

## Initial Finnish NGO comments to the Road to Dignity by 2030

### - the UNSG synthesis report

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Para 20 serves as a good motto: *"This is no time to succumb to political expediency, or to tolerate the lowest common denominators. The new threats that face us, and the new opportunities that present themselves, demand a high level of ambition and a truly participatory, responsive and transformational course of action."*

... underlined by para 158: *"2015 is hence the time for global action. ... to adopt sustainable development, to restructure the global financial system in line with our needs, and to respond finally and urgently to the challenge of human-induced climate change."*

### General remarks

- It is positive that the report calls for inclusiveness and sustainability and economic transformation. However, even if the framing is improved compared to the OWG report, the UNSG does not include the structural changes of prevailing economic paradigm to the chapter 3.2 on transformational change, and the report still contains contradictory text on sustained growth.
- A strong faith in technology
- All the specific groups of people separated from the mainstream population. The latter consists merely of - men.
- Climate change and planetary boundaries are paid attention to.
- Particularly weak language on womens' rights.

### Pluses

- The whole chapter 1 is a needed bold statement. We hope it is reflected in full in the final outcome in September 2015!
- the report calls ambition from member states to correct the inequities that have long plagued the international system to the disadvantage of developing countries, a fairer representation of emerging and developing countries in international financial and economic decision-making, better regulation and more stability in the international financial and monetary systems, and sustainable debt solutions.
- We are very pleased to see that the role of the youth is highlighted throughout the document in many ways, especially in para 68.
- The reference to the need for disaggregated data is also welcome (although perhaps the list of sectors to disaggregate by is not comprehensive enough) as this will be key in terms of ensuring that young people are not left behind.
- We affirm the recognition in the report of the need to invest in **the unfinished work** of the MDGs, and to use them as a springboard for the future we want.
- We are particularly encouraged by the affirmation that **no one should be left behind** (para 51) and the commitment to using a **'transformational approach'** (in 3.2) whereby no goal or target will be considered met unless met for **all** social and economic groups (para 65).
- In addition to children and youth, we are pleased to see special attention being given to other marginalized people, such groups of people who are often uncounted and unreached, including slum dwellers, people with disabilities, minorities, refugees & displaced populations (para 51, para 68). However, it is unfortunate that people living in poverty and

- marginalized people are not seen as active change agents.
- The reference to LGBT groups is most welcome (para 78)
  - Covering universal health-care and **ending preventable maternal, new-born and child deaths and malnutrition** is highly welcome (70).
  - **The commitment to the most vulnerable is reflected in the prominent inclusion of peace and stability** throughout the report.
  - Mainstreaming **planetary boundaries and environmentally sustainable development** (in addition to social and economic development) is well presented in the Report and highly welcome.
  - We affirm the emphasis on **partnerships** throughout the document and particularly the inclusion of partnerships as one of the six essential elements for delivering the new framework (paragraph 66, 80-81). We would be keen to endorse the global partnership, but as partnerships per se are formulated vaguely and the accountability mechanisms are not clear, we would rather leave this point out at this moment. The same goes with the partnership point below.
  - **Human rights** are central and the UNSG's approach is **from charity to justice**: The new agenda should be **built on the principles of human rights and consistent with existing international law & commitments**. However, from time to time the language is quite vague and it is regrettable that, regardless of the form charity to justice starting point, there are no specific references to the power imbalances and tackling structural or root causes of poverty, inequality and human rights violations.
  - The report calls for measurable goals and strong indicators, and promises UN expertise to support them.
  - Calls to maximize commitment to public transparency, information sharing, participatory monitoring and open data, are welcome. Also the emphasis on enabling environment for CSOs, role of civil and political rights in regard to participation and the important role of CSOs is much more prominent than in the OWG report.
  - **Tax**: curbing illicit financial flows and combatting tax evasion are included. We welcome the call for establishment of an intergovernmental committee on tax cooperation, under the auspices of the United Nations. The next step must be a strong mandate for the body and to provide necessary resources.
  - **Corporate accountability**: The starting point is right: all companies must pay their taxes, and respect labour standards, human rights, and the environment. Calling mandatory corporate accountability reporting is a welcomed step forward, the next step should be to include mandatory country-by-country reporting for large multinational companies. A global legally binding corporate accountability framework promoting harmonization and implementation of existing guidelines would be needed.
  - The report calls to ensure investment policies are in line with the UN's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, core labour standards of the ILO, and United Nations environmental standards.
  - **Trade**: the report reminds of strong calls to correct the inequities that have long plagued the international system, to the disadvantage of developing countries; the international trade system needs to be reformed to be more equitable, and the Doha round needs to be concluded to ensure that our global intellectual property regimes and the application of TRIPS flexibilities are fully consistent with and contribute to the goals of sustainable development and to ensure effective regulation of markets and financial actors.
  - **Beyond GDP**: The report highlights the need to improve measures of progress in order to better inform policy decisions. However, because many mechanisms already exist they must be *implemented* urgently.

## Minuses/ points for further improvement

The report:

- reminds that people are strongly calling for a rigorous and participatory review and monitoring framework to hold governments, businesses, and international organizations accountable to the people for results, and to ensure that no harm is done to the planet is needed. The SG's vision of a "new paradigm" - of the accountability of all actors to the world's people as the "real test of people-centred, planet-sensitive development" is an inspiring one. We agree that the goal of this framework must be "to hold governments, businesses and international organisations accountable to the people for results, and to ensure that no harm is done to the planet". However, the proposal fails to lay a deep and broad enough set of foundations for such a transformation to be built upon. Therefore this calls for further attention to be directed, urgently, to the issue of accountability;
  - is much stronger on Governance and peaceful and safe societies than the OWG report. However, governance should be mainstreamed throughout the document, not just put under justice;
  - underlines universality and links it to policy coherence, but is silent on fair effort sharing model, CBDR and differentiation;
  - calls for norm-based policy coherence at all levels, corresponding reform of global governance mechanisms, and a renewed effective global partnership for sustainable development. However, calls appear indirectly in different parts of the report and don't provide concrete recommendations or tools, especially in MoI chapter;
  - sees poverty as multidimensional: but leaves the means quite vague;
  - calls for **Meaningful transformations of our economies**: it is positive that the report calls for inclusiveness and sustainability and economic transformation. However, even if the framing is improved compared to the OWG report, the UNSG does not include the structural changes of prevailing economic paradigm to the chapter 3.2 on transformational change, and the report still contains contradictory text on sustained growth.
  - does not mention that the UN General Assembly has initiated a process to develop a multilateral legal framework for sovereign debt restructurings by September 2015.
  - is too weak on gender equality, women's rights or women's empowerment, even if it recognizes "the decade of the women". It lacks a wider, sophisticated analysis on factors that affect the gender equality issues
  - is silent on the use of citizen-generated data.
  - does not mention sexual health or rights, but merely reproductive health and rights. This is a clear weakening compared to the OWG language. This weaker language must not be the starting point to the future negotiations!
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- The special needs of the youth are not mentioned, even if they are mentioned as a particularly important group.
  - The report should refer to the ICPD Beyond 2014 process. Member states support it!
  - Children appear to be too frequently absent or conflated with youth. Nor are children's voices listed as amongst those who need to be heard (para 65).
  - We call for the proposed zero tolerance for violence against women and girls to be extended to specifically include children, boys and girls, and not only girls.
  - The broad emphasis in the document on participation and inclusion of all segments of society is welcome (para 68). Unfortunately, however, the section on monitoring, evaluation and reporting falls short on citizen's (including children and youth) participation and presents citizens largely as beneficiaries of the accountability process.

- Cross-sector partnerships need to be focused on the needs of the most vulnerable and there needs to be a strong and rigorous accountability mechanism in place that covers all the actors.

We note the following omissions from the current draft and encourage their inclusion in the final draft:

- **Hunger**, and the imperative to address it, is grossly under-represented in the document,
- The lack of reference **birth registration** despite the recognized importance of improved data and services;
- a stronger commitment to the **elimination of child labour** in line with the OWG targets.

## The structure

- States should consider the Synthesis Report's proposal to cluster the Open working Group's 17 goals under core 'essential elements'. This would help to ensure an implementable agenda that ultimately delivers for the poorest and most marginalised.
- The 'People' cluster should be broken down into key constituent components to ensure that critical issues such as gender equality, universal health coverage and nutrition are not pushed down the agenda
- It remains unclear if the 17 OWG goals are retained in the new 6 essential elements or are the goals split between these elements.
- The work on targets not suitable to a negotiation process. States should take on board the recommendations for work to improve the targets included in the OWG's proposals in order not to dilute existing commitments
- The strong emphasis placed on inequalities by the OWG and the Synthesis Report must be reflected in the final agenda.
- More concrete commitments to ensure policy coherence for development should be established.
- National and global processes should also be linked to existing human rights mechanisms, e.g., with reporting on relevant SDGs as part of the UPR process.
- Further guidance should be established on how the global framework should be adapted to country context.
- Channels for citizen and civil society participation must be established at all levels of the accountability framework, including for children and marginalised groups.
- Greater attention must be paid to emergency settings, fragility, conflicts and chronic crises, including ensuring that the people are not deprived of essential health and education in these contexts. While the Synthesis Report highlights the need to rebuild societies after conflict and strengthen resilience, disaster risk reduction is on the whole neglected.
- As negotiations shift to the means of implementation, **we would like to see more discussion and concrete targets of how the people in the hardest and most remote places in conflict areas/fragile contexts will benefit from the framework.** E.g., in relation to peace and stability, this means tackling the drivers of conflict (access to resources, arms, drugs and human trafficking).

## Financing/ means of implementation

- We are encouraged by the proposition that **public funds must positively impact the poorest and most vulnerable in all societies** (para 90).
- Concrete targets should be established for domestic resource mobilisation and social sector spending, including a commitment to ensure that at least 20% of GDP is raised from taxation, and a commitment to review the impact of tax policies on the poor to ensure they are progressive.
- The international community must go further than the proposal and establish a permanent transparent and independent sovereign debt workout mechanism.
- The absence of recommendations on responsible lending and borrowing must be addressed.
- **Tax**: curbing illicit financial flows and combatting tax evasion are included. The next step must be a strong mandate for the body and to provide necessary resources. These are now missing. The call to ensure information exchange and judicial cooperation is positive. The information exchange should also be multilateral and automatic. Also, mandatory country by country reporting for large multinational companies should be added and is now missing.
- **Beyond GDP**: The report highlights the need to improve measures of progress in order to better inform policy decisions. However, because many mechanisms already exist they must be *implemented* urgently.
- **Corporate accountability**: The starting point is right: all companies must pay their taxes, and respect labour standards, human rights, and the environment. Calling mandatory corporate accountability reporting is a welcomed step forward, the next step should be to include mandatory country-by-country reporting for large multinational companies.
- A global legally binding corporate accountability framework promoting harmonization and implementation of existing guidelines would be needed.
- Debt: the report does not mention that the UN General Assembly has initiated a process to develop a multilateral legal framework for sovereign debt restructurings by September 2015.
- The report recognises that developed countries do not only need to fulfil their previous commitment to provide 0.7% of GNI as official development assistance (ODA) but that concrete timetables are needed to ensure that the target will be reached in a timely manner. It is, however, regrettable that there is no new commitment to improve the existing Istanbul commitments of ODA to the LDCs.
- The report covers only selective areas of the aid effectiveness agenda
- The recommendations to **adopt innovative ways to raise additional resources**, such as Financial Transaction Taxes (FTTs), carbon taxes, airline ticket levies, are welcome, but regrettably the report fails to mention that such taxes are also means for reducing the harmful economic, social and environmental externalities, or that removing harmful fossil fuel subsidies, both direct and indirect, is also an innovative source of financing while also correcting market externalities.
- The duty of states to provide adequate resources for meeting human rights commitments should be more clearly stated as these duties are primarily a matter of mobilising domestic resources, especially taxation.
- Blended finance entails many risks that should be clearly spell out.

To conclude: as the Report consistently notes, the ideas with which it engages are a product of a long and ongoing process of consultation. Ultimately, the challenge is **to ensure that the voices from people across the world - particularly the most vulnerable children and youth - are reflected in the framework and subsequent actions**. We look forward to that ongoing dialogue.