGs at the country level to fit in existing national plans required more thought. How was it done and what gaps remained? He also suggested using a more forward looking analysis rather than concentrating on a historical overview.

Mr. Omilola summarized the chapter as good, but felt it needed to use other existing evidence for greater insight.

Open discussion

Mr. Casper Edmonds

Mr. Edmonds stated that policies had to be coherent and not just tailored. He gave the example that, during the 2008 financial crisis, policies undermined other existing policies. He spoke of the need of the chapter to further strengthen its message to develop capacities. It should also focus more on the rights of the individual as a justification for development. Finally, he pointed out the need to have a renewed focus on the private sector. High cost of services for the poor was a good opportunity for businesses to provide better solutions.

Mr. Binayak Sen

Mr. Sen stated that an analysis of health system approaches should be included in the chapter, and it should also look at education outcomes. He pointed out that the definition of social protection needed to be well thought out, and the use of per capita measures “smelled like tokenism”. He stated that even in Latin America, labour income was the main driver of incomes, not so much cash transfers. Mr. Sen also said that other social drivers that were low hanging fruit and did not require financial or growth systems should get more prominent consideration as they were more likely to determine outcomes. One example was the relationship of the practice of dowry and development.

Mr. Sen pointed out that the last 10-15 years have helped reduce income poverty, which has empowered many and will lead to greater demand for other aspects of development in coming decades. In this regard, he felt that the chapter did not address development practice as a combination of contradictory and interdependent phases. Focus should be on human capital and complex issues of governance, education and social protection.

Mr. Jonathan Perry

Mr. Perry pointed out that the major lesson of the MDGs was that goals could not be reached with sectoral interventions alone. Development required a broader conversation of a vision for development that included social justice, equality, etc. Social protection systems existed not just to ameliorate consequences, but as a fundamental part of development strategy.

Mr. Brian Tomlinson

Mr. Tomlinson pointed out the importance of looking at enabling conditions for achieving the MDGs and at the capacities of governments to finance their commitments to the MDGs. In developing countries, spending per capita was very low. He suggested that the chapter sharply address the need to

improve outcomes given existing resource limitations. Mr. Tomlinson also suggested that on the issue of gender, the chapter should draw on the extensive literature on the reality of mainstreaming. For example, it is necessary to look at the degree to which there was actual investment on women organizations. DAC says this was less than 2%, and declining, a good sign that the level of investment needed was not reached.

Ms. Lynn Freedman

Ms. Freedman felt that the chapter needed to focus more on intra-household inequalities that were often overlooked (although the lack of data was a barrier). With regard to sanitation, she said that many households had facilities but for many reasons women were not allowed to use them, and that a similar situation existed regarding food distribution.

Fourth session: MDG lessons regarding environmental sustainability

Summary of presentation by Mr. Nazrul Islam, Team Leader, WESS 2015

Mr. Islam presented five main parts and a number of useful graphs to illustrate and substantiate some of the key arguments made in the chapter. First, the environmental efforts and thinking that predated the MDGs were reviewed, beginning with the Conference on Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972) to the Kyoto Protocol (1997). The multiple ways in which environmental thinking had since evolved were described, ranging from the limits to growth in the 1970s to the ideas on decoupling of growth and resource use (and waste generated), limits on growth, the idea of de-growth, and the propositions of different types of growth. He also presented evidence showing that there had not been absolute decoupling between GDP and CO₂ emissions (and other environmental indicators).

Second, the presentation examined MDG 7 from the perspective of it being regarded as an environmental goal. Its targets were spelled out, and some of the main weaknesses (e.g., heterogeneity, non-binding nature, timeframes, level of ambition, and others) and strengths (e.g., universality, degree of flexibility left to countries for implementation, and the greater relevance for post-2015) were discussed.

Third, Mr. Islam identified the processes external to the MDG which were relevant for MDG 7, both UN-led and global in scope (such as UNFCCC and others) as well as regional (e.g., EU Commission's NATURA initiative and Micronesian Challenge). A critical aspect discussed here was the two-way interaction between these processes and the MDG process, with the former helping implementation of MDG 7 targets and influencing adoption of targets and indicators, and the latter influencing the adoption of targets and plans by the outside processes.

Fourth, MDG lessons were drawn regarding specific issues of MDG 7. With respect to emissions, for example, Mr. Islam underscored the need for more effort to make the UNFCCC process

successful even in the absence of a grand global agreement. At the same time, he thought that a low-carbon path of development had to be made technologically and financially viable. Regarding forests, the promotion of sustainable consumption was presented as critical to reducing demand for timber, which would in turn reduce the pressure on the use of forests. The key role that indigenous people and women can play in protecting forests was underscored. With respect to terrestrial and marine areas, Mr. Islam stated that quantitative targets prompted countries to action. However he noted that reporting and monitoring should include scope for qualitative information on the fulfilment of targets. Furthermore, it was important to find targets that captured the inter-linkages. He pointed to protection of terrestrial and marine areas as an example of useful composite target/index. Lessons from the experience on water, sanitation and slums were that targets and indicators needed to be carefully formulated, and that the role of the public sector and communities in providing water and sanitation services was important. The treatment of sewerage before discharge to water bodies was identified as one of the key areas to keep in mind going forward. Another key message was that the root socio-economic cause of slums would have to be understood and addressed through appropriate changes in a country's development strategy.

Fifth, the overall MDG lessons and their implications were spelled out at the end of Mr. Islam's presentation. For example, it was stressed that the reliance on outside-MDG processes for environmental goals yielded mixed results. With regard to the important issue of climate change, it did not have the expected success. As a consequence, much more effort would be necessary to make this arrangement successful in post-2015. Furthermore, the efforts would need to bring environment and development together. With regard to targets, Mr. Islam explained that binding, quantitative targets were helpful, and in the process of defining them it would be important to give more recognition to the inter-linkages between environmental goals and non-environmental ones. In this respect, the importance of finding composite targets (with "sustainable consumption and production" being a potential candidate) was underscored. The rising importance of Global Public Goods (GPG) requiring global initiatives and cooperation was regarded as particularly relevant for environmental protection. An important conclusion presented was that countries should not wait for a grand, global agreement in order to take action for sustainable development goals. The multi-stakeholder character of the efforts, including the business community, as well as the role of technology, would have to be strengthened during post-2015.

Comments from Discussants

Mr. Laszlo Pinter, International Institute for Sustainable Development and Central European University

Mr. Pinter began by asking what the unique opportunity for the report was. In his view, the advantage of WESS, at least for the purposes of Chapter IV, was that in analyzing the environmental challenges it could bring up the economic and social perspectives rather than the purely environmental ones. He claimed that there were already many environmental evaluations.

Mr. Pinter also suggested more elaboration on the integration of growth and sustainability, in this sense establishing important connections between Chapters II and IV.

One element missing in the chapter, as pointed out by Mr. Pinter, was the problem of governance and, more importantly, how this related to sustainability.

Mr. Pinter considered that the chapter should emphasize the idea that we are at a “danger zone”, one that was characterized by downward economic conditions and environmental depletion. More importantly, the key point should be to take a more forward-looking approach by making projections about the conditions under which the goals and targets would actually say something about sustainability. The chapter should address the question with regard to safe zones both at the country and regional levels going forward.

Another potential limitation of the chapter in Mr. Pinter’s opinion was the insufficient discussion about mainstreaming. Instead of addressing only cases where there was mainstreaming, it was important to consider cases where it did not occur and determine why this was so. For example, consumption and production patterns and the accounting of these were left out of the MDG process.

Last but not least, a key issue that perhaps deserved more attention in the chapter, according to Mr. Pinter, related to the ability of the market to deliver, the conditions under which this was possible and whether it represented the public interest.

Ms. Inga Winkler, German Institute for Human Rights

Ms. Winkler grouped her comments around three topics: (i) the water and sanitation target, (ii) inequalities and (iii) lessons learned. With regard to the first topic, her view was that the water and sanitation targets were not just environmental ones but social; in other words, MDG 7 was not only an environmental goal but also a social one. The problem, she pointed out, was that water and sanitation were seen as part of the environmental issues in Chapter IV rather than as part of the social policy issues discussed in Chapter III. She suggested moving water and sanitation issues to Ch. III and leaving the focus of Chapter IV exclusively on environmental issues (and for water, covering its environmental dimension only).

Some other more specific suggestions were given as follows: (i) do not focus too much on access to but on the management of water and sanitation; (ii) pay more attention to the fact that the MDG indicator on water did not capture the quality of the water dimension very well; (iii) say something about the fact that the target on drinking water extended to 2020; and (iv) explain why UNICEF/WHO monitored water and sanitation while other institutions monitored other aspects of MDG 7. What were the implications of this?

Ms. Winkler stressed that inequalities were very relevant to the discourse on water and sanitation. For example, she said that the target could have been achieved without reaching special and

marginalized population groups. Going forward, these dimensions needed to be considered. It was not just about achieving progress as quickly as possible. Furthermore, these dimensions were also relevant for developed countries where indigenous people and other minority groups also faced constraints. The recommendation was to address the issue of inequality in more depth in the chapter.

Last but not least, Ms. Winkler expressed her uncertainty about how the chapter arrived at its conclusions. Here her comments concentrated on three areas. Firstly, she considered that there was something missing between the examples and the conclusions. For example, the chapter did not explain why piped water and sewage were important for everyone; it basically took this for granted. Also, the link between water and sanitation was important but the chapter missed making this connection. Secondly, Ms. Winkler wondered why certain examples were selected over others; what were the selection criteria? Thirdly, she sought clarity on the time-period covered by the analysis. She thought there was no such thing as the MDG experience, because all things the chapter talked about already existed before the MDGs.

Mr. Michael Cohen

Mr. Cohen began his comments by questioning the benefits to be derived from referencing the target on slum dwellers. In his opinion, the way the target was framed with regard to slums distorted the international agenda because at that time, 2 billion people were living in slums and in the formulation of the target only 5% of the problem was picked up. The target entailed “significantly improving the lives of people...,” but the major problem was that it did not specify in which ways. How to know if the target was achieved, in what proportions, and who was accountable for its achievement remained as open questions. The chapter could elaborate more on these issues, according to Mr. Cohen.

Another issue Mr. Cohen raised with regard to the target regarding slums related to the urban share of GDP because, ever since the MDGs were formulated and adopted there had been too little attention paid to cities in the global development discussions. The MDG framework talked about employment, infrastructure, and so on, and yet “the city” did not appear in it. Not only was this a mistake, according to Mr. Cohen, but the goal actually ended up contributing to bad outcomes. Cities were neglected while other MDGs were achieved through cities (e.g., through stimulus policies). Making sure that this type of error was not repeated in the first round of SDG formulation and implementation would be critical, and the chapter could reflect more on this.

Mr. Cohen thought there was no sense of urgency in the chapter. In this respect, he suggested the chapter should be less about the treaties and more about why we needed things to work. Key questions to answer would rather be: Why was the environmental issue important for the other MDGs? For example, what would happen to the achievement of goals in Sao Paulo if there were no water? What would happen to health and economic growth? This connection between the environment and non-environmental goals was not well-covered in the chapter, in his view.

Another cautionary note from Mr. Cohen was with regard to the process of formulation of SDGs. Thus far it seemed to contain too many targets. Moreover, although slums were considered, the productive side of cities was not. These issues should be addressed in the chapter to draw lessons and implications for the future.

At the end, Mr. Cohen made the general remark that there were places in the WESS chapters where descriptive voice, analytical voice and normative voice of what we wished to happen took centre stage but yet were not well integrated (too much wishful thinking?). He felt that Chapter IV was the place to avoid from wishful thinking.

Mr. David O'Connor

Mr. O'Connor began by addressing Mr. Cohen's comments about the treatment of cities in the SDGs, essentially concurring with him.

He disagreed with the idea that MDG7 was universal (and the only universal goal). In Mr. O'Connor's view, MDG 7 was also a "developing country agenda". On the other hand, SDGs were universal and dealt with issues relating to both developed and developing countries. It was important to establish this difference in the chapter and to be more cautious about referring to MDG 7 as a universal goal.

One potential lesson Mr. O'Connor felt the chapter should address related to the real need to have an environmental goal when we already had the UNFCCC. He indicated that, luckily, there was such a goal on climate change and the UNFCCC had legal binding constraints, perhaps the only binding aspect of the SDGs. These issues needed to be better explained in the chapter.

Mr. O'Connor argued that the fact that there was insufficient specificity in the environmental MDG could not be used to neglect the potential existence of specificities at the national level. The chapter should do more justice to this point. For example, the "2 degree threshold" was universal, but for other targets the level of ambition should be set at the country level. Global targets only provided order of magnitudes but countries defined their own targets.

Moreover, in Mr. O'Connor's view, there was nothing wrong with qualitative targets, as the chapter seemed to imply, which, by the way, contradicted the SDGs. On the contrary, Mr. O'Connor thought that qualitative ways of tracing progress were necessary. In fact, he mentioned there was a target on policy space in the SDGs.

Mr. O'Connor made reference to the idea of composite indicators which was suggested in the chapter. He argued that composite indicators could also be called keystone indicators (progress along which would imply simultaneous progress along many other indicators). He drew attention to some work done in DSD in identifying such keystone or composite indicators. As an example of keystone indicators that covered more than one target in the SDGs he presented 6.4 (water) and 12.2 (sustainable

management and efficient use of natural resources). Moreover, with regard to composite or keystone indicators, it was important to suggest what one could do going forward, which seemed to be missing from the chapter. In this sense, it remained crucial to continue considering the connectivity of goals, as well as between SDG targets and other goals made by scientists that presented a denser mapping.

Open discussion

The general discussion led to two main comments. Firstly, because of the proliferation of treaties and agreements with regard to the environment there was no policy coherence. Against this backdrop, it was recommended that the chapter come up with a reflection about the need for a simplification of targets and objectives. Secondly, the issues of climate change and how it related to poverty should be discussed in more detail. If there were no people there was no need to address climate change.

Fifth session: MDG lessons regarding governance

Summary of presentation by Mr. Hamid Rashid, Capacity Development Officer, Development Policy and Analysis Division

Mr. Rashid pointed out that originally there was not a chapter on governance planned for the book, but that, thanks to his colleagues and others who took this on, it was developed into a complete chapter. Originally, the material on governance was subsumed in chapters 2 and 3, but it was decided relatively recently that a standalone chapter would be better. Given that, it was also important to recognize that the chapter was itself a relatively recent creation and therefore still needed work in terms of organization and integration, and that it still needed to grow.

As governance was such a broad issue, the decision was made to focus on those areas of governance that were more relevant to the MDGs and the SDGs. Mr. Rashid pointed out that across almost all of the presentations one could observe an undercurrent emphasizing the need for good governance in development. The chapter posited that, from a conceptual standpoint, good governance was a necessary condition for both development and peace and stability. There was evidence that countries with better governance had done better in achieving the MDGs. The difficulty was that good governance was both an enabler and an outcome of development, and that there were complex and non-linear relationships between the two. An important question was what were the sufficient conditions for good governance. A necessary qualification was also that good governance alone did not assure peace and stability – history, culture, geography, climate change, etc. all played a role. During the MDG phase, governance was not included broadly in the MDGs, although there were a few exceptions of countries adding an MDG 9 on governance. There were questions about what governance itself meant, or what were the qualities of good governance. Disagreements on those questions ultimately led this issue to be excluded.

Some key issues were that good governance was a part of good leadership and strong leadership ensured effective use of resources and policy coherence. Another key issue was that governance was not just a function of government – good governance should include all stakeholders. This also required strong mechanisms to ensure accountability and productive development outcomes.

Mr. Rashid introduced two broad strands of governance – market enhancing governance and growth enhancing governance. The former attempted to deal with making markets as efficient as possible and dealing with, what it viewed, were government failures and general frictions. The latter drew attention to market failures that the government may need to address. This version, most commonly seen in East Asia, focused on resource allocation. The issue with both of these views of governance was that economic growth did not always lead to development. This suggested the need for a third alternative: development-enhancing governance.

One of the issues with trying to assess governance concerns measurement. The chapter used the World Governance Indicators (WGI) from Kaufmann and Kraay, which was the most comprehensive database on governance. This database was used to assess how governance had changed over the MDG period and how that had effected MDG achievement. The results have been mixed with more deterioration in governance than improvement over the period. At the same time there have been some positive outcomes, particularly from the development perspective. Overall there appeared to be little connection between WGIs and poverty reduction. There was a wide variety of development outcomes for low-income countries with the same governance structures. For example, we saw significant improvement in poverty levels in Burundi versus deterioration in Madagascar, which have roughly equivalent governance levels. We may need therefore broader measures of governance. There are a number of issues with the WGI: first, it was largely synthetic; second, it was subject to large sampling bias; third, it had large variance; and finally, it was also very sectoral. In general, it may not actually capture government effectiveness. Furthermore governance effects might come through more indirect channels, for example, keeping food prices low through better governance may lead to better nutrition outcomes. In addition, WGI were measured at the national level so we did not have any subnational data, which could be important in some contexts.

Mr. Rashid noted that corruption was a serious detriment to MDG achievement – and corruption had been a concern for governance for quite some time, even going back to writings from 4th century China. Corruption was not only an issue of stealing resources, it could also be about stealing time, as in absenteeism.

He highlighted five factors for development enhancing governance: effective policy coordination, which was critical for MDG delivery, but which could be constrained by capital limits and required necessary resources; decentralized service delivery, which could also be costly but important for inclusion; strong partnerships between government and non-government organizations, with effective community involvement; strong monitoring, which could be an issue given limited data capacity in developing countries; and finally policies, strategies and incentives to control corruption,

which could improve service delivery. In general, issues of effective resource management would be critical for governance in the SDG period.

Another key issue in governance highlighted by Mr. Rashid was the need for peace and stability. He stated that there were 1.5 billion people living in conflict affected countries and there were clear divergences between the development outcomes for conflict affected countries versus non-conflict affected countries. This affected all MDGs and women and children were disproportionately the victims in these countries. There were feedback effects as well, because development stresses, including economic, environment and social stresses, could be triggers for conflict. We could see examples of this in the economic stresses that precipitated the Arab Spring and the environmental stresses that have led to the conflict in Darfur.

There was a need to build a virtuous cycle in order to counteract this through the establishment of legitimate institutions, jobs and skills to solidify peace and stability, the formation of political coalitions, more steps toward inclusive governance and overall efforts to strengthen international support for stability. The UN could leverage the latter to avoid past mistakes in dealing with conflicts.

The MDG experience highlighted the need for a slightly different view on governance. There needed to be an increased focus on decentralization and participation. The OWG's SDG targets 16.5-16.7 all apply here. The question was what kind of indicators could be developed to track governance. It is also clear that better efforts to avoid conflicts must be made as the effects of conflict have an unambiguously negative impact on development. Good governance could also help to prevent conflict. In reference to OWG SDG target 16.1, more concrete targets and programs for reducing violence are needed.

Comments from Discussants

Mr. Juwang Zhu, Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM), UN-DESA

Mr. Zhu noted that he sympathized with Mr. Rashid's task with regard to this chapter as governance was such a broad topic. He noted that one could probably devote a whole EGM just to the topic. With that in mind he complemented DPAD for adding a chapter on the subject to the WESS. So far DESA's analysis of the MDGs has mainly focused on monitoring, with limited analysis, so that this WESS will help to fill this gap – although he questioned why there hadn't been more analysis earlier. He said that he mostly agreed with what had been presented in the slides and the chapter. Colleagues from the DPADM department had gone over the chapter more thoroughly and would be presenting comments later, but he said that he would outline some of those comments.

The comments have addressed the issues with the linkages between the different sections and how they have impacted the MDGs. They suggest that the chapter may need some further analysis and potentially some case studies as the section is in parts somewhat divorced from the MDG goals

themselves and how they are related to fighting corruption or improving governance. Other questions are: what is the effect of market enhancing governance on MDG outcomes; what does strong leadership mean; and what about accountability? Since this may be the first time that these questions are addressed, particularly in the context of the WESS, there may be a need to further lay out definitions. Strong leadership must be defined clearly as in some cases this could be beneficial and in others could be viewed as autocratic.

Mr. Zhu also noted the lack of reference to parliaments and that DPADM colleagues feel that parliaments have played a strong role in advocating policies for MDGs and also in monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the issue of government audits, which the GA has a number of resolutions on, will need to be included. For the service oriented MDGs, many of which remain in the domain of public institutions, the question is how can supreme audit institutions aid in service delivery?

Mr. Henk-Jan Brinkman, Peacebuilding Support Office, UN

Mr. Brinkman pointed out that it was important to recognize that governance is also an outcome, particularly in relation to peace and stability. It is also important to note that the concept of good governance doesn't appear in the SDGs, rather the SDGs refer to global governance. Overall, governance needs to be a universal issue, and currently the chapter focuses too much on developing countries. All the issues, justice, voice, etc. are all universal. On the issue of universality, peace is a universal issue, as is violence. For now all the examples refer to developing countries so broader examples will be necessary.

Mr. Brinkman noted that there are some contradictions in the chapter, starting with the definition – for instance, there is the need to include the rule of law and the role of the judiciary in the discussion. Furthermore the chapter starts with a definition, but later there's a footnote saying that there's no clear definition of good governance.

The chapter spends a lot of time discovering what Mr. Brinkman referred to as “Switzerland and Swedens”, but not much on how you get there. How do you create these states? How do you reduce corruption? There are those benefitting- often these are minorities in power. How do you create political movements to reduce this? More broadly, there is almost no politics in this chapter.

In WESS 2000 – there was a chapter on the difficulty of reforming institutions which might be worth examining. That chapter came to the conclusion that institutions tend to persist because of path dependency, entrenched interests, existing processes, etc. Building on that reforms must start with the leadership, which is needed to focus efforts. Mr. Brinkman said that the way forward is to start with trial and error for various reforms and programs supplemented with rigorous monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the changes that are being made are having the desired effects. He then referred to the work of Richard Kleinfeld, who described the trajectory of reaching good governance as sailboats, not trains – meaning that there is no straight track to reaching the goal of becoming like Switzerland. It is also important to build on momentum to further reform other sectors.

The chapter will also need to address state-society relationships, which are critical to proper service delivery. People have to trust in government, which gives legitimacy to the state. In the Westphalian definition of governance its about a monopoly on violence and taxation. But people get something back in return for their taxes. In developing countries there tend to be low taxes and limited services. Related to this is the fact that many developing countries are supported by external resources, which often results in low taxation, and therefore a more limited social contract. These messages are more hidden in the chapter, although they were somewhat more apparent in the presentation.

There were two points that Mr. Brinkman thought might need to be rethought. The focus on decentralization could be an issue as there is not much evidence for its efficacy and many projects have a mixed record. There are issues with capacity at the local level and resource flows to the decentralized units. Local government needs both the capacity to deliver services and also to manage the resource flows. If these two issues are tackled properly then these programs will be unsuccessful. The IMF frequently discusses public financial management, but much more often at the central government level and without proper knowledge of local conditions. One can't have proper decentralization without a focus at the local level. This is also related to the issue of corruption discussed in the chapter – decentralization can lead to an amplification of corruption as everyone takes a cut of the flow of resources, all the way down to local chiefs.

Also the chapter assumes a role for the private sector in service delivery and makes the assumption that this is necessarily good. There can be downsides to private provision of public goods, particularly with regard to quality control. Also the huge role of the private sector in social service delivery in the U.S. contributes to inequality. Furthermore, the capacity to coordinate and create coherence may not be there. One must assume that there are huge costs to coordination across the board and the costs to coordination may be bigger than the benefits.

From a practical perspective Mr. Brinkman advised that the chapter needed to reduce the level of jargon as it should be intended for a broader audience. There are also jumps in how the text flows. On sections on peace and stability it is important to recognize that this is not something that has been negotiated and agreed on by member states – so it is probably better to stick to language used in the SDGs. He suggested removing table 5.2, which lists fragile countries as this will likely create conflict and draw attention in a negative way. With regards to the box on the Arab Spring he suggested that Tunisia should be held up as a positive example as it is the only country that has actually made progress in the wake of the transition. Also he disagreed that unemployment is a trigger for violence, and viewed it as rather a risk factor. Within the area of ODA, greater risk aversion is an issue that will need to be addressed – there is a tendency to focus on issues that are easy to measure. For example, it is much easier to vaccinate children than to build health systems even if the later is more important and effective in the long run. In addition, it is difficult to measure the achievement of parliaments, even though they may have a significant role in good governance and effects on MDG progress. Finally Mr. Brinkman mentioned that he would like to see a target in the SDGs on the percentage of ODA flows that go to institution building.

Ms. Diana Alarcon, Office of Under Secretary General (OUSG), UN-DESA

Ms. Alarcon began by noting that she is not a specialist in governance and that she may be coming at the issue from a somewhat biased perspective. She agreed with the previous commenters and thought that the chapter would need some more work. Overall the chapter is a welcome addition to the book as the questions of governance are so important to the issues of service delivery and MDG and SDG outcomes. But given that, there will have to be some choices and distinctions about what will be included in the chapter. She suggested on focusing on governance issues that are related to service delivery, both for the MDGs and for improving service delivery for the SDGs. Overall she felt the piece needed a more analytical narrative and some more nuanced analysis.

Ms. Alarcon noted five important issues beginning with policy coordination (which she noted is not the same as policy coherence). She felt the chapter needed a more analytical, comprehensive look at the challenge of policy coordination. This needs to be explored both within sectors and across sectors and different dimensions of development. How do you have better coordination between policies for growth and development and those for employment? She felt that this was much bigger than issues of corruption or low capacity. For example, how do you have effective coordination between different ministries? This is a real challenge for policy making and these issues need to be included. The chapter also needs to look at coherence over time for example the MTEF which provided certainty on budgets over longer periods. In addition, there needs to be global and national coordination too. How do you match global vertical funds and ODA and the need for stronger more stable budgets?

There are also issues around decentralization – the functions, budgets and capacity at the local level need to be dealt with. In addition, issues of inequality between regions needs to be covered. As mentioned before there have been mixed results from decentralization.

Another important point that needs to be addressed concerns partnerships and multistakeholder participation, including the private sector. What are the incentives for the private sector to undertake development enhancing activities. It is more difficult to provide proper incentives for proper participation in these cases. There are also issues with coordination with other groups such as NGOs, CSOs and this make ensuring proper service delivery that much more difficult.

Overall Monitoring and Evaluation has to be part of the whole policy cycle. There has to be a more thorough review of strong systems for accountability and for policy design and implementation. Ms. Alarcon felt that corruption was the least important factor in strengthening monitoring and evaluation.

For now political leadership is only just a box and this is a critically important issue for governance. This applies to all of the issues mentioned above as there are different types of leadership

necessary for different activities. The political economy for these issues is complex but it needs to be enunciated and developed in the chapter.

With regard to corruption, she felt that it seemed that a lot of the arguments in the chapter are built around it but that it should rather be treated as one factor among many. Furthermore, one needs to be careful in saying that developing countries have high levels of corruption, therefore they have had poor MDG achievement.

She suggested reorganizing the chapter around these five issues. Whereas now it begins with the discussion of the WGI which results in the conclusion that governance doesn't play that big a role and is generally not correlated with the issues that we are trying to address, Ms. Alarcon said that she thought that this was the wrong conclusion. Furthermore there are issues with aggregate governance measures, some of which might be functions of the fields that it covers. She advised that this may not be something that we want up front in the chapter.

Open discussion

Mr. Binayak Sen

Mr. Sen raised an issue that he felt applied to all chapters – it appeared that much of the analysis and lessons rely on cross-country correlations and country success and failure stories. But this ignored the fact that some countries had achieved high levels of success despite high corruption, and vice versa. He suggested that more boxes to explore these cases could be inserted. He also pointed to a report on income inequality that was prepared for the UNDP, and in which he had written a chapter on non-income inequality using some analysis based on Kaufmann and Kraay that could be useful. In general, he noted that there tended to be low correlations between corruption perceptions and MDG achievement. He suggested that it would be better to look at changes in perceptions over time as well as achievements over time while at the same time controlling for fixed effects. Also, he suggested the possibility of a graph comparing corruption and public servants' wages, which could be useful for distinguishing between good governance and “good enough” governance. He did admit that he had not yet come across relevant data, but still hoped that it could be produced. He pointed out that it was possible to arrive at good governance through development, but that good enough governance was required for proper service delivery. Also, it would be useful to attempt to distinguish between avoidable and unavoidable corruption. Overall the connection between economic growth and governance remained a puzzle, but there was some work pointing to certain income levels being more associated with better governance.

Mr. Jeroen Kwakkenbos

Mr. Kwakkenbos pointed out that with regards to measuring public financial management there were a lot of tools available, and it was hard to choose the most appropriate. There were also issues of universality with regard to the diagnostic tools and whether they were applied to developing or to

developed countries. Furthermore, the issue of corruption was universal – he cited the Citizens United Supreme Court decision in the United States which essentially made corruption legal. In addition, in Germany, it used to be legal to discount foreign bribes paid from a company's taxes. He also concurred that a measure of the percentage of ODA that went to institution building would be very helpful.

Mr. Brian Tomlinson

Mr. Tomlinson concurred that this was a complex area to deal with and that the approach of attempting to tease out some core issues was the right one. An overarching issue was that there was a lack of human rights as a central normative framework for governance, which should be there as a UN position. It was also important to note the role of NGOs and CSOs for accountability and policy dialogues. Furthermore, the issue of the narrowing policy space for CSOs, particularly those that dealt with human rights or corruption, should be addressed. He felt that there had been legal restrictions and exclusion of critical voices.

Mr. Binayak Sen

Mr. Sen pointed out that there was a need to highlight the demand side of governance as governance structures were arrived at through a process of economic and social development. The issue of how one moved away from the current position was an important transition question.

Mr. Laszlo Pinter

Mr. Pinter suggested the need to link back to some of the ideas about sustainable development. Since the MDGs had been initiated, the idea of earth systems governance came up, revealing that it was no longer just an environmental issue. This raised serious challenges about the design of such a system, which would have to deal with the complexity of the environment and earth system issues. Currently there were no systems in place to deal with that. Some institutions had grown to deal with issues of coordination of global governance that were necessary for sustainable development and the environment. The question was whether this required coordination bodies, either similar to those that used to exist or new ones.

Accountability beyond just indicators was needed, as well as to fully close the accountability cycle. We needed to be forward-looking by incorporating risk and introducing solutions to the system, but these required capacity and skills that were not yet available.

Mr. Hamid Rashid

Mr. Rashid thanked the participants for their helpful comments and stated his observation that the comments/inputs were of three distinct types. Firstly, there were the stylistic issues – the need to tighten up the structure and writing of the chapter to ensure that all the elements fit together well. Overall, the team would need to figure out what lens to use in examining the immensely large topic of

governance. Since they would need to be selective, he thought that focusing on MDGs and service delivery would be a useful lens.

The second set of comments related to the fact that governance needed to be more effective, but the question was how to get there. Addressing this question would take some time and a comprehensive look both cross-country and within countries. This would require dealing with the roles that parliaments and public auditing played.

The third set was the most problematic because they required both expanding and narrowing at the same time. An example is the point that corruption is not necessarily the most important issue. An important point is that the MDGs were focused more on developing countries, whereas the SDGs are more universal. Also, there is the issue of governing the commons. Post-2015 will require a better focus on this and the issue of governance of global public goods.

Another issue that may need to be addressed was the relationship between the state and the individual. The chapter also needed to address the role of leadership and how it could shape government outcomes.

With regard to the governance indicators, the discussion in the chapter was not designed as an exercise in discrediting those indicators, and while looking at changes in corruption perceptions could be useful, it may be hard to do with the existing dataset. In addition, exploring the link between corruption and civil service salaries would be good, but Mr. Rashid was unsure about having the time or the data to undertake that in the chapter.

Ms. Diana Alarcon

Ms. Alarcon felt that sections one and two of the chapter were somewhat disjointed and needed to be better integrated.

Mr. Henk-Jan Brinkman

Mr. Brinkman noted that the two sections could be tied together, being careful not to tie them too closely otherwise one would risk just looking at conflict-affected countries. The question also needed to be addressed of how developed countries created good governance. This could be done through good examples. He also noted that there were problems with corruption surveys regarding their measurement and the correspondence to actual rates of corruption. He suggested that recently there had been efforts to introduce surveys that dealt with experiences of corruption – such as whether a person paid bribes and to whom. There appeared to be significant differences between these two types of surveys.

Sixth session: MDG lessons regarding global partnership

Summary of presentation by Mr. Marcelo LaFleur, Economic Affairs Officer, Development Policy and Analysis Division and Mr. Hiroshi Kawamura, Economic Affairs Officer, Development Policy and Analysis Division

Mr. LaFleur stated that the objective of the presentation was to provide the overall framework of analysis of the current global partnership for development, including a definition and the context in which it existed, and to identify emerging challenges and issues as the world prepared the post-2015 development agenda. Specifically, there were the following objectives:

1. To characterize the MDG-8 experience: did it deliver on its commitments?
2. To understand the changing landscape of global partnerships;
3. To understand the interaction between the narrow Partnership, and the global, broader partnerships and governance as an enabler of development;
4. To characterize the role of the United Nations.

To accomplish this, the presentation was structured as follows:

1. The origins of partnerships for international development
2. Delivering on the Global Partnership in the MDG era
3. Emerging challenges for an effective Global Partnership for Development
4. Renewed partnerships for development in the post-2015 era
5. Monitoring and reviewing mechanisms
6. Lessons from the MDG period and implications for the post-2015 era

Mr. LaFleur also presented the framework of analysis that served to identify lessons for the implementation of a partnership post-2015. First, the starting point of analysis was the Global Partnership for Development embodied in MDG-8, including a careful definition of what it meant and what it did not. From there it was important to expand into efforts for promoting global governance and sustainable development and how these efforts related to the implementation of MDG-8. This would define the challenges for a new Global Partnership for sustainable development beyond 2015. We must understand the conceptual origins and evolution of the Global Partnership for Development, the changing landscape of development, and the role of the various actors, particularly the United Nations.

Mr. LaFleur briefly touched upon the origins of partnerships for international development, dating back to 1948 when the UN called for countries to give consideration to development. The early objective was to strengthen economies in order to promote independence. The history included the financial assistance plan that started in 1950s, followed by the creation of the OECD DAC to coordinate donor countries. The decade of the 1960s was defined as the first development decade. In the 1980s, the World Bank and IMF started to have more prominent roles as the role of ODA was more

closely tied to debt sustainability and economic restructuring. Another change occurred at end of cold war, which led to new objectives: human rights, democracy and governance. ODA allocation priorities shifted to social sectors and humanitarian assistance.

With the MDGs came the eighth goal to form a “Global Partnership for Development”. Mr. LaFleur stated that the global partnership measured by MDG 8 was a set of donor-recommended policy commitments designed to promote specific types of support to developing countries that lower their debt burdens, increase their earnings from trade, provide sufficient ODA, and increase access to technologies and essential medicines. MDG 8 had 6 targets, 16 indicators, and was being monitored by the MDG Gap Task Force in its annual reports. It was hoped that by meeting the MDG 8 targets, developing countries would be in a position to reach the other seven MDGs.

Mr. LaFleur provided a brief overview of the progress of the Global Partnership during the MDG era in five key areas: resource mobilization, market access, debt sustainability, access to technology and access to affordable medicines. On resource mobilization, ODA flows increased, but not enough as a share of GNI. In terms of improving access of LDC exports to developed countries markets, there had been steady progress with lower tariffs, preferential access to agricultural products from LDCs, and lower subsidies in developed countries. Recently, the Bali package was completed, with special provisions for developing countries. On debt sustainability, the focus in practice had been on HIPCs, which saw declines in their debt service burdens and increases in poverty-related expenditures. Access to medicines had also improved, particularly for HIV treatment, but still remained inadequate and expensive. In technology, there was much progress in reducing the gaps and lowering costs.

Mr. LaFleur summarized the efforts of monitoring and reviewing partnerships for development at the global, regional, and national levels, highlighting the role of the United Nations. This was followed by an overview of broader partnerships for development that go beyond MDG 8. These were defined as being cooperative international deliberations to design strategies for countries to reach development objectives and were concerned with means of implementation.

The efforts at creating these partnerships existed within a global governance structure that was increasingly decentralized and had many actors that were regional and ad-hoc (G-x groups). There were many specialized bodies with limited membership but of growing importance (FSB, FATF, Basel Core Principles), and groups with common concerns on various issues (e.g., tax policy, corruption, illicit financial flows).

As a result, there was an evolution of development partnerships to respond to the new actors and new sources of financing, namely non-DAC donors, South-South cooperation models, philanthropic organizations, and vertical funds (e.g., GAVI, GPE), shifting focus of development partnerships from economic to social and environmental issues. Though cooperation was initially conceived to promote economic growth and structural transformation in low-income countries, following the proposal of social and sustainability goals (the precursors to the MDGs), the objective shifted towards social and environmental issues. There was also a shift from donor-recipient to mutual

and universal assistance. Mr. LaFleur stated that the challenge to revitalize the Global Partnership was significant and must keep pace with the emergence of new actors and changing global environment, such as new trade and financing models and an evolving governance architecture.

Mr. Kawamura continued the presentation by pointing to three fundamental inadequacies that existed in the global partnership which were identified by the proposed SDG 17:

1. The partnership was not equipped to manage deepening globalization and to provide global public goods (trade, international capital flows, migration and tax matters).
2. There were pervasive asymmetries in the international decision making between developing and developed countries (e.g., IMF, WTO).
3. The standardization of rules led to a shrinking of the policy space of developing countries.

He continued with a discussion of what was required to address these deficiencies, namely:

1. First there was a need for an ambitious new agenda, which would require significant political and financial commitment;
2. Sustainability goals would require structural transformation, not just social and health interventions;
3. Global Partnership must address structural deficiencies in global governance and global imbalances in trade, migration, financing, environment, etc.

Mr. Kawamura proposed some guiding principles as we defined a new partnership, as follows:

1. Common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) in accordance with respective capacities; tackling common problems, but with different financial and technical capacities;
2. Inclusiveness, transparency and accountability: without the first two, decisions lacked universal legitimacy; accountability was necessary for commitments to be implemented;
3. Coherence among global rules and regulations and between national and global rules; calling for a holistic and comprehensive assessment of rules and regulations.

The presentation concluded with the following list of ten lessons for the post-2015 era:

1. The MDG period was a reminder of the importance of "global enablers" for supporting national governance and achieving development goals. Regulations in trade, finance, tax, migration and etc. were also important.
2. Proliferation of new partnerships and emergence of new players would continue in the new era. A global coordination mechanism was needed.
3. Organizations of limited membership should be more closely associated with the UN system to strengthen legitimacy and ensure coordination.
4. Some global rules and regulations in trade and trade related areas were inflexible and did not take into account different capabilities. Too many trade agreements existed.

5. On the other hand, there were too few rules regulating financial flows, cross-border migration and international tax matters.
6. The new era could benefit from more coherent or new rules to support domestic efforts to achieve SDGs, as global enablers.
7. There was a clear need for a broad-based technical but inclusive monitoring group, and for a succinct annual report for the public on progress and challenges
8. There was a need to ensure that more and better data were collected by national offices through standards and technical assistance.
9. Cooperation across existing mechanisms to review and share data and add value to existing assessments needed to be promoted.
10. Flexibility in the partnership to adjust to emerging needs and changing landscape of financial and regulatory conditions should be maintained.

Comments from Discussants

Mr. Joroen Kwakkenbos, European Network on Debt and Development (EURODAD)

Mr. Kwakkenbos divided his comments into what he referred to as general, and more specific. His general comments included suggestions that the chapter be more ambitious, in particular in terms of development cooperation. There were many lessons to be learned from MDG 8, and the chapter needed to identify successes and failures and show how they had functioned from the civil society perspectives. Without sharing risks, rewards and responsibilities among stakeholders, there would be no results. Overall, the chapter did not describe what MDG 8 really looked like. Mr. Kwakkenbos' specific comment was that the chapter neglected to mention some of the major global partnerships, for example the Aid for Trade partnership with ILO.

The chapter also needed to be clear about the different roles that governance and partnerships played. Governments were primarily responsible for governance; and the definition and scope of partnerships for facilitating progress towards achieving the targets listed in the MDG 8 needed to be adequately addressed. For example, the 0.7 per cent goal had not yet been achieved while, instead, ODA had declined in recent years. This could be interpreted as a lack of seriousness in achieving this goal. ODA was not facilitating domestic resource mobilization and there was no discussion in the chapter on how ODA was spent. In the realm of trade, WTO was not functioning, but no one at present could change the situation. Another critical issue was that of innovative resources for financing. To address these issues it was necessary to clearly define what partnerships should look like.

Finally, the chapter needed to be careful about attributing significantly improved access to Internet and IT services to the MDGs.

Ms. Caroline Lombardo, Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination (OESC), UN-DESA

Ms. Lombardo started her comments by saying that global partnerships needed to be clearly defined. For one, global partnerships for sustainable development in SDG 17 covered wider areas than did MDG 8, and referred widely to multi-stakeholder partnerships at the global and regional levels. As such, she questioned the purpose of discussing MDG 8 at all. She further argued that the chapter was required to state the purpose of global partnerships for sustainable development, the essential features of the global partnership, its relationship to international cooperation, and the reason for the renewal of the partnership for the post-2015 era.

Ms. Lombardo then provided section-specific comments as follows: section 2 needed to pay attention to the nature of each multi-stakeholder (or at least the dominant ones) and address the challenges to be discussed in the ensuing sections. Section 3 needed to describe the emerging challenges in relation to the changing landscape of global partnerships and link them to the future agenda. Section 4 could expand its scope about global partnerships with regard to, for example, their advocacy role, resource mobilization and engagement among stakeholders. Engagement of global partnerships with regional and national partners would be critical, as well. Section 5 needed to examine the value-added of monitoring and reviewing global partnerships for the purpose of sustainable development. Monitoring results would affect daily activities of stakeholders at the field level and the quality of their development efforts.

Mr. Brian Tomlinson, Aid Watch Canada

Mr. Tomlinson began his review of chapter VI by stating that this was a challenging chapter because global partnership did not exist in reality. What really existed in “global partnership” was based on unequal relations among countries, with the interest of large donors dominating the interactions.

Mr. Tomlinson felt that a partnership should be a joint initiative by participating stakeholders and contributed to equally by all of them according to their respective means towards common goals and shared benefits with mutual accountability for the outcomes. In the history of development cooperation, however, the benefits of aid transfers (as outcomes of partnership?) have been neither automatic nor obvious, even where the shared goal had been poverty reduction.

In the area of ODA, the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2011) had not evolved in a desirable way and its outcome was dominated by the interest of large donors. About 20 per cent of the increase in ODA disbursement to developing countries up to 2010 was attributed to aid to Afghanistan, and was not necessarily related to development or poverty reduction. In addition, while the LDCs’ share in total ODA to developing countries increased since 2000, Afghanistan received 17 per cent of allocable ODA that went to LDCs.

Even with the implementation of debt reduction measures during the MDG period, the chapter should recognize that different countries had different motivations to participate in this reduction initiative, and the policy space of debt-recipient countries had been negatively affected by the

conditionality associated with debt reduction. It was also important to recognize partial movements/the “partial nature” of global partnership in the debt reduction initiative.

Mr. Tomlinson highlighted the following recent ODA trends: (1) ODA from OECD/DAC increased up to 2005, but became flat thereafter. In real terms, however, ODA increased up to 2010, but it also subsequently became flat. Despite the recent stagnation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain had already reached the 0.7 per cent goal and thus deserved credit and recognition; (2) the share of ODA to LDCs improved significantly since 2000 and now accounted for more than 50 per cent of allocated ODA (net of debt forgiveness) since 2010. It was noted that Afghanistan received about 17 per cent of aid disbursed to LDCs; (3) the “aid-proxy indicator” – a sum of aid flows to the health, sanitation, social sectors and general environment – showed only marginal increase since 2000 and declined in 2013; (4) regarding the emergence of new providers of development financing, in 2013, while OECD/DAC provided \$123.6 billion to developing countries, non-traditional bilateral official donors sent \$23.5 billion and civil society organizations as a whole, \$48 billion. It should be noted that south-south cooperation had been increasing rapidly, but only four countries from the South (China, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and United Arab Emirates) accounted for about 90 per cent of those flows. Overall, a narrow set of countries influenced the nature of ODA. Mr. Tomlinson emphasized that a partnership does not appear in a vacuum, but emerged and evolved over time while progressing towards shared objectives.

Mr. Tomlinson concluded with a few additional comments. Firstly, the very basic framework of development – the human rights framework – should come at the beginning of the chapter. Secondly, when talking about “partnership”, the chapter should take into account the inherent power imbalance in countries’ relationships. Thirdly, while monitoring exercises were very expensive to undertake and the availability of recourse was key to success, the chapter did not examine any resource issues. Finally, it was important to review the experience of the Busan Partnership in drawing lessons for the SDG period.

Open discussion

Binayak Sen

Mr. Sen felt the chapter needed to examine human right implications for global partnership and the role of civil society organizations in global partnerships more explicitly.

Mr. Birger Fredriksen

Mr. Fredriksen posed the question of what was the quality/capacity of global institutions to address key development issues. In his opinion, for example, the capacity of WHO to respond to the Ebola crisis was not strong enough, and UNESCO did not play any major role there. This could lead one to question the level and quality of national distribution channels to provide global public goods, which demanded strong governance and credible capacity to implement interventions.

Concluding Session

Mr. Joroen Kwakkenbos

Mr. Kwakkenbos raised a few points. Firstly, given the users/target audience of the WESS, the language needed to be simple. Secondly, the primary focus of the report was the identification of lessons that could be gained during the MDG period and not the attribution aspect. Finally, the report needed to be open about the fact that not all the MDGs could have been achieved due to limitations and difficulties during the goal setting stage.

Mr. Pingfan Hong

Mr. Hong clarified that the WESS was a UN publication that was submitted directly to the ECOSOC for inclusion in intergovernmental debate and discussion. It was also geared towards the general public. It hopes to offer policy guidance, but it cannot impose its recommendations.

Mr. Lenni Montiel

Mr. Montiel said that the “attribution challenge” was difficult to address and therefore the WESS team had a big challenge on its hands ensuring that the issue did not become an obstruction to the consolidation of a good report.

Mr. Montiel also challenged the participants to read the entire publication as a way of helping to produce a consistent report that leads to the same key messages in all the chapters. It was important for the report to offer consistent messages and cross references and, above all, to move from the story of the MDGs to the lessons of the MDGs. He stated that the meeting definitely produced rich debate over the two-day period.

Mr. Brian Tomlinson

Firstly, Mr. Tomlinson suggested that the key to success lay in how the messages were formulated. They should be focused on the critical areas that were still problematic for the SDGs, thereby offering forward-looking advice rather than looking back. Secondly, the report needed to ramp up and place at the centre the sense of urgency around the issues raised. It was not merely an academic exercise. Thirdly, it was fundamentally important for the UN and its work to frame the report within the human rights agenda because this was something shared all over the world. It might be a normative framework but without its reference it is easy to become lost. Finally, the diversity of actors was important, but the question was how to engage the actors effectively and tackle growing constraints faced by the civil society. The report should point to the need to overcome these challenges.

Mr. Laszlo Pinter

Mr. Pinter felt that it was important to decide whether the lessons to be learned coming out of the report related to how to set up and implement goals, and/or whether the WESS also wanted to speak to how the work should look like. There was more to be said about the lessons if sustainability were to be taken seriously. The inter-linkages also had to be more consistent throughout the report; the introduction must be consistent with the body of the report.

Mr. Pinter also urged consistency with the narratives across chapters. There was indeed an integrated story, but, for example, what transpired with the environment related more to issues addressed by other chapters and not primarily those of the environment chapter. Also, the elephant in the room was growth, which must be decoupled from the impacts in order to effectively tackle poverty. Otherwise poverty remains an economic issue.

Mr. Binayak Sen

Mr. Sen suggested that one possible focus of the report could be on how to create opportunities for and remove obstacles to the ascent of the poorest of the poor. The governance chapter could focus on inclusive governance for this group. He also stated that concrete examples of the growth experience over the MDG period could be presented or strengthened throughout the report, and offered suggestions for making the report more popular.

In short, the general, ground-level tone of the report should be that those who have been derailed needed to be brought back up, and those who had made progress needed to be further supported. This would be good for a third-world country reading.

Mr. Anis (Anisuzzaman) Chowdhury

Anis stated that it was important to decompose growth and how it impacted all development goals rather than focus on inclusive growth.

Mr. Joroen Kwakkenbos

Mr. Kwakkenbos stated that as the report attempted to do, the thematic areas should be clearly identified, with the weaknesses and strengths of each MDG and the lessons learned presented in the various chapters, and what should be done going forward. The attribution aspect was secondary because with respect to policy it was almost impossible to ascribe causality. The question was whether the MDGs encouraged progress or not, and whether this meant anything in the end.

Mr. Nazrul Islam

Firstly, Mr. Islam said he could try to summarize all the points that were raised over the two days, but given the extensive discussions that had occurred he thought it best to assure the meeting that

extensive notes had been taken and that the team would take into account all the suggestions and comments. In fact, a team meeting had already been scheduled on the coming Monday to discuss everything.

Secondly, Mr. Islam informed participants that the MDGs were arguably the greatest initiative in the development process and the UN system therefore needed to provide its own commentary on the MDG experience as it moves to post-2015. This presented a very challenging undertaking as it needed to satisfy a wide range of stakeholders while simultaneously produce something meaningful. Nevertheless, the team is trying to meet this challenge.

Thirdly, Mr. Islam said that within the UN system there were many monitoring reports on the MDGs, but what was missing was an analysis that could generate forward-looking lessons. The objective of the team was also to produce something that added value to what already existed. The situation is however tricky: on the one hand, the report could not aim to influence SDG goal-setting. On the other, there was the expectation that analytical insights could contribute to the SDG goal-setting process, but this had to be done without over-stepping boundaries since the process had already begun though not yet fully complete. WESS 2015 therefore tries to strike a delicate balance.

Finally, the report was being produced within certain constraints in that it should not offend member states. At the same time, it is still expected to produce novel and interesting messages for its broader audience.

Diana Alarcon

Ms. Alarcon stated that regarding the final integration of all the chapters there seemed to be three different and competing lines of argument put forward by Mr. Islam, but that these needed to be reconciled in order to make that final and difficult decision regarding the purpose of the report. Firstly, there was the issue of not being able to influence SDG goal formation. Secondly, and in particular reference to chapter 2, there was the question of what policy makers needed to do going forward in order to integrate the economic dimension of growth into social policies. This could be explored in various chapters of the survey. Thirdly, the report could focus on what had been done in the MDG period in terms of policy design and implementation and what could be learned from what was done. This has particular implications for chapter 3 and, to some extent, chapter 6.

Mr. Joroen Kwakkenbos

Mr. Kwakkenbos said that although there was no time for the report to influence SDG goal formation, it could still try to identify the limitations to and lessons from the MDG goal-setting process that could be transferred to the SDG process. There was still room to ambitious and yet be realistic.

Mr. Lenni Montiel

Mr. Montiel confirmed that this WESS exercise was definitely not going to influence SDG goal setting. What would be more useful for the team to clarify to its audience that this was an exercise being set within very clear limits between the MDGs and the SDGs, and that the analytical focus was on the MDGs. There is already a large amount of literature on what had already been achieved and the lessons that resulted, so the team had to be very accurate on what it proposed in the report. Perhaps of the Survey could identify gaps where lessons had not yet been produced, but the report must not be confused with the SDG process irrespective of whether it presented lessons that could feed into the process. Finally, Mr. Montiel stated that the report would make every effort to convey accurate messages, and that this meeting had been very useful in helping the team to determine and clarify what these messages were.

Mr. Laszlo Pinter

Mr. Pinter stated that goal-setting was a function of governance, and that whether we wanted it or not, the report really should offer some messages and lessons that could help the SDG process. It would not provide a blueprint for what countries should do, but there was a need for guidance and there might still be an opportunity for the report to lend support to this.

Mr. Pingfan Hong

Mr. Hong thanked participants for the very rich and useful discussions that helped to make the purpose of the report clearer than before. The challenge now lay with effectively integrating the six chapters. The objective was to produce a unique piece with all six chapters consistently written and effectively integrated with one another. Mr. Hong reiterated his view that the report definitely could not influence SDG goal setting, but it was anticipated that once the SDG declaration was launched (this time there would be ownership of the goals as opposed to what transpired with the MDG process) the report could serve as a reference (lessons for post-2015) to countries as they moved to the next stage of developing their national strategies on how to transform global goals into national actions.

Annex 1: List of Participants

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Annex 2: Agenda



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND ANALYSIS DIVISION

World Economic and Social Survey 2015
on
MDG Lessons for Post-2015

Expert Group Meeting II
26-27 February 2015
Conference Room S-2724 BR, 27th floor, United Nations Secretariat Building

Draft Agenda

This second Expert Group Meeting (EGM) is convened to discuss the draft chapters of *World Economic and Social Survey 2015*, scheduled for publication by July 1. The meeting will bring together MDG experts from the academia as well as various UN agencies.

Thursday, 26 February, Venue: S-2724 BR

9:15-9:30 **Participants gather** (tea and coffee will be served)

9:30-9:45 **Welcome and Introduction**

Welcome by **Pingfan Hong**, Development Policy Analysis Division (DPAD), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)

Introductory remarks by **Lenni Montiel**, UN-DESA

9:45-11:15 **Session I: History, impact, and framework of analysis**

Chair: **Pingfan Hong**, DPAD, UN-DESA

Presenter: **Nazrul Islam**, DPAD, UN-DESA

Discussants: **Sakiko Fukuda-Parr**, New School for Social Research
Nicole Rippin, German Development Institute
Sanjay Reddy, New School for Social Research

Open discussion

11:15-11:30 **Coffee and tea break**

11:30-13:00 **Session II: MDG lessons regarding economic policies**

Chair: **Nazrul Islam**
Presenter: **Pingfan Hong**
Discussants: **Binayak Sen**, Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies
Sanjay Reddy/Ingrid Kvangraven, New School for Social Research

Open discussion

13:00-14:00 **Lunch (First floor cafeteria)**

14:00-15:30 **Session III: MDG lessons regarding social policies**

Chair: **Nazrul Islam**
Presenter: **Marco Vinicio Sanchez-Cantillo**, DPAD, UN-DESA
Discussants: **Lynn Freedman**, Columbia University
Birger Fredriksen, formerly with Human Development in Africa Division, World Bank
Babatunde Omilola, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New York

Open discussion

15:30-15:45 **Coffee and tea break**

15:45-17:15 **Session IV: MDG lessons regarding environmental sustainability**

Chair: **Pingfan Hong**
Presenter: **Nazrul Islam**
Discussants: **Laszlo Pinter**, International Institute for Sustainable Development and Central European University
Inga Winkler, German Institute for Human Rights
David O'Connor, Division for Sustainable Development (DSD), UN-DESA
Michael Cohen, New School for Social Research

Open discussion

Friday, 27 February, Venue: S-2724 BR

10:00-11:30 **Session V: MDG lessons regarding governance**

Chair: **Nazrul Islam**
Presenter: **Hamid Rashid**, DPAD, UN-DESA
Discussants: **Juwang Zhu**, Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM), UN-DESA

Henk-Jan Brinkman, Peacebuilding Support Office, UN
Diana Alarcon, Office of Under Secretary General (OUSG), UN-DESA

Open discussion

11:30-11:45 **Coffee and tea break**

11:45-13:15 **Session VI: MDG lessons regarding global partnership**

Chair: **Pingfan Hong**

Presenter: **Marcelo LaFleur**, DPAD, UN-DESA

Discussants: **Jeroen Kwakkenbos**, European Network on Debt and Development (Eurodad)

Caroline Lombardo, Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination (OESC), UN-DESA

Brian Tomlinson, Aid Watch, Canada

Open discussion

13:15-14:30 **Lunch (First floor cafeteria)**

14:30-15:30 **Concluding Session**

Chair: **Pingfan Hong**

Overall remarks: **Nazrul Islam**

Open discussion

Vote of thanks