



# Chief Executives Board for Coordination

25 November 2015

English only

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## Report of the High-Level Committee on Programmes at its thirtieth session

(United Nations Headquarters, New York, 12 and 13 October 2015)

### I. Introduction

1. The High-Level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) held its thirtieth session at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 12 and 13 October 2015. The agenda of the meeting (annex I) and the list of participants (annex II) are attached to the present report.

2. Mr. Achim Steiner, the Chair of High-Level Committee on Programmes, opened the meeting by noting that the thirtieth session of the Committee was taking place against the backdrop of the remarkable United Nations Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, which had demonstrated the drawing power of the United Nations, and at which the General Assembly had adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through which Member States had delivered an historic set of global Sustainable Development Goals which were received with enthusiasm across the globe. In anticipation of this new agenda, the Committee had been at the forefront of efforts to identify what it means for the United Nations to be ready to support Member States and to work effectively as a system in response to the new 2030 Agenda, which will require complex and coordinated approaches.

3. Over the past 18 months, the Committee, in coordination with the United Nations Development Group and the High-Level Committee on Management, had developed a concrete set of actions geared towards enhancing the readiness of the United Nations system for the post-2015 era and had begun to “test drive” some of these actions on two key global policy issues. To that end, youth employment and sustainable urbanization served as entry points for the Committee to examine the interlinkages and implications of the core elements of sustainable development as identified by CEB — i.e., universality, inequality, integration, human rights and data. In doing so, the Committee played a critical role in supporting the CEB deliberations on strategic policy issues and emerging global challenges.

4. With the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development now beginning in earnest, the Chair stressed that the Committee had the responsibility to pursue its leading role as a think tank for the United Nations



system by focusing on “big picture” issues and articulating system-wide perspectives on them. One of Committee’s clear comparative advantages was its broadly scoped mandate, which encompassed the full range of the work of the United Nations system, transcending all its pillars. In view of the ever stronger focus on integration in the 2030 Agenda, the need for the Committee to act as a think tank for the Executive Heads of the United Nations system was greater than ever so that the United Nations system could tackle the major challenge of how to improve its work in the interlinked areas of development, humanitarian affairs, human rights and peace and security. The Committee had an important role to play and contributions to make as the system worked to attain higher levels of integration and collaboration in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

## **II. Agenda item 1: Climate change**

5. Inviting the Committee to turn its attention to the first item on its agenda, climate change, the Chair recalled that, at its twenty-seventh session, it had endorsed the 2014-2015 work programme of its Working Group on Climate Change. The programme included a review of the CEB climate change action framework and the preparation of a proposal for a longer-term system-wide climate change strategy. The Committee had before it a paper prepared by the Working Group that summarized key findings of a stocktaking exercise focused on achievements and gaps in coherence, cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system in addressing climate change and outlined options for a way forward. In considering the paper, the Committee was requested to provide guidance on the future direction for the coordination of the action of the United Nations system on climate change.

6. Summarizing the key findings of the stocktaking, Ms. Elena Manaenkova, Assistant Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization and the Chair of the Working Group on Climate Change, noted that while United Nations entities were increasingly integrating climate change into their strategic plans and mandates at the individual level, substantive and programmatic coordination among entities of the common system on climate change at the global, regional and national levels remained weak. The Working Group had been guided by the CEB Action Framework, developed in 2008, which, at that time, had been a useful first effort to structure the work of the system on this subject. Today, however, there was little awareness of the Action Framework, and it was further losing relevance in a post-2015 world which called for integrated action on climate change and sustainable development. Ms. Manaenkova noted that the Working Group had largely been focused on coordinating the United Nations system’s joint engagement in the work of the Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and had made only limited progress on more ambitious and strategic aspects of coordination.

7. Furthermore, the stocktaking exercise revealed that integration of climate risk into operations and other development activities had been ad hoc, and mechanisms to access key data and information for climate proofing were lacking. It also found that there was no framework in place for measuring impact of United Nations system-supported climate action on the ground. Ms. Manaenkova stressed that, without enhanced system coordination of the United Nations system, there was a considerable risk that it would lose relevance and credibility in the implementation phase of the climate change agreement in the context of the broader 2030 Agenda

for Sustainable Development. Against this background, continuing with business as usual was not considered a viable option by most members of the Working Group.

8. The report, therefore, outlined two real options for the way forward. The first option entailed the development of a United Nations system climate change strategy that was focused on policy and high-level programmatic coherence and coordination. This could entail developing a policy and programming framework for addressing climate change, also aimed at promoting integration with sustainable development and disaster risk reduction. The Working Group, within its current mandate through the spring of 2016, could generate recommendations for the development and implementation of this option, under the guidance of the Committee and in consultation with key stakeholders across the system. Challenges with such an approach, however, included the lack of engagement with the operational arm of the system, which could threaten awareness, ownership, uptake and impact at the field level, and thus make it a less effective pathway to integrating climate risk into operations.

9. The second option proposed in the report entailed the development of a system-wide, comprehensive strategy. Building on the above-mentioned policy-focused approach, a comprehensive strategy would extend more formally and explicitly to the operational side of the United Nations system, including programming, policy support to Member States and the integration of climate risk into operations. This approach could include commonly agreed objectives on coordination of climate action, aligned with the Paris outcome, as well as a monitoring system to measure impact. This option would be more responsive to demands at the country level and could lead to greater ownership and uptake. It could also create the foundation for reporting on climate financing and activities, and strengthen the impact and relevance of the activities of the United Nations system on climate change by maximizing synergies across the system.

10. However, Ms. Manaenkova noted, the development and implementation of a comprehensive strategy would require a major investment of political will, commitment, time and resources across the United Nations system. The absence of an entity clearly mandated to lead the coordination on climate change posed a further challenge. Moreover, the development of a comprehensive strategy would clearly go beyond the scope of the Committee and its Working Group, and would need to be developed through broader consultations bringing together the policy, operational and administrative arms of the system. This would require dedicated financial and human resources. In sum, Ms. Manaenkova concluded that the first option was more feasible, but that it might have a more limited impact, while the second option, with a potential for maximizing impact, required a major commitment and investment by the system.

11. Thanking Ms. Manaenkova for her leadership and the Working Group for its work, the Chair invited Mr. Janos Pasztor, Assistant Secretary-General on Climate Change, to provide the Committee with an assessment of progress and challenges in relation to the road to the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention in Paris, from the Secretary-General's perspective.

12. Mr. Pasztor informed the Committee of positive developments, which occurred during the annual meeting of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund in Lima in the area of climate finance, a critical aspect of the climate negotiations. He noted that confidence among Member States was growing due to:

(a) a credible pathway through the commitment of \$100 billion annually in climate finance by 2020; and (b) a politically viable option through the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties in Paris in December 2015. In addition, political convergence on some complex issues of the negotiations was on the rise. In view of these developments, he felt that there was reason for optimism, although several challenges remained before a successful outcome could be assured.

13. Mr. Pasztor noted that while many countries had submitted their national climate action plans, referred to as intended nationally determined contributions, a few countries needed the support of the United Nations system in preparing their contributions in time for the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties. Mr. Pasztor further underlined the importance of coherent messaging by the United Nations system on climate change, and also noted in this context that a set of core messages was being developed and would be shared in due course.

14. Turning to the future approach of the United Nations system on climate change, Mr. Pasztor conveyed the Secretary-General's view that a "business-as-usual" response by the system would not be appropriate. While some specific issues might arise from the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties, it was evident that the climate agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals needed to be implemented in an integrated way; it was one agenda. This called for a comprehensive approach, encompassing conceptual aspects related to policy and programming as well as action on the ground, as outlined in option 2 in the report of the Working Group. However, further reflection was needed on the boundaries and the appropriate depths of such an endeavour.

15. Opening the discussion, the Chair encouraged the Committee to particularly reflect on the following three issues: first, the need to strike a balance between addressing climate change as an integral part of the broader 2030 Agenda on the one hand, and ensuring an adequate response of the United Nations system to climate challenge on the other. In this context, he alerted the Committee to the risk of creating a separate, self-serving process, potentially resulting in an ineffective balance. Second, the need to rise to the challenge and play a central role in supporting Member States in addressing climate change at the national and global levels. Third, the need to strike a balance between pragmatism, which should enable the United Nations system to be operational and start delivering on climate change in 2016, and the advantages of developing a comprehensive, long-term strategy owned by the entire system.

16. In the ensuing discussions, the Committee expressed broad agreement with the assessment of the Working Group on the need for more coherent and coordinated action by the United Nations system on climate change. The members of the Committee expressed divergent views on the proposed options, ranging from the position that minor adjustments to the current approach would be appropriate, to an approach that focused on high-level policy coordination with some programmatic guidance to the entities of the system. In juxtaposition, several members expressed the view that in order to remain relevant and match the high level of ambition of Member States and civil society, the system would have to demonstrate not only programmatic coherence, but also operational coherence and impact on the ground, which could only be achieved through a comprehensive strategy aimed at enhancing complementarity and mobilizing joint action at the global, regional and national levels.

17. While noting the proliferation of system-wide action plans, the members of the Committee underscored the need to draw on lessons learned from the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the United Nations System Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience and other recent experiences. The Committee identified the following factors as critical for the success of a system-wide strategy on climate change: strong leadership through a lead agency (or agencies); ownership and buy-in from across the system; the establishment of agreed standards and mechanisms to enhance compliance; and commitment of the entities of the United Nations system to report on those agreed standards. It was important to be cognizant of the considerable investment of commitment, time and resources that are required to develop, implement and monitor system-wide strategies. The Committee further suggested that, to be effective, any strategy on climate change would need to make a forceful reference to the normative basis of the work of the United Nations system and its role in setting standards and monitoring. In this context, climate justice was mentioned as an area of particular and growing concern.

18. It was stressed that, ultimately, the efforts of the United Nations system would need to be geared towards supporting practical action on the ground and building the required staff capacity. Underlining that climate action and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals represented one inextricably linked agenda, Committee members stressed the importance of aiming at enabling the United Nations system, including at the country level, to become a strong partner of Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. To that end, and to ensure that any policy and programming guidance on climate change was informed by a thorough understanding of national realities and needs, the field and regional perspectives would need to be taken into account from the onset. A unified United Nations system strategy on climate change would also need to entail enhanced efforts to share data and knowledge for climate action among all organizations of the system, as well as tap into work in other inter-agency bodies such as UN-Water and UN-Energy, in order to maximize access to complementary capacities across the system. Fostering linkages between climate finance and climate programming, as well as the integration of climate risks through a risk management approach at the field level, were considered additional areas that a potential strategy on climate change should address. Furthermore, the need to provide guidance on the role of partnerships in climate action, including with the private sector and civil society, was noted.

19. With regards to the two options for the way forward — a policy-focused approach or a comprehensive strategy that also covers the operational aspect — the Committee generally agreed that, rather than seeing them as alternatives, both were needed. It was proposed to take a step-by-step, phased or incremental, approach, starting with policy and programmatic coherence, but with a clear path towards a comprehensive strategy. The Committee underlined that while it was well placed to lead the development of a policy-focused approach, formulating a more comprehensive strategy was beyond its scope and would require the engagement of all three mechanisms of CEB and other parts of the United Nations system.

20. As a first step, the Committee suggested that the Working Group on Climate Change could develop a policy-focused approach to climate change, for the consideration of the Committee at its next session in March 2016, noting also that the mandate of the Working Group would expire at that time. It was further suggested that the entities of the United Nations system with both normative and

operational mandates develop, through a small task team, a possible road map towards the second step, a comprehensive system-wide strategy, for the Committee's further consideration. Such a road map should consider working arrangements for the development, roll-out and implementation of a comprehensive strategy, taking into account gaps in integration with other climate-related work streams within the system, including disaster risk reduction, humanitarian action, as well as nexus issues of the 2030 Agenda. The possible road map could also include the expected impact and added value of a comprehensive strategy as well as resource needs. Several Committee members underscored the need to avoid creating new processes and structures, but instead the need to build on existing coordination mechanisms within the system. A mention was also made that in order to ensure effective linkage between policy/programme coordination and field-level implementation, consultations and alignment were important between the respective efforts under the two phases, as well as with other relevant inter-agency forums.

21. Several Committee members noted that the development of a system-wide approach to coordinated climate change action would provide an important opportunity to reflect on the ability of the United Nations system to effectively support Member States in the implementation of an ambitious and complex climate agenda. It would also present an opportunity to deepen collaboration among relevant inter-agency mechanisms, as well as across the three pillars of the Charter of the United Nations, and further inform the discussion on how the system could best support the implementation of other Sustainable Development Goals. In conclusion, the Chair noted that, overall, the members of the Committee demonstrated their broad support for the need for coordinated climate action by the United Nations system, to be pursued in a phased manner, and thanked the Working Group for having provided the Committee with a good starting point to work towards this goal.

### **Conclusion**

22. **The Committee concluded its discussion, noting the following:**

(a) **Overall, the Committee expressed support for the need to develop a system-wide approach to coordinated climate change action in a step-by-step/phased manner, with a sense of urgency, recognizing the importance of comprehensiveness in scope;**

(b) **Pending the upcoming CEB discussion and the outcome of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as a first step of a step-by-step/phased approach, the Committee tasked its Working Group on Climate Change to prepare, for consideration at its thirty-first session, in March 2016, a proposal for the first part of the strategy focused on system-wide policy and high-level programmatic coherence and coordination;**

(c) **Pending the upcoming CEB discussion and the outcome of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as a basis for further consideration by the Committee of a possible comprehensive system-wide strategy, the Committee asked the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme and the Department of Economic and Social Development of the Secretariat to lead, at a suitably senior level, through a small task team, the preparation of a possible road map towards**

such a strategy, bearing in mind the importance of linkage between policy and operational aspects and, thus, coordination and alignment with the above-mentioned first-phase effort as well as other relevant inter-agency efforts.

### **III. Agenda item 2: Human rights: inequalities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

23. It was recalled that, at the twenty-ninth session of the Committee in March 2015, a discussion paper had been prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) that explored the concept of inequalities as a central element of the post-2015 agenda and a driver for greater mainstreaming of human rights in sustainable development. The paper had also highlighted the practical implications of a human rights-based approach to addressing inequality in the post-2015 agenda and had proposed specific recommendations to promote the systematic integration of equality concerns into the policies, programming and practices of the organizations of the United Nations system. Following the Committee's discussion, OHCHR had been requested to lead the effort to develop, over the course of 2015, a Committee "positioning paper" articulating a system-wide framework to guide the work of the organizations of the system related to inequalities in the context of the post-2015 agenda. To contribute to that effort, Committee members had provided OHCHR with inputs outlining the perspectives, approaches and expectations of their respective organizations.

24. The Chair brought to the Committee's attention the draft position paper prepared by OHCHR, reflecting the Committee's guidance during the twenty-ninth session, as well as member inputs received thereafter. He observed that this work also presented an opportunity to discuss the wider fitness-for-purpose and evolution of the United Nations system in the context of the 2030 Agenda, and a chance to reflect on where the system as a whole and CEB in particular found themselves in the context of the political consensus put forward by Member States. Observing that the problem of inequality had multiple "entry points", the Chair specifically posed a question as to whether the paper had fully captured these and the unifying thread to inequalities in all its dimensions.

25. The Chair highlighted the three proposed actions. First, he invited the Committee to decide whether it would recommend that CEB consider endorsing its position paper as a basis for initiating the elaboration of a common United Nations system approach to integrating inequalities in its efforts in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, under the overall umbrella of the United Nations system's common understanding on the human rights-based approach. Second, he asked the Committee to discuss whether CEB should be invited to develop and adopt a brief policy statement to put the imperative of reducing inequalities and eliminating discrimination at the heart of the Organization's efforts in implementing and monitoring the 2030 Agenda and to call for a common approach in this regard. Finally, on the basis of such a CEB policy statement, the Chair invited the members of the Committee to consider options for ensuring coordinated response, either through a system-wide action plan on addressing inequalities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda or through a lighter joint implementation plan.

26. The Chair thanked the representative of OHCHR Mr. Craig Mokhiber, Chief of the Development and Economic and Social Issues Branch, and his colleagues for

advancing this work, which he highlighted as intrinsically linked to the 2030 Agenda's key imperatives of "universality" and "leaving no-one behind".

27. In introducing the draft paper to the Committee, Mr. Mokhiber noted that the issue of inequality and its human rights implications had been embraced by the Committee and the wider United Nations system, both of which had showed a strong commitment to addressing the challenge. He observed that the 2030 Agenda was largely an agenda for equality, with two Sustainable Development Goals devoted entirely to inequality,<sup>1</sup> as well as numerous related elements reflected in the problem statement, in a number of targets and in the call for broader disaggregation included in the Agenda. The Agenda's adoption demonstrated a high degree of political consensus that inequality was a serious problem with far-reaching negative impacts across all three pillars of the Charter, affecting a number of areas, including social cohesion, economic growth, peace, security, democracy and human rights. The Agenda recognized that inequality was not inevitable, but was rather a direct result of policy action (or inaction). It emphasized accountability, for example with its calls for measuring progress, disaggregating data, focusing on marginalized groups and tackling discrimination. Mr. Mokhiber also recalled that equality was a Charter principle, enshrined in various United Nations treaties and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Thus, he emphasized that the United Nations system had both a firm normative grounding for its approach to inequality as well as an agreed political agenda for implementation.

28. In this context, Mr. Mokhiber recommended that the Committee focus its deliberations on how to advance a norm-based approach to addressing inequalities through fast, effective, coherent action across the United Nations system that would, simultaneously, demonstrate its fitness for purpose. He highlighted the components that would be needed in a human-rights based approach to combating inequalities and discrimination in the 2030 Agenda, namely:

- (a) Systematically analysing data disaggregated or collected on an expanded list of specific population groups;
- (b) Developing new tools to capture multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination;
- (c) Developing equality/equity monitoring methodologies to monitor trends over time, to ensure the progressive reduction of inequalities;
- (d) Moving beyond the focus on formal equality towards a focus on substantive equality, by measuring opportunities and outcomes, particularly in relation to horizontal inequalities;
- (e) Building joint analysis and programming to address the structural and root causes of inequality and discrimination in policies, programming and advocacy;
- (f) Strengthening participatory mechanisms of accountability.

29. In closing, Mr. Mokhiber reiterated the three proposed decisions for consideration by the Committee, already presented by the Chair, and added that, should the Committee agree, OHCHR, together with UN-Women, was willing to lead the inter-agency consultation process to advance the proposed work.

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<sup>1</sup> Goal 10 on reducing inequality within and among countries, and Goal 5 on achieving gender equality.

30. The Committee expressed appreciation for OHCHR's leadership in this important area of work and welcomed the paper. The document was seen to be well articulated and comprehensive. Members felt that the draft effectively brought together the five key elements of the post-2015 agenda identified by CEB. The focus on substantive equality, and the emphasis on the contribution of the United Nations system to data collection and data disaggregation, were appreciated. Also welcomed were references to the root causes of inequalities, refugees and displaced persons, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and universal access to the Internet.

31. In the ensuing discussion, the Committee acknowledged that equality and non-discrimination were at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. The members of the Committee, however, cautioned that careful thought was needed on how the United Nations system should respond to this imperative, and, in particular, on the role of CEB and each of its subsidiary mechanisms in formulating the response.

32. A number of suggestions to improve the draft were shared over the course of the discussion, while others were offered to be submitted in writing. Some members felt that the length could be reduced, with a view to making it more concrete and operational, while others asked for further additions. It was suggested that the paper could benefit from greater elaboration on the conceptual framework to strengthen the cohesiveness of the argument linking human rights and inequality. With respect to equality of opportunities and outcomes, it was suggested that the paper should reflect not only on people's rights, but also responsibilities, by emphasizing the need to build the capacity of duty-bearers to meet obligations and of rights-bearers to claim their rights. It was also felt that the paper could benefit from a more nuanced analysis on vertical and horizontal inequalities. Also mentioned was the importance of addressing the causes of, and solutions to, economic, social and environmental inequalities both within and among nations as a key factor of success for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, a suggestion was made that, in the light of the need to cover both development and humanitarian efforts, the paper go beyond the realm of development instruments (e.g., the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process) in its analysis and recommendations. Other topics suggested for addition or strengthening included references to the United Nations system common understanding on human rights-based approach, the rights of the child, the right to enjoy scientific progress and to take part in cultural life, enabling refugees to access livelihood opportunities and the need for a fundamental change in taxation paradigms. While some members stressed that inequality is core to their missions, it was suggested that it must be pursued within the mandates of their institutions.

33. It was observed that the development of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators was well advanced, and that any effort to monitor the support of the United Nations system to the reduction of inequalities and discrimination should be appropriately aligned with the process being carried out through the Statistical Commission. A number of interventions also stressed the need for capacity development within the United Nations system so that staff could more effectively contribute to this effort. On this point, it was suggested that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and/or the United Nations system training institutes could take the lead in developing relevant resources for staff, in collaboration with other relevant entities.

34. Many interventions were supportive of the proposal for developing a CEB policy statement, seeing it as an opportunity to send a strong message from the Board. It was stressed that the framing of any such statement would be important, and that care should be taken to be brief, while also avoiding being too reductionist.

35. In considering the proposal for a system-wide action plan or joint implementation plan, the Committee generally saw value in exploring a common approach to reducing inequality, and highlighted the desirability of a joined-up and coordinated response, which would enable the system to leverage the benefits that arose from action being pursued on a range of different “entry points”. Nevertheless, there were diverging views on the appropriate scope and modality of such collaboration. While a few supported a structured system-wide action plan, members generally felt it preferable to take a more pragmatic approach to action through various entry points, making the best use of already existing tools and instruments. A suggestion was also made that as a first step, a gap analysis by mapping existing agency initiatives, tools and processes could be undertaken, as a basis to identify possible joint tools and initiatives. It was also noted that other existing system-wide action plans had achieved differing levels of impact and usefulness and that factors contributing to their success or otherwise needed to be carefully considered in identifying a suitable modality.

36. General concern was expressed about the possible proliferation of system-wide action plans. Numerous speakers cautioned against multiplying system-wide guidance, developing strategies in parallel tracks and creating heavy additional processes and overwhelming country teams, noting that consideration should rather be given to the development of a single, joined-up and integrated guidance that addressed the entire 2030 Agenda, including all its Goals. Furthermore, the need to make use of available tools and mechanisms, while filling any gaps, was stressed. In the light of these broader concerns, various suggestions for advancing the work on inequalities, with a light touch, were offered by members, including through forming a time-bound task team of interested agencies to identify a few key actions, employing an agency-driven approach whereby each entity would progress their own programme and take joint action where beneficial, focusing activity on gaps not being addressed by other existing mechanisms or processes, and developing a common approach on social and environmental standards as a means of integrating human rights.

37. United in the view that there was ultimately one integrated development agenda, the Committee felt that ideally any joint effort on reducing inequality and discrimination should be integrated as part of an overall United Nations system approach and mechanism to implementing and monitoring progress towards the achievement of all of the Sustainable Development Goals. Although seen, overall, as beyond the scope of the Committee and thus not intended for its action, the importance of developing an overall “template” or a common action plan for the implementation of all of the Sustainable Development Goals was stressed by a number of members, while others noted that any effort to this end should follow guidance emanating from the forthcoming CEB second regular session of 2015. Also stressed was the importance of ensuring complementarity and proper sequencing of and coordination among guidance produced by the three CEB high-level committees.

38. Closing the session, the Chair recognized the overwhelming support for the framing of an inequality response by the United Nations system within the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. He concluded that the Committee approved the position paper for onward transmission for CEB's endorsement, subject to a last round of revisions and a quick electronic circulation before it was finalized and transmitted. As a next step, OHCHR should lead the consultation process to develop a succinct CEB policy statement for the Committee's consideration at its next session. In the light of the various views presented, the Chair also requested OHCHR, with other interested agencies, to further reflect on possible tools or mechanisms that were most appropriate to subsequently take this work forward across the system. In this regard, he noted the approach, as suggested in the paper, to extract from Sustainable Development Goals and targets and indicators an analytical framework for inequality.

39. Furthermore, when transmitting the Committee's eventual recommendation to CEB, the Chair felt it important to convey to the Board the fact that the Committee considered it critical that the United Nations system identify an overall point of integration or synthesis for the implementation of all of the Sustainable Development Goals, within and towards which the contributions of the CEB machinery, including the Committee, would need to be conceptualized and pursued, rather than, for example, developing a system-wide action plan for each Goal in parallel tracks.

#### **Conclusion**

40. **The Committee concluded the following:**

(a) **Subject to the incorporation of its comments and subsequent electronic endorsement, the Committee approved the positioning paper (as set out in annex III to the present report), for endorsement by CEB at its second regular session of 2015;**

(b) **The Committee requested OHCHR to lead the process to prepare a draft CEB policy statement for its consideration at its thirty-first session in March 2016;**

(c) **The Committee further requested OHCHR to develop, in consultation with others, proposed options for possible approaches or instruments to further advance this work, also for its consideration at the thirty-first session.**

#### **IV. Agenda item 3: Promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies, preventing conflict, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

41. Opening the discussion on promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies, preventing conflict and the 2030 Agenda, the Chair recalled that CEB, at its first regular session for 2015, had discussed the issue of global threats and reaffirmed the need for a system-wide approach that combined efforts across the three pillars of the Charter in order to address the complex and interconnected challenges facing the world today. At its forthcoming session in November, the Board was planning to discuss how to better integrate the humanitarian, development, peace and security

and human rights efforts of the United Nations system. In preparation for that discussion, the Secretary-General had requested the Department of Political Affairs to prepare, through the Committee, a paper focusing on the critical interlinkages of peace and security issues with the other pillars of the Organization's work, with a view to creating a coherent and integrated system-wide vision and approach in the post-2015 era. The Committee was invited to consider, based on the discussion paper presented before it, key issues and challenges in pursuing system-wide engagement towards building peaceful, just, and inclusive societies and preventing conflict, and necessary steps to strengthen the readiness of the United Nations in this regard. The Department of Political Affairs, the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations were invited to participate in the discussion on this item.

42. Introducing the discussion paper entitled "Promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies, and preventing conflict," Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, Director, Policy and Mediation Division, Department of Political Affairs, noted that the 2030 Agenda offered a comprehensive framework for the United Nations system to assist Member States in addressing, over the next 15 years, some of the biggest challenges the world was facing today. Concurrently with the finalization and adoption of the global Agenda for Sustainable Development, a considerable number of interlinked policy and review processes had been carried out in the fields of peace and security (High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations; Advisory Group of Experts on the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture; Global Study on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)), financing for development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda), disaster risk reduction (Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction) and humanitarian affairs (preparations for World Humanitarian Summit; High-level Panel on Humanitarian Financing). Combined, those processes and reflections provided a rare chance to look broadly at today's challenges and at the tools at the Organization's disposal for tackling the issues in a holistic and coherent way. Moreover, the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 16, offered a unique historic opportunity to re-examine how the United Nations system could best work together towards the common goal of promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies and preventing conflict as the "threshold condition" for sustainable development.

43. In introducing the six sub-chapters of the paper, Ms. Spehar noted that the Sustainable Development Goals presented an opportunity to pursue a comprehensive approach to the world's developmental, human rights and peace and security challenges by moving from the rhetoric of the interdependent nature of the work of the United Nations to making it an operational reality. In this regard, new approaches were needed that would more effectively integrate the Organization's efforts across the pillars towards a shared purpose. Three common central messages had been identified in the different reviews in the field of peace and security that were also at the heart of making the system more coherent and effective: (a) the importance of prevention in all its dimensions; (b) the primacy of political solutions; and (c) the need to deepen United Nations system collaboration.

44. Ms. Spehar noted that the recent key reviews assessed that the international community had "failed at prevention". As preventing conflict was a shared responsibility of the entire United Nations system, it needed to better utilize a multitude of tools it already had available and act together towards realizing this

common objective under the Charter. Building on comparative advantages and overcoming fragmentation would be key in this regard, as closer collaboration among the different parts of the system would be a prerequisite for supporting peaceful, just and inclusive societies. The 2030 Agenda was a critical framework through which the system could work together to support sustainable development and contribute to sustaining peace. Political goals such as ending conflict and ensuring good governance needed to find their place alongside and integrated with social, economic and environmental objectives. The operationalization of the Sustainable Development Goals presented a common pathway for the integration of peace and security, development and human rights. In this context and in support of CEB's forthcoming discussion on the issue, Ms. Spehar invited the Committee to focus in particular on the relevance of Goal 16 for the entire United Nations system and how to operationalize it through a coordinated approach; as well as the role of CEB and the Committee in this regard.

45. The Chair, underscoring that there was no break between the pillars of the Organization's work, challenged the Committee to focus on what was new about the narrative at this historic juncture, and where the United Nations system needs to reinvest and conceptually rethink its approaches to make it work differently and more effectively.

46. In the ensuing discussion, the Committee expressed its appreciation to the Department for the preparation of the discussion paper. Many members of the Committee emphasized the historic significance of Goal 16, which reaffirmed the normative, conceptual, programmatic and operational linkages between sustainable development and peace and security, and strongly supported the notion that peace was at the heart of and a prerequisite for development, and vice-versa. The Committee welcomed this initiative and stressed its commitment to paying continued attention to and engagement on this important issue, bearing in mind its mandate of promoting system-wide integration and coherence across all the three pillars of the Organization's work.

47. It was pointed out that the 2030 Agenda was as much an agenda for peace as it was an agenda for development, and that all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, — of which Goal 16 was the most directly, though not exclusively, relevant for peace and security — included aspects aimed at supporting the establishment and maintenance of peaceful, just and inclusive societies. In this regard, building on existing analysis of relevant elements across all the Goals was seen as potentially beneficial for articulating the clear relevance and linkage of peace and security perspectives in the 2030 Agenda.

48. With regard to Goal 16, the Committee was also reminded that its focus went beyond the promotion of peace and the prevention of conflict and covered a wide array of related issues, including accountable and transparent institutions, the rule of law and access to justice, arms flows, organized crime and corruption, birth registration and access to information. It was felt to be important that these broader aspects of Goal 16 were appropriately taken into account. It was suggested that the United Nations system could build upon the experience of collaboration and consultation in the preparation of Goal 16, in terms of bringing together disparate parts of the system around a joint objective, articulating interlinkages and reconciling different conceptual frameworks and approaches, including through CEB and the Committee.

49. The Committee broadly agreed with the paper's focus on conflict prevention and sustaining peace as a shared responsibility of the entire United Nations system and an area where the system needed to work more and better together. Relevance of whole-system efforts, directly or indirectly, to the promotion of peace and the prevention of conflict was affirmed, while, as pointed out by one member, the differing scope and focus of each organization's mandate and work was noted. The members of the Committee observed that system needed to enhance collaboration and coordination in the area of common analysis of the drivers of violence and the root causes of conflict. In this regard, some members raised, more broadly, the need for a system-wide approach to conflict risk management, possibly through a broad-based partnership, noting that this current initiative could make an important contribution in this regard.

50. Members underscored the importance of collaborative and coordinated planning, noting that based on an integrated analysis of the risk factors, including socioeconomic and environment and underlying conflicts, a common vision that would link development, peace and human rights perspectives and efforts could be developed. It was felt that a shared system-wide vision and the related conceptual clarity could help overcome existing operational barriers that too often in the past had hindered the successful linkage from peacekeeping to peacebuilding to recovery and reconstruction to development, conflict prevention and the sustaining of peace. In the context of developing such a shared vision, the need for further clarification on the concept of the primacy of political solution and its relationship with, e.g., human rights considerations, was mentioned as necessary.

51. Recalling past attempts/inter-agency programmes and endeavours in this area, such as the integrated mission planning process, an analysis of past experiences — both successes and challenges — was suggested as helpful as a way to learn lessons and be able to better support United Nations country teams operating in conflict-afflicted countries. Several members provided examples of measures that have already proven effective in preventing conflict, such as education, including human rights education, promotion of tolerance and cultural diversity; building institutional resilience and shock-resistant national systems; and regional partnerships. The quadrennial comprehensive policy review was viewed as an important process to advance a business model for the United Nations system that successfully responds to diverse country situations.

52. Many members of the Committee highlighted specific aspects relevant to their respective mandates and areas of expertise that were seen as critical for the promotion of peaceful, just and inclusive societies and the prevention of conflict. It was suggested that the linkage between peace and development be addressed in a more explicit and holistic manner by focusing on particular development issues that were especially pertinent for the prevention of conflict and for sustaining peace. For example, socioeconomic and environment factors such as food insecurity, conflict over access to land and other natural resources, forced displacement and undermining of State structures by transnational organized crime and corruption, were cited as frequent drivers of violence and conflict. Successful examples of supporting efforts to sustain peace by integrating technical expertise on environmental issues could be drawn upon. The important role of women in conflict prevention and sustaining peace was particularly emphasized. One member pointed to a spreading, albeit relatively new, aspect of conflict, cyberviolence, which posed novel challenges to the United Nations system and the world at large that needed to be tackled.

53. In general, participants stressed the importance of an inclusive approach and partnerships by which communities, civil society and the private sector actively and systematically participated in the process of building and sustaining peace and promoting sustainable development. National ownership and capacity-building for conflict prevention and crisis response at all levels were critical in this regard. Other areas where members of the Committee were of the view that more work was needed included preparedness, mediation, risk assessments and resilience. The regional and subregional dimensions of conflict needed to be taken into account as well. Aviation was cited as an industry heavily affected by conflict but also one that made important contributions to enhancing safety and security.

54. Some participants also touched on the important question of insufficient funding for prevention. The debate on integration needed to address funding flows and funding sources since efforts at prevention and preparedness required considerably more investments. The Peacebuilding Fund was provided as an example of a mechanism that had been successful in providing flexible funding for post-conflict initiatives in a way that incentivizes integrated approaches. Fragmentation in the intergovernmental area was also mentioned as an impediment to integrating efforts in the areas of development and peace and security.

55. Many members of the Committee recognized that CEB and the Committee had an important role to play in overcoming existing obstacles and enhancing United Nations system coordination towards greater integration across the three pillars of the Charter and joint action in implementing Goal 16. Importance of coordination with the United Nations Development Group, where operational aspects of this issue are being addressed, was also noted. It was suggested that CEB take a comprehensive look at the issues of crisis and conflict prevention, with a view to bringing the outcomes of the various review processes together towards a joint strategic vision as well as practical steps forward.

56. In conclusion, the Chair observed that the members of the Committee had welcomed this timely initiative and had demonstrated the Committee's particular contribution to the topic. Noting that the objective of the discussion was to provide input to CEB's deliberation on the issue at its November 2015 retreat session, the Chair invited the Department of Political Affairs to take into careful consideration the discussions at the Committee as it further develops the paper as an input for the upcoming CEB discussion.

#### **Conclusion**

**57. The Committee welcomed the initiative and affirmed its commitment to its continued engagement in this important area of work. The Committee agreed that the Department of Political Affairs, taking the Committee's comments into careful account, would proceed to prepare, on the basis of the discussion paper, an input to CEB's deliberation on this topic at its second regular session for 2015.**

## **V. Agenda item 4: disaster risk reduction**

58. Inviting the Committee to turn its attention to the item on disaster risk reduction, the Chair reminded the Committee that, at its twenty-fifth session, in March 2013, it had endorsed the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience, prepared by its Senior Management Group on Disaster

Risk Reduction. The Chair further recalled that the Committee had requested the Senior Management Group to report back to the Committee's thirtieth session on progress made on the Plan of Action, taking into account developments in relation to the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and the 2030 Agenda.

59. Thanking Ms. Margareta Wahlström, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Chair of the Senior Management Group for her leadership, the Chair of the Committee invited her to present a note prepared by the Senior Management Group that proposed a revision of the Plan of Action. In addition to considering the paper and its recommendations, the Chair encouraged the Committee to reflect on its potential future role and that of its Senior Management Group, if any, as a time-bound entity, while noting the need to find a longer-term institutional home for advancing the implementation of a revised Plan of Action. He further invited the Committee to consider how the revision of the Plan of Action could serve as an example of the United Nations system practically applying the concept of universality in its work.

60. Ms. Wahlström provided the Committee with an update on recent intergovernmental developments related to disaster risk reduction that prompted the Senior Management Group to propose a revision of the Plan of Action. She recalled that key features of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction included a major conceptual and programmatic shift from managing disasters to managing risks, and an agreement on four priority areas for action: (a) understanding disaster risk, (b) strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, (c) investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience, and (d) enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "build back better". The Sendai Framework had explicitly called on the organizations of the United Nations system to assist, within their respective mandates, with its implementation in coordination with other relevant frameworks, including through the development and the strengthening of capacities, and clear and focused programmes that support the priorities of Member States.

61. Against this background, the Senior Management Group proposed a revision of the Plan of Action that would be guided by three elements: (a) performance: while some programmatic alignment with the Plan of Action had taken place at the global and regional levels, major challenges existed at the national level, due mainly to a lack of prioritization of disaster risk reduction by Member States, as well as insufficient guidance to country teams. In this context, Ms. Wahlström noted that only a few entities of the United Nations system had made disaster risk reduction a strategic priority; (b) alignment with the 2030 Agenda: a revised Plan of Action was needed to provide guidance on how to establish strong linkages between the major intergovernmental outcomes, especially in the area of implementation, and address how to leverage partnerships to meet the ambitions of the Sendai Framework; and (c) accountability: the revised Plan of Action would need to be backed by an accountability framework and a results-based management system to ensure ownership and assess progress on the implementation of the Plan.

62. The Committee expressed broad support for the need for a revised Plan of Action. In the ensuing discussion, the Committee welcomed the increasing focus on risk management of the Sendai Framework. It was underscored that this focus required a significantly different approach to analysis and programming, which in turn required a commitment of the United Nations system at the highest level to embrace it. One member suggested that risk management and resilience-building be

considered a potential sixth core element of the 2030 Agenda to guide the efforts of the United Nations system to support its implementation. Developing risk assessments or risk profiles at the country level was mentioned as a key prerequisite for a shift to managing risks. This was considered an area where the entities of the United Nations system could effectively contribute their respective technical expertise to inform national disaster risk reduction strategies. With respect to national development plans and strategies, Committee members further highlighted the role of the system in facilitating the broadest participation possible, including different parts of government as well as local authorities and communities.

63. Several Committee members suggested that the focus of the Plan of Action should shift from merely offering a global, macro-level framework to providing operational guidance and tangible support to the country teams. Consolidating and reinforcing existing guidance and tools, aligned with efforts of the United Nations Development Group, such guidance should be geared towards addressing disaster risk reduction as an integral part of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, including through strong linkages with climate action and conflict prevention. Members further suggested that the revised Plan of Action included guidance on managing industrial as well as cyber risks. The role of information and communications technologies (ICTs) and transport infrastructure in managing disaster risk was also highlighted. With regard to partnerships, the Committee stressed the importance of engaging the private sector in disaster risk reduction, while underscoring the principal responsibility of Governments. In this regard, the need to develop safeguards to guide partnerships in the United Nations system with the private sector was also mentioned.

64. The Committee underlined the importance of providing adequate funding to United Nations country teams and Resident Coordinators to implement the revised Plan of Action. In this regard, the Senior Management Group was requested to provide more clarity on the resources required for the roll-out of the revised Plan, as well as a clear engagement strategy on how to bring different parts of the United Nations system into the process. By providing technical expertise to risk assessments and the quantification of potential disaster related losses, the United Nations system could promote the prioritization of disaster risk management and the allocation of adequate resources to reducing risks at the national level. In this context, Committee members noted that resource allocation was increasingly based on risk assessments. Examples in this area included forecast-based and index-based financing. In addition, several members emphasized the need for funding mechanisms related to climate change and peacebuilding to be accessible for disaster risk reduction efforts, underscoring once again the importance of adopting risk management as an overarching principle to guide implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

65. Committee members expressed particular appreciation and support for the results-based management framework proposed as part of the revised Plan of Action. Several Committee members underlined the need to find an appropriate balance between measuring impact at the macro-level and ensuring that efforts are targeted at those most at risk of disasters. For the latter, the availability of disaggregated data was considered to be of critical importance. The Senior Management Group was encouraged to take existing baselines and frameworks for measuring results into account when developing the proposed results-based management framework.

66. In conclusion, the Chair thanked Ms. Wahlström for her presentation and the members of the Committee for their constructive comments. With regard to the scope of the revised Plan of Action, he suggested that the Plan focus on developing an analytical framework on disaster risk management as a cross-cutting approach that would provide the organizations of the United Nations system and country teams with a certain degree of flexibility in applying the approach in a context-specific way. He further proposed that more specific guidance on operationalizing the framework at the country level could more suitably be articulated by the United Nations Development Group. Once the revised Plan of Action had been adopted, the Senior Management Group would have delivered on its mandate. The responsibility to coordinate, monitor and review progress on its implementation should thereafter be borne by the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

### **Conclusion**

**67. The Committee approved the proposed way forward and requested the Senior Management Group, under the leadership of the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, to prepare, taking into account the guidance provided by the Committee, the revision of the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience, for consideration by the Committee at its thirty-first session. As part of this work, the Senior Management Group was also requested to consider a suitable coordination arrangement to monitor and review progress on the implementation of the revised Plan of Action after its work is completed.**

## **VI. Agenda item 5: Summary of information items**

68. The Committee, prior to the current session, had received, via electronic mail, the following information notes for its review and endorsement on a non-objection basis. No objection had been received. The Committee was thus invited to take note of these reports which provided updates on progress achieved since its twenty-ninth session.

### **A. Urbanization and sustainable development**

69. The information note, prepared by the Committee's Working Group on a New United Nations Urban Agenda, provided an update on the work of the Working Group, in particular the progress in the development of the Committee's paper on "Urbanization and sustainable development: a United Nations system input to the New Urban Agenda" and issue-based partnerships on the New Urban Agenda.

### **B. Istanbul Plan of Action for the Least Developed Countries**

70. The information note, prepared by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, (OHRLLS), outlined the efforts under way in the preparation of a set of proposals related to United Nations system-wide implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, in particular the development of a toolkit for mainstreaming the Programme of Action into the work

programmes of the organizations of the United Nations system. Once approved by the Inter-Agency Consultative Group at its meeting in November 2015, the toolkit would be shared with the members of the Committee through online consultations, and will subsequently be annexed to the OHRLLS progress report to be submitted to the Committee at its thirty-first session. At that session, the Committee will be requested to take note of the toolkit, prior to its launch at the United Nations system high-level event during the comprehensive midterm review of the implementation of the Programme of Action in June 2016.

### **C. UN-Water, UN-Energy and UN-Oceans**

71. Information notes, prepared by UN-Water, UN-Energy and UN-Oceans, offered progress updates on recent activities of these three inter-agency coordination bodies.

#### **Conclusion**

72. **The Committee took note of the information notes.**

## **VII. Agenda item 6: youth employment**

73. The Committee was reminded that, at its twenty-eighth session, in October 2014, it had agreed that the youth employment crisis was a universal challenge to which many organizations of the United Nations system could contribute, and that it had thus supported the proposal of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to establish a time-bound task team on youth employment to develop and launch a global initiative on decent jobs for youth. The Committee had further prescribed that this work should provide a prototype platform for applying the five key elements of the post-2015 agenda identified by CEB and supporting “fit-for purpose” efforts by mobilizing the capacity of the United Nations capacity and putting into practice issues-based multi-stakeholder partnerships. The task team’s terms of reference had been approved by the Committee at its twenty-ninth session in March 2015 and subsequently endorsed by CEB at its first regular session of 2015. The terms of reference stipulated that the proposal on the initiative would be considered by the Committee at its thirtieth session. In keeping with the agreed timeline, the Committee had before it a draft strategy for the global initiative on decent jobs for youth.

74. Before inviting Ms. Azita Berar Awad, Director of the Employment Policy Department, ILO, to introduce the proposed strategy, the Chair commended ILO and the task team, and observed that this work was a test of whether the United Nations system could do justice to the 2030 Agenda. Noting that the youth employment crisis touched virtually every United Nations entity in some form, he asked members to reflect on whether they were confident that the initiative served as a good example of an issues-based coalition, spoke to the three pillars of the Charter and responded to the five CEB-identified elements. He sought confirmation that the proposal was resilient enough for the principals to stand behind.

75. Ms. Berar Awad highlighted the rapid, inclusive and constructive consultative process that had produced the draft strategy. She felt that it demonstrated the ability of the United Nations system to respond to the new 2030 Agenda by bringing

together expertise and experience from various entities of the system<sup>2</sup> to form a coherent overarching strategy.

76. Putting the work in context, she noted that the labour market remained tight even though there had been a slight reduction in youth unemployment globally.<sup>3</sup> The crisis was a top policy concern for all Governments in all regions. To make inroads, action needed to be scaled up, made more coherent, and be based on evidence of what works in different circumstances. The task team envisioned the global initiative on decent jobs for youth as an agile mechanism to support policy innovation that addressed the rapidly changing labour market conditions. Built on a wealth of past work on and enriched by previous experience with this issue, the initiative would facilitate systemic action on youth employment in the medium- to long-term in support of the realization of the aspects of the 2030 Agenda that related to full, productive and decent work for young people. It would help increase impact and catalyse expanded country-level action to create an environment in which youth everywhere had greater access to decent work.

77. The strategy was formed around 14 guiding principles and composed of four interconnected elements: a strategic multi-stakeholder alliance that could influence policy, action and commitment; scaled-up regional and country-level action on decent jobs for youth; a knowledge facility that would make good practice from disparate sources accessible and digestible; and a dual financing track that maximized the use of existing facilities and funds to their full potential to promote youth employment and also mobilized additional dedicated resources to support the implementation of the strategy and action for youth employment. An 18-month launch and implementation phase was foreseen, during which, inter alia, the proposed governance mechanisms would be established, a three-year operational road map would be finalized and a number of country action plans and regional partnerships would be formed. Ms. Berar Awad stressed that the success of the initiative depended on the full support of the entities of the United Nations system that would become members of the Alliance.

78. The Committee welcomed the draft strategy, congratulating ILO on its effective, participatory and galvanizing leadership and the task team on advancing the important, timely and ambitious initiative. It was observed that youth issues appeared throughout the 2030 Agenda, and that young women and men were sources of innovation and creativity who would themselves be key to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals.

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<sup>2</sup> The Task Team was chaired by the ILO and its core members were: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNDP, UNEP, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in Palestine and the Near East (UNRWA), UN-Women, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank Group, as well as the International Trade Centre (ITC) and (ex officio) the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) joined the task team shortly before the Committee's thirtieth session.

<sup>3</sup> See "Global Employment Trends for Youth 2015" (<http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/youth/2015>).

79. Members agreed that the global initiative on decent jobs for youth is a good example of an issue-based coalition. Alluding to its earlier discussion, the Committee saw this as a potential template or model for a system-wide response in the context of the integrated and universal 2030 Agenda, in which a collective capacity was deployed to address a complex challenge. Many members reported that their principals were already fully briefed on and supportive of the initiative. Several agencies confirmed that their own operational strategies/plans were well aligned with it. Members appreciated that the initiative built on the commitment of the UN Youth-system-wide action plan. Specific references in the strategy document were welcomed, including to the importance of regional-level action, young women and gender equality, lifting youth out of vulnerable employment and easing the transition from informal to formal employment. The annex of select multi-stakeholder initiatives and partnerships was seen to be a useful reference.

80. To be successful, the Committee stressed that the initiative would have to have strong, active and visible leadership; be flexible; have dedicated staff to support its work; pool expertise according to partners' comparative advantages; and mobilize additional resources to achieve scale and impact of implementation, including through a thematic multi-donor funding facility. Some agencies specified ways in which they intended to contribute to the initiative, including by joining the multi-stakeholder alliance; engaging industry and other partners; offering to lead a particular thematic area of work; sharing knowledge and gathering and disseminating data in relevant domains; and offering regional platforms, both inter-agency and intergovernmental, to help move the strategy forward.

81. Members offered a number of comments to improve the draft. It was suggested that participation of young men and women in the development of youth-focused policies should be more pronounced in the strategy. As the source of most jobs, the role of the private sector could be amplified, including as active contributors to the formulation of youth employment plans and programmes. At the same time, the important role of the public sector and the need for youth to engage with it was also stressed. It was felt that the gender dimension could be enhanced, for example by addressing female entrepreneurs' access to finance, measures that reduced and redistributed caring responsibilities to ensure that young women had the opportunity to seek decent work and training and men's role in sharing nurturing/paternity responsibilities. To adequately respond to the risks identified, it was proposed that the mitigation measures enumerated in section 5.4 of the paper should be strengthened. It was also suggested that experience gained in developing the inter-agency policy for post-conflict employment could also be included in the endeavour.

82. Other issues that members felt could be addressed or reinforced in the draft strategy included the issues of focusing on skills development in addition to job creation, overqualification and the relevance of higher education, transferring informal jobs to formal employment, shifting employment in illicit economies to licit economies, unemployment benefits, capable institutions to monitor relevant national laws, expanding on how to secure a job path through youth to adulthood and introducing a "risk culture" into school curricula.

83. Following the discussion, the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi, pledged his full support to the initiative and welcomed the Committee's endorsement. He underscored the importance of the Youth-system-wide action plan in "connecting the dots" on youth issues across the United Nations system,

including at the country and regional levels. He saw value in the initiative's vision to strategically and systematically bring together various stakeholders, as well as in the knowledge management component. Although significant investment was needed, he highlighted the challenge in mobilizing resources in support of youth-related policies and programmes, and expressed hope that the initiative would realize strategic, scaled-up resourcing.

84. Ms. Berar Awad thanked the Committee for its supportive and constructive feedback, and provided assurances that the issues and interests of the various entities would be well reflected in the initiative. The strategy document was not meant to be exhaustive, and there would be mechanisms to pick up new and emerging issues as needed. Recalling the level of ambition of the initiative, she highlighted the explicit need for participating agencies to support a dedicated secretariat to guide its launch and implementation until such time that a dedicated funding mechanism was in place. She indicated that ILO was prepared to put resources towards the launch phase and expressed hope that the same collaborative spirit exhibited in developing the strategy would prevail when establishing a dedicated secretariat to support the early stages of work.

85. In closing the session, the Chair expressed his appreciation for the UNEP investment in the initiative and hoped the other Executives Heads would also contribute to the collective capacity needed to bring the strategy to fruition. He recognized the Committee's wholehearted support for the initiative, and requested ILO to reflect comments from the discussion, as appropriate, in a revised draft of the strategy, to be provided to the Committee ahead of transmittal to the CEB for the Board's endorsement. He stressed the importance of preparing the principals on this item, in particular recognizing that the Committee felt the global initiative on decent jobs for youth could provide a model of system-wide response to issues reflected in the 2030 Agenda.

#### **Conclusion**

**86. Highlighting its potential to serve as a model or template for a system-wide response to issues in the 2030 Agenda, the Committee approved the draft strategy for the global initiative on decent jobs for youth, as set out in annex IV, subject to the incorporation, as appropriate, of comments made during the session, for endorsement by CEB at its second regular session of 2015.**

### **VIII. Agenda item 7: other issues**

#### **A. Dates and venue of the thirty-first session**

87. Committee members were informed of the Chair's proposal to hold the thirty-first session of the Committee in Geneva on 8 and 9 March 2016. The secretariat of the Committee will revert to members of the Committee regarding the venue of the session.

#### **Conclusion**

**88. The Committee confirmed the dates of 8 and 9 March 2016 for its thirty-first session in Geneva.**

## **B. Any other business**

89. The representative of the United Nations System Staff College informed the Committee of the establishment of its Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development in Bonn, Germany, and invited those members of the Committee who had not yet done so to submit names of their focal points to the Staff College so that they could work together towards the development of suitable training programmes for United Nations staff.

90. The representative of UNCTAD as Chair of the United Nations Group on the Information Society, together with the representative of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, briefed the members of the Committee on the status of the 10-year review of the World Summit Information Society, complementing the note that had been shared in advance of the current session via electronic mail. In this context, the Committee was reminded that the World Summit, held in two phases, in 2003 in Geneva and 2005 in Tunis, assessed the potential of ICT for achieving the internationally agreed development goals. A two-day high-level meeting of the General Assembly to consider the 10-year review will be held on 15 and 16 December 2015 at Headquarters. In addition, the representative of ITU informed the Committee of the intention of the Group on the Information Society to prepare a joint statement for the approval of CEB at its forthcoming session.

### **Conclusion**

91. **The High-level Committee on Programmes took note of the information shared.**

## **IX. Closing/concluding remarks**

92. Drawing on the discussions held by the Committee over the past two days, the Chair noted the complex challenges the United Nations system was facing in tackling operationalization and implementation of the universal and integrated 2030 Agenda and invited the members of the Committee to further reflect on its particular role and its contributions as part of this system-wide effort.

93. In response, the members observed that over the past years the prospect of a universal and integrated sustainable development agenda had provided strong impetus for the Committee to assume a leadership role in exploring the practical applications of the five key elements of the agenda by focusing on specific global challenges, such as youth employment and sustainable urbanization, as well as by examining individual core elements — human rights, inequalities, and data — in greater depth. It was broadly supported that the Committee should continue to play such a “think tank” role.

94. Looking ahead, participants underscored that the Committee’s strength and value-added rested in its ability to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals from the vantage point of policy coherence and coordination. In this regard, the work of the Committee on the five key elements of the agenda was seen as the type of direction-setting and steering, for which the Committee was uniquely suited and at which it excelled. Building on that earlier seminal work, it was felt that the Committee should continue to play an important role, for example,

in further examining individual elements, such as “integration”, with a view to identifying a limited number of core actions that could be applied to each Sustainable Development Goal.

95. The members affirmed the view that the Committee’s comparative advantage laid in its function as a think tank and as a catalyst of ideas for addressing select global challenges from the perspective of policy coherence. In this regard, while the development of an overall system-wide strategy for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals was seen to be beyond its mandate, cross-cutting issues such as risk management, climate change and the challenge of integration could be explored further by the Committee in the future, pending the outcome of the CEB discussions at its second regular session for 2015.

96. While expressing support for the Committee’s continued policy-level focus, members also stressed the importance of contributing to effective normative-operational linkage. In the search for a “locus” that would bring together the different processes and strands in an integrated manner, participants emphasized the need to avoid adding to or duplicating already-heavy inter-agency mechanisms, but instead to better utilize, build on and link with existing forums in a practical manner. In this context, the Committee was reminded that the United Nations Development Group was already addressing the operational details of an integrated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the country level in its ongoing work. Complementarity between the work of the Committee and the Development Group, as well as other operationally focused inter-agency forums, was seen as critical. In this regard, the practice used for youth employment was noted as a good model, where the Committee’s policy and normative-focused work is being “relayed” by ILO, as the lead agency, to relevant mechanisms of the Development Group for operationalization on the ground.

97. In conclusion, the Chair concurred with the Committee’s view and expectation that the upcoming CEB discussion on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals offered an important opportunity for greater clarity on the overall direction for the United Nations system in the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda, which in turn would guide the direction of the Committee’s future work. He stated his intention to convey, in his report to the CEB, these issues and the “sense of urgency” felt by the Committee in this regard.

## Annex I

### Agenda

- Item 1: Climate change
- Item 2: Human rights: inequalities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Item 3: Promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies, preventing conflict, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Item 4: Disaster risk reduction
- Item 5: Summary of information items
  - (a) Urbanization and sustainable development
  - (b) Istanbul Plan of Action for the Least Developed Countries
  - (c) Reports of UN-Water, UN-Energy and UN-Oceans
- Item 6: Youth employment
- Item 7: Other issues
  - (a) Dates and location of the thirty-first session of the HLCP
  - (b) Any other business

## Annex II

### List of participants

Chair: Mr. Achim Steiner (UNEP)

Vice-Chair: Ms. Jane Stewart (ILO)

Secretary: Ms. Kayoko Gotoh

#### United Nations

Executive Office of the Secretary-General	Mr. Janos Pasztor Mr. Paul Akiwumi
Department of Economic and Social Affairs	Mr. Navid Hanif Ms. Sarah Nunez
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	Ms. Gwi-Yeop Son Mr. Robert Gaylord Mr. Murad Jeridi
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	Mr. Craig Mokhiber Ms. Sally-Anne Way
Regional commissions	Mr. Amr Nour
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction	Ms. Margaret Wahlstrom Mr. Neil Mcfarlane
Department for Political Affairs	Mr. Stephen Jackson Ms Elizabeth Spehar Mr. Francesc Claret
Peacebuilding Support Office	Mr. Oscar Fernández-Taranco Mr. Hens-Jan Brinkman Mr. Gianluca Rampolla
International Labour Organization	Mr. Andre Bogui Ms. Azita Berar
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Ms. Carla Micavi Ms. Sharon Brennen-Haylock Mr. Lucas Tavares

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Ms. Marie-Ange Théobald Ms. Marie-Paule Roudil Ms. Ana Persic
International Civil Aviation Organization	Mr. Boubacar Djibo
World Health Organization	Dr. Natela Menabde Mr. Werner Obermeyer
World Bank Group	Mr. Nicholas Bian
International Monetary Fund	Mr. Axel Bertuch-Samuels Ms. Nriya Subramaniam
International Telecommunication Union	Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin Mr. Gary Fowlie
World Meteorological Organization	Ms. Elena Manaenkova Mr. Christian Blondin Mr. Paul Egerton
International Maritime Organization	Mr. Jesper Loldrup
World Intellectual Property Organization	Ms. Lucinda Longcroft
International Fund for Agricultural Development	Mr. Zak Bleicher
United National Industrial Development Organization	Mr. Kazuki Kitaoka
International Atomic Energy Agency	Ms. Tracy Brown
World Tourism Organization	Mr. Sarbuland Khan
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	Ms. Chantal Line Carpentier Mr. Nils Engler
United Nations Development Programme	Mr. Michael O'Neill Mr. Stan Nkwain
United Nations Environment Programme	Mr. Elliott Harris Ms. Corli Pretorius Ms. Maaike Jansen Ms. Claudia ten Have
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	Ms. Anne-Christine Eriksson Mr. Buti Kale

United Nations United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	Ms. Jasmin Reitrigue
United Nations Children's Fund	Ms. Mandeep O'Brien
United Nations Population Fund	Mr. Ramiz Alakbarov
	Mr. Daniel Schensul
	Ms. Kanako Mabuchi
World Food Programme	Mr. Kenn Crossley
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes	Ms. Gillian Murray
	Mr. Gautam Babar
United Nations Human Settlements Programme	Mr. Naison Mutizwa-Mangiza
	Ms. Yamina Djacta
UN-Women	Mr. Moez Doraid
	Mr. Gustavo Gonzalez Canali
United Nations University	Mr. James Cockayne
United Nations System Staff College	Mr. Jafar Javan
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS	Ms. Angela Trenton-Mbonde
	* * *
Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Youth	Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi
	Ms. Saskia Schellekens
	* * *
United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office	Ms. Kanni Wignaraja
	Mr. Alex Warren-Rodriguez
Secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination	Ms. Simona Petrova
	Mr. Remo Lalli
	Mr. Ken Herman
	Ms. Xenia von Lilien
	Ms. Cheryl Stafford
	Ms. Catherine Zanev
	Mr. Silvan Scheiwiller

**ANNEX III****Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development:  
Towards a UN System-Wide Shared Framework for Addressing Inequalities  
and Discrimination in Implementation of the 2030 Agenda**

HLCP Positioning Paper  
(4 November 2015)

**Key Messages**

- 1) In the context of the threat of rising inequalities across the world, a central defining call of the 2030 Agenda is the commitment of States 'to leave no one behind', to 'reach the furthest behind first' and to address inequalities, inequities and discrimination, both within and between states.
- 2) This core commitment reinforces the UN's existing mandate to promote and encourage respect for human rights, including the international standards for equality and non-discrimination.
- 3) To be 'fit for purpose' to ensure that 'no one is left behind', the UN will need to put this priority at the heart of its efforts to assist Member States in implementing the new Agenda, by developing a shared framework for action underpinned by the UN's normative standards.
- 4) This shared framework would ensure a common UN voice and facilitate the systematic integration of measures to reduce inequality and end discrimination in UN support to Member States, as well as the development of shared tools for analysis and equity/equality monitoring to assess progress on 'leaving no one behind'.
- 5) This Positioning Paper proposes the CEB adopt a Policy Statement putting the imperative to combat inequalities and discrimination at the heart of UN system-wide support on implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Subject to CEB endorsement, the HLCP would establish a time-bound inter-agency task force, led by OHCHR and UN Women, based upon this positioning paper to 1) develop this Policy Statement and 2) develop a shared framework for action covering four broad areas: a) analysis; b) programming and policy support; c) monitoring tools and methodologies; and d) accountability and advocacy, to guide the UN system in delivering on this objective.

## **I - Introduction**

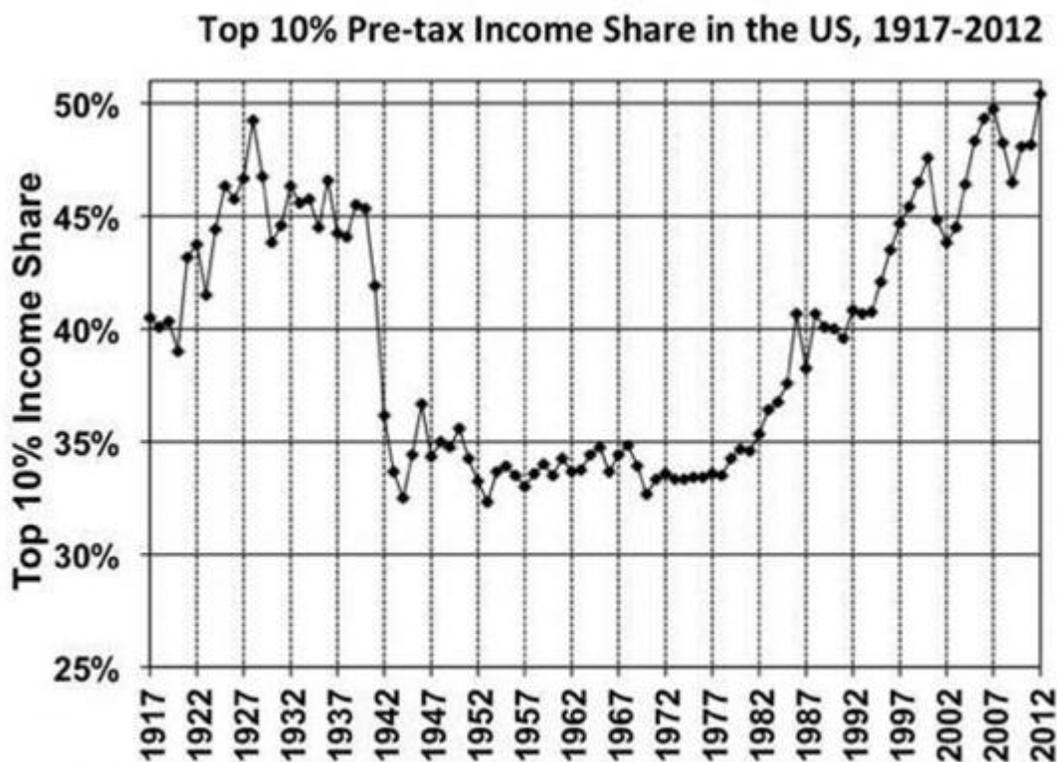
1. In the context of deepening and divisive inequalities across the world, a central defining call of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the imperative to 'leave no one behind' and to address inequalities, inequities and discrimination both within and between states. Indeed, as the UN Secretary-General warned, "*If inequalities continue to widen, development may not be sustainable*".<sup>1</sup>
2. In the 2030 Agenda, Member States have committed to achieving "a world of universal respect for equality and non-discrimination", including gender equality (para 8), reaffirming the responsibilities of all States to "respect, protect and promote human rights, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national and social origin, property, birth, disability or other status" (para 19). The overriding message is "to leave no one behind", to ensure "targets [are] met for all nationals and peoples and for all segments of society" and "to reach the furthest behind first". The imperative of reducing inequalities permeates all the SDGs, with two dedicated goals on combating inequality and discrimination (Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and Goal 10 on reducing inequalities), a Goal 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies, as well as commitments within every other goal, and a cross-cutting commitment to disaggregate data to monitor that no one is being left behind (para 74f). The new Agenda is also firmly "grounded in the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights treaties" and other instruments, including the Declaration on the Right to Development (para 10), and its core aim to "realize the human rights of all" (Preamble).
3. To become 'fit for purpose', the UN System must prepare to respond to this call. This means putting the imperative to reduce inequalities and eliminate discrimination at the heart of UN efforts to support Member States in implementing – and monitoring - the new Agenda over the next 15 years. While there will be multiple entry points in which UN entities can engage, in accordance with their respective mandates, the UN will be more effective by working together under a shared framework for action that is operationally oriented and fully grounded in the UN's normative standards. These standards include human rights principles of *equality and non-discrimination* which are already an integral part of the human rights-based approach to development (HRBA), as set out in the 'UN Statement of Common Understanding on the Human Rights-Based Approach to Development' and the UNDAF Programming Principles. The 2030 Agenda provides an opportunity – and an imperative – to advance further in this regard.
4. This position paper discusses the mandate to combat inequalities and discrimination that Member States have instilled at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, and how this aligns with the UN's existing human rights mandate. It explores the linkages between concepts of inequalities and human rights, and the practical implications of incorporating these principles and norms into our work on addressing inequalities. It further proposes the development of a system-wide shared framework for action – under the overall umbrella of the UN's existing norms - to ensure a common UN voice and the systematic integration of inequality, discrimination and equity issues into UN analysis, programming, policy and monitoring support to Member States in implementing the new Agenda. This would help to further operationalise the human rights-based approach, including by developing and sharing new tools and methodologies, contributing to the broader goal of the full realisation of human rights. It would seek to ensure coherence and synergy of the UN system, while drawing lessons from and building on the specific mandates and different expertise and capacities of the UN entities.
5. Finally, the paper proposes that the Chief Executives Board adopt a Policy Statement putting this imperative at the heart of UN efforts to support Member States on the 2030 Agenda, and calling on the

HLCP to establish a time-bound task force for the development of shared framework for UN action on this front.

## **II - Rising Inequalities as a risk for Sustainable Development**

6. The issue of inequalities has risen rapidly up the political agenda because inequalities are now so stark. While the world is richer than ever before, most of this wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few. And wealth and income inequalities are not the only inequalities of concern – inequalities, including gender inequalities, pervade not only the economic, but also the social, political, legal, cultural and environmental spheres, deepening divides between people both within and between countries.

7. A recent IMF Discussion Note has argued that “widening income inequality is the defining challenge of our time” with the gap between rich and poor at its highest level for decades in the advanced developing economies.<sup>ii</sup> Income inequality has increased substantially since 1990 in most of the developed countries, with Asia and Eastern Europe also seeing marked increases in inequality.<sup>iii</sup> Only Latin America has seen declines in income inequality - as a direct result of recent policy decisions to reverse inequalities - though that region remains the most unequal in the world.<sup>iv</sup> The work of the French economist Thomas Piketty, has graphically illustrated how inequalities in the developed economies are reaching levels not seen since before the 1929 Great Crash and the Great Depression, as illustrated in the graph below on pre-tax income inequality in the United States:<sup>v</sup>



Source: Piketty and Saez, 2003 updated to 2012. Series based on pre-tax cash market income including realized capital gains and excluding government transfers. 2012 data based on preliminary statistics

8. International inequalities (in terms of the Gini coefficient by country GDP per capita) have fallen as a result of the rapid rise of China and other rapidly developing nations, but are nevertheless higher today than in 1980.<sup>vi</sup> The absolute gap in mean per capita incomes between low income countries and high-income countries more than doubled from USD 18,525 in 1980 to USD 32,000 in 2010.<sup>vii</sup>

9. Inequalities in wealth are even more extreme than inequalities in income.<sup>viii</sup> Globally, the IMF records that the top 1 percent of the world's population now owns almost half of the world's wealth.<sup>ix</sup> Recent reports from the non-governmental organisation Oxfam suggest that the world's 84 richest individuals now own as much as the poorest 3.5 billion people put together. In most countries with available data, the share held by the top one percent is rising at the expense of the bottom 90 percent.<sup>x</sup> In the United States, the top one percent now holds one third of US total wealth, while low and middle-class households are increasingly indebted. Inequality has deepened after the global economic crisis of 2007-2008, with the wealthiest capturing most of the gains of government responses to the crisis such as quantitative easing<sup>xi</sup>, whilst austerity policies have disproportionately impacted the less well-off,<sup>xii</sup> illustrating how policy choices can have a marked distributional impact.

10. Stark inequalities exist not only related to income and wealth. Other equally problematic inequalities include inequalities in opportunities and outcomes relating to education, health, food security, employment, housing, health services and economic resources<sup>xiii</sup>, which amount to failures to achieve internationally agreed human rights. The world's poorest children are four times more likely not to go to school than the world's richest children, and five times more likely not to complete primary school.<sup>xiv</sup> Around 43% of out-of school children at primary and secondary levels are children living in countries affected by humanitarian crises. Migrant children may be excluded from school due to their uncertain legal status; pregnant girls may be withdrawn from school for care work, and pregnant girls and children with disabilities are frequently excluded from school and face institutionalised discrimination, stigmatisation and neglect. Income-related inequalities should thus be complemented by other measures of inequalities, including for example UNICEF's deprivation-based measures, based on internationally agreed definitions of child rights-related to deprivation of children's needs for adequate nutrition, safe drinking water, decent sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and access to information.<sup>xv</sup>

11. At the same time, there are clear linkages between income inequalities and other kinds of inequalities. UNDP studies have shown for example a strong association between high income inequalities and inequalities in health, education and nutrition. These show that inequalities of opportunities and inequalities of outcomes are in fact highly interdependent, and inequality cannot be effectively confronted unless the inextricable links between inequality of outcomes and inequality of opportunities are taken into account.<sup>xvi</sup>

12. Inequalities are deeply entrenched by structural drivers and barriers across all economic, social, political, cultural urban and environmental domains, as highlighted in the report of the Global Thematic Consultation on Addressing Inequalities co-led by UN Women and UNICEF.<sup>xvii</sup> These drivers intersect and reinforce each other and can have cumulative, mutually reinforcing effects that lead to systematic disadvantage and the perpetuation of discrimination, inequality and exclusion from generation to generation. Addressing inequalities is therefore also about addressing structural barriers, reversing unequal distributions of power, resources and opportunities and challenging discriminatory laws, policies, social norms and stereotypes.

13. Gender-based discrimination remains one of the most prevalent forms of discrimination, preventing half the world's population from developing to their full potential. Deep-seated

discriminatory norms, harmful gender stereotypes, prejudices as well as gender-based violence against women and girls continue to prevent equality and the full realization of women's rights. Progress in promoting gender equality has been slow, with stagnation and even regression in some countries and a backlash against women and girl's rights in a number of contexts. Discrimination in the law persists in many countries, particularly in family, nationality and health laws. Women remain underrepresented in decision-making at all levels and sectors and women in the workforce face poorer conditions and lack of decent work, and are overrepresented in vulnerable and informal employment with fewer prospects for advancement. Women's salaries are lower than men's in almost all countries and, according to ILO, the gender pay gap persists for women, with women earning on average 77 per cent of what men earn for work of equal value, with an even wider absolute gap for higher-earning women. There is evidence that women with children incur a further wage penalty, known as the 'motherhood pay gap'. At the current rate of progress, pay equity between women and men will not be achieved until 2086, 71 years from now.<sup>xviii</sup> Unequal pay has cumulative impacts, resulting in greater inequality and poverty for older women.<sup>xix</sup> Women also continue to bear heavy and disproportionate unpaid care workloads, and face unacceptably high levels of preventable maternal mortality, particularly for adolescent girls, indigenous and rural women, women belonging to minority groups and stateless and displaced women. In many countries laws and regulations and lack of sufficient resources continue to restrict access to sexual and reproductive health services that only women need, with unmarried women, and adolescents most often denied access to sexual and reproductive health services, information and education due to economic, social, legal and cultural barriers.<sup>xx</sup>

14. Many other forms of discrimination against particular population groups (e.g. discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, age, disability etc), with many people affected by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that produce and reproduce deep inequalities across generations. People from particular ethnicities, caste or minorities or indigenous peoples, and groups in situations of vulnerability, persons with disabilities or migrants, stateless and displaced persons, children, youth, older persons, slum dwellers, persons with HIV, sexual minorities (and especially women within these groups), are often excluded, disempowered and discriminated against in law, policy and practice, resulting in inequalities in both opportunities and outcomes. One study measuring MDG progress found that in Nepal, under-five mortality rates among Dalit communities (90 per 1000 live births) were more than double those of the Newar caste (43 per 1000 live births), while in Vietnam, only 7 per cent of ethnic minority households had access to improved sanitation compared to 43 per cent of the majority Kinh and Chinese groups. Similarly in South Africa, the incomes of black Africans were only 13 per cent of white incomes.<sup>xxi</sup> The most recent ILO Global Wage Report has highlighted that discrimination and wage penalties suffered by women, migrant workers and workers in the informal economy who are often from disadvantaged groups contribute to income inequality.<sup>xxii</sup>

15. Racism and xenophobia are often at the root of discrimination against particular groups, often involving restrictions or restrictive interpretations of laws, policies and practices, which can also affect e.g. the situation of migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons. Islamophobia has become a global phenomenon, challenging the realization of a broad range of human rights for millions. Indigenous peoples often face particular challenges, frequently under-represented politically, denied control over their own development based on their own values, needs and priorities; lacking in access to social and other services and frequently the victims of forced displacement as a result of the exploitation of natural resources and other development projects.<sup>xxiii</sup> Some groups are also particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups because governments refuse to protect them from discrimination and exclusion, such as LGBTI persons, men who have sex with men, sex workers, people living with HIV, people who inject drugs, prisoners, or people in detention.

16. Drivers of inequality within and between countries further relate to a range of different issues. Climate change, for example, often disproportionately affects the poorest, most marginalized and least resilient (e.g. poorer subsistence farmers, or people who live in informal housing on flood plains), who contribute the least to climate change. Inequitable distribution of the costs and benefits of the use of natural resources, the costs of pollution and environmental degradation can reinforce patterns of inequality. Poverty and inequality often result when the poorest and most marginalized lose access to natural resources that they depend on for their livelihoods – e.g. fishing grounds, grazing lands, and forests.<sup>xxiv</sup> Lack of land tenure security and inheritance rights are fundamental drivers of inequality, especially for women, indigenous groups and rural populations. Lack of political representation, access to justice, access to information, access to and use of ICTs (the digital divide) can also result in deepening inequalities. There is a positive correlation between high income inequality and high crime and imprisonment rates,<sup>xxv</sup> with most prisoners facing even further socio-economic exclusion and stigma after release, leading to an endless cycle of poverty, marginalization, criminality and imprisonment.

17. Political, economic and social instabilities bring new risks and growing vulnerabilities that can aggravate and perpetuate inequalities, including insecure and informal work and incomes, breakdown of social systems as a result of urbanisation and exposure to a volatile global economy and price fluctuations. People face differential risks of vulnerabilities to conflict and disasters and people living in conflict-affected or in fragile states are particularly difficult to reach. Protracted displacement creates extremely high levels of social and economic inequality and erodes people's resilience.

18. Many inequalities emerge as a result of the way markets operate and are (or are not) regulated, and how production factors are rewarded, as well as a result of the ways in which rules are structured at national and international levels in trade and financial systems. In an increasingly open and interconnected world economy, national and global inequality dynamics are closely interrelated, with structural shifts and changing production in the global economy affecting inequalities both within and between countries.<sup>xxvi</sup> There are also structural inequalities arising from differences in productivity that exist between countries and between different sectors of economies, and which are driven by technological, market power or industrial relation dynamics, among others. Inequalities also include inter-generational inequalities (as subsequent generations are left with poorer natural resources) and spatial or geographical inequalities (e.g. the divide between industrialized/non-industrialized states, between, small island state/resourceful country, coastal/inland and between rural-urban areas, or for remote regions).

19. Empirical studies have shown that deep inequalities between ethnic and religious groups – whether in income, access to economic resources, social services, political participation or justice - threaten social cohesion, radicalize groups and heighten the risk of tensions escalating into political crisis and violent conflict.<sup>xxvii</sup> The weight of economic evidence now suggests that high levels of income inequality threaten the stability and sustainability of economic growth,<sup>xxviii</sup> and it is now widely agreed that economic inequality was one key factor contributing to the 2007 global economic crisis.<sup>xxix</sup> High levels of inequality reduce the efficiency of economic growth in contributing to poverty reduction – as the benefits of economic growth flow to affluent groups, rather than the poor<sup>xxx</sup> - and reduce the likelihood of public spending on improving social service coverage and outcomes, including mortality rates, learning levels and nutrition, given elite capture of political systems.<sup>xxxi</sup> High inequalities are transmitted across generations and limit equal opportunities for children, as children's opportunities are largely determined by their parents' incomes and outcomes,<sup>xxxii</sup> demonstrating that the linkages between equality of opportunities and equality of outcomes.

20. The deepening of inequalities is therefore a concern for whole societies, not only because undercuts poverty reduction and sustainable economic development, but also because it undermines the enjoyment of human rights, social cohesion, peace, and other dimensions of sustainable development. It is a worrying trend for all the pillars of the UN's work.

### **III - The 2030 Agenda as an agenda for equality: A mandate from Member States**

21. As a result of rising awareness of this threat, Member States have instilled the imperative to 'leave no one behind' and to combat inequalities and discrimination at the heart of the new agenda for more sustainable development.

22. Indeed, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development marks a sharp shift in the development paradigm. It responds to the critique that, while important progress was achieved under the Millennium Development Goals, too much attention was focused on statistical averages and national aggregates, obscuring the rise in inequalities and glossing over the persistence of structural discrimination. By not paying attention to who was winning and who was losing from development policies, the MDGs may have sometimes contributed to leaving the poorest and most marginalized far behind. The 2030 Agenda reflects the will of the global community and gives the UN a mandate - and indeed a duty - to assist Member States in meeting this imperative in the implementation of the new Agenda. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Outcome Document:

- **Identifies rising inequalities as an immense challenge that must be confronted:** It sees "rising inequalities within and among countries", "enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power", and "gender inequality" as some of the "immense challenges" confronting the world.<sup>xxxiii</sup> It identifies inequality as a factor that can "give rise to violence, insecurity and injustice"<sup>xxxiv</sup> and declares that "combating inequality within and among countries" is necessary for achieving poverty eradication, preserving the planet, creating sustainable economic growth, and fostering social inclusion.<sup>xxxv</sup> It aims to build "just and inclusive societies" that provide "equal access to justice" and that "are based on respect for human rights."<sup>xxxvi</sup>
- **Sets a normative basis for addressing inequalities anchored in existing human rights commitments of Member States to equality and non-discrimination:** The whole Agenda is guided by "the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for international law" and is "explicitly grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights treaties, the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document", as well as the Declaration on the Right to Development,<sup>xxxvii</sup> and "other international instruments relating to human rights and international law."<sup>xxxviii</sup> Very significantly, it is "to be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the rights and obligations of states under international law,"<sup>xxxix</sup> which include obligations to combat discrimination and inequalities.<sup>xl</sup> The Agenda therefore declares a determination to "to *realize* the human rights of all,"<sup>xli</sup> to promote and achieve gender equality,<sup>xlii</sup> to "end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls"<sup>xliii</sup> and to "ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in... equality."<sup>xliv</sup> It resolves to combat inequalities within countries, to establish just and inclusive societies, to protect human rights<sup>xlv</sup>. It envisages a "just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive" world of "equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity."<sup>xlvi</sup> All States are "to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other

status.”<sup>xlvi</sup> Importantly, it is explicitly directed both to “ensure equal opportunity” and to “reduce inequalities of outcome.”<sup>xlvi</sup>

- Focuses on leaving no one behind:** The Agenda pledges that no one will be left behind and that the goals and targets are to be met “for all peoples and for all segments of society”, and that efforts will be made “to reach the furthest behind first.”<sup>xlix</sup> It recognizes that “people who are vulnerable must be empowered”, and includes explicitly children, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees, internally displaced persons, migrants, people living in areas affected by complex humanitarian emergencies and in areas affected by terrorism,<sup>l</sup> and people living under colonial and foreign occupation.<sup>li</sup> It envisages a world where women and girls enjoy full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment are removed.<sup>lii</sup> It pledges as well to ensure full respect for the human rights of migrants regardless of migration status, of refugees and of displaced persons, and seeks to strengthen the resilience of host communities.<sup>liii</sup>
- Aims at addressing inequalities throughout all the SDGs, including Goals 5 and 10:** So central is the challenge of inequality to the 2030 Agenda that two of the 17 Goals are entirely dedicated to this objective. One is directed to reducing inequality within and among countries (Goal 10),<sup>liv</sup> and another to achieving gender equality (Goal 5).<sup>lv</sup> However, all the SDGs and their targets aim to achieve more equitable development. Education, for example, is to be “*inclusive and equitable*” and gender disparities eliminated,<sup>lvi</sup> and all girls and boys are to complete free, *equitable* and quality primary and secondary education.<sup>lvii</sup> *Equal access* is ensured for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.<sup>lviii</sup> All people, irrespective of sex, age, race, ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, children, and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, are to have access to life-long learning opportunities.<sup>lix</sup> And persons in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations, are to be provided with *equal access* to all levels of education and vocational training.<sup>lx</sup> Similarly, the Agenda targets universal and *equitable* access to safe and affordable drinking water for all,<sup>lxi</sup> and promises the development of infrastructure with a focus on *equitable* access for all.<sup>lxii</sup> Specific targets seek to promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws, and policies,<sup>lxiii</sup> and actions<sup>lxiv</sup> eliminate those laws, policies and practices that are discriminatory,<sup>lxv</sup> to ensure equal access to justice,<sup>lxvi</sup> and to promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status<sup>lxvii</sup> Others set out to achieve universal health coverage and access to quality health care,<sup>lxviii</sup> to provide non-discriminatory access to transport systems<sup>lxix</sup> and to green and public spaces<sup>lxx</sup>, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons,<sup>lxxi</sup> and to promote fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources<sup>lxxii</sup>
- Reflects an imperative to reduce income inequalities as well as eradicating poverty:** The Agenda observes that sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth will only be possible if wealth is shared and income inequality is addressed.<sup>lxxiii</sup> It includes targets to eradicate extreme poverty<sup>lxxiv</sup> and to “ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources...”<sup>lxxv</sup> It includes targets to progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average,<sup>lxxvi</sup> and to adopt policies, especially

fiscal, wage and social protection policies to progressively achieve greater equality.<sup>lxxvii</sup> There are targets to improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations.<sup>lxxviii</sup> Other elements are directed to remedying key policy lapses that have contributed to growing income inequality, including universal health coverage, labour rights, decent jobs, social protection, inclusive education, and so on.

- **Makes gender equality a particular priority:** The Agenda states that the SDGs seek to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.<sup>lxxix</sup> It pledges “significant increase in investments to close the gender gap and strengthen support for institutions in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the global, regional and national levels.” All forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls are to be eliminated and the Agenda should be implemented with a “systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective.”<sup>lxxx</sup> Specific targets aim to end all forms of discrimination and violence against all women and girls,<sup>lxxxii</sup> including the elimination of harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and Female Genital Mutilation<sup>lxxxii</sup>, and to adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Others aim to eliminate gender disparities in education, ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training,<sup>lxxxiv</sup> and ensure that all learners acquire education for gender equality.<sup>lxxxv</sup> Others aim to ensure women’s equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life<sup>lxxxvi</sup> and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> The empowerment of women and girls includes legal and policy measures to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health by enabling them to make autonomous decisions concerning their own sexuality and reproductive rights. In terms of women’s economic empowerment, targets include ensuring full and productive employment and decent work, achieve equal pay for work of equal value,<sup>lxxxviii</sup> and the need to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work, and to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources.<sup>lxxxix</sup>
- **Includes a focus on intergenerational equity for sustainable development:** The Agenda states an intention to protect the planet “so that it can support the needs of the present *and future generations*,”<sup>xc</sup> and to implement the Agenda “for the full benefit of all, for today’s generation and for future generations.”<sup>xcii</sup>
- **Aims to reduce inequalities between countries:** The Agenda pledges to combat inequalities among countries,<sup>xciii</sup> noting that progress has been uneven, particularly in Africa, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and small-island developing States,<sup>xciii</sup> and expressing a “wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations.”<sup>xciv</sup> To these ends, it contains commitments to promote a non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system<sup>xcv</sup> under the World Trade Organization,<sup>xcvi</sup> to broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance,<sup>xcvii</sup> and to implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements.<sup>xcviii</sup> It reaffirms the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health and affirms the right of developing countries to make use of flexibilities to protect public health and provide access to medicines for their populations.<sup>xcix</sup> In addition, targets are set to encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, small-island developing States, and

landlocked developing countries.<sup>c</sup> Others will ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions.<sup>ci</sup>

- **Commits to measuring and monitoring the reduction of inequalities over the next 15 years:** The Agenda commits to “developing broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product (GDP),”<sup>cii</sup> and recognizes that disaggregated data will be needed to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind.<sup>ciii</sup> Follow-up and review processes at all levels are to be people-centred, gender-sensitive, respect human rights, and have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind.<sup>civ</sup> All data is to be disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.<sup>cv</sup> To these ends, the outcome document calls for support to be provided to developing countries in strengthening the capacity of national statistical offices<sup>cvi</sup> and data systems to ensure access to data<sup>cvi</sup> disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.<sup>cvi</sup>

23. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is thus, in large measure, an agenda for equality. Member States have chosen to put the fight against inequalities and discrimination at the core of the new Agenda, providing a strong new mandate for UN System.

#### **IV - The UN System’s existing human rights responsibilities to promote equality and non-discrimination**

24. While the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda thus provide a compelling new political mandate for addressing these issues, the UN System already has an existing legal mandate and a central duty to promote and encourage respect for human rights, including the principles of equality and non-discrimination, through the 1945 UN Charter. Article 1 of the UN Charter set out that one of the core purposes of the UN is:

“To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion;”

25. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 1, emphasizes that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” and requires the creation of a social and international order in which all human rights can be fully realized. Many subsequent international human rights treaties have given more substance to this vision, including defining and expanding the grounds of discrimination that are prohibited under international human rights law. The 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development also calls for more equitable and non-discriminatory development, with the meaningful participation of all and the fair distribution of benefits of development.

26. Equality and non-discrimination are fundamental principles of international human rights law as codified by the UN, and are essential to the exercise and enjoyment of all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. The UDHR prohibits discrimination of any kind as to “race<sup>cix</sup>, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”, which has the intention or effect of nullifying or impairing the equal enjoyment or exercise of a human right. The inclusion of “other status” indicates that this list is not exhaustive and international human

rights mechanisms have since specified that the Covenant also prohibits discrimination (whether in law or in fact, whether direct or indirect) on the basis of age (with attention to youth and older persons), nationality, marital and family status, sexual orientation and gender identity, health status (including HIV), place of residence, economic and social situation, and civil, political or other status.<sup>cx</sup> The principles of equality and non-discrimination are core principles of UN human rights treaties, including ILO's labour conventions (The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) for example defines discrimination as any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation).<sup>cxii</sup> Expanding the grounds for the disaggregation of data is thus critical for meeting obligations of non-discrimination and equality. While the listed prohibited grounds of discrimination may not easily translate into operational definitions and characteristics for producing disaggregated data in all instances, they constitute a universally accepted legal standard and an obligation to which governments are already committed. As such they provide authoritative guidance for data disaggregation efforts at global, regional, national and sub-national levels.<sup>cxiii</sup>

27. The responsibilities of the UN system in promoting equality and non-discrimination is thus not merely a policy choice, but already a core mandate and duty under the UN Charter and international law adopted under UN auspices. The UN system must hold true to these norms and standards in all its efforts to assist Member States in fulfilling the human rights obligations into which they have themselves voluntarily entered, as well as in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. Indeed, the 2030 Agenda calls for implementation to be in a manner fully consistent with international law, including international human rights law.

## **V - Conceptualising inequalities from a UN human rights perspective**

### *What is distinctive about a human rights-based approach to combating inequalities?*

A human rights-based approach to combating inequalities is grounded in legally-binding commitments to equality and non-discrimination that are fundamental principles of international human rights law and national legal systems across the world. It puts the focus on people as rights-holders and on the corresponding responsibilities of duty-bearers in fulfilling these rights. It aims at eliminating discrimination in law, policy and practice and at achieving both formal and substantive equality. It aims at addressing patterns of exclusion and unequal power relations that produce and reproduce inequalities over generations. Like the 2030 Agenda itself, the universality of human rights-based approach focuses less on States than on the people living within those States, overcoming simplistic dichotomies such as that of developed and developing countries.

28. A human rights perspective is concerned with three closely-related but distinct concepts in this area: **equality** (that is, moving towards substantive equality of opportunity and outcomes), **non-discrimination** (defined as the prohibition of discrimination against people on the grounds identified above) and a broader concept of **equity** (understood as fairness in the distribution of costs, benefits and opportunities). A human rights-based approach aims at addressing inequalities that are unnecessary, avoidable or unjust, including the many different forms of inequality and exclusion that result from discrimination in laws, policies and practice and from the unequal distribution of power. It is concerned with inequities and barriers that exist at the national and international levels which produce and

reproduce patterns of unequal development for people within and between States, where these have an impact on the realisation of rights.

29. There are a number of concepts that can be useful for understanding a human rights conception of inequalities, including:

- The concepts of vertical and horizontal inequalities. Horizontal inequalities are defined as inequalities among certain population groups (distinguished e.g. by gender, ethnicity, disability, race, religion etc.), while vertical inequalities are inequalities between individuals or households, rather than group-based distinctions.<sup>cxiii</sup>
- The concepts of 'equality of opportunity' and 'equality of outcomes' are also relevant. Equality of opportunity requires that every individual sets off from the same starting point, while equality of outcomes requires that each individual manages to achieve a similar end point or outcome.<sup>cxiv</sup> However, a hard distinction between the two quickly breaks down, particularly in relation to horizontal inequalities between groups, since equality of opportunity can often only be judged by measuring results in terms of outcomes (e.g. women or ethnic groups might have an equal right to vote and to stand for election, but this frequently does not result in equal or proportionate representation in the political system, suggesting opportunities are not truly equal).<sup>cxv</sup>
- Within the human rights and broader legal field, a key distinction usually made is between 'formal equality' and 'substantive equality'. Formal equality relates to procedural equality and requires that everyone be treated in a manner that is procedurally fair, while substantive equality requires moving towards substantive equality of opportunities and outcomes, including through additional investments or measures to take account of differences, inequities and structural disadvantage.
- The human rights concept of equality is a legal concept that offers legal protection as it has been defined and institutionalised in law across most national and international legal systems. This concept of 'equality' overlaps with the concept of equity used by a number UN agencies (who define this as the fair treatment of all population groups in society<sup>cxvi</sup>), although equity is often understood more a philosophical concept than a legal one, bringing a focus on fairness but not necessarily a focus on legal protection (as distinct e.g. from the legal protection of gender equality, racial equality etc.)

30. **The human rights concept of equality calls for both formal and substantive equality.** This is not a simplistic concept, as sometimes (mis)understood, that implies treating all people the same. Nor does it envisage a world without difference. It is rather a complex concept that requires formal equality, but also substantive equality of opportunities and outcomes for all population groups (i.e. horizontal equality). Formal equality includes the procedural rights that protect equality, including *inter alia* the right to equality before the law, the right to information, the right to participate in decision-making, the principle of free, prior and informed consent, access to justice and the right to remedy. Substantive equality aims to address the horizontal inequalities between population groups that can persist even after formal equality is achieved, given structural disadvantages or different needs. This has been most clearly clarified by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women which has emphasized that CEDAW 'requires that women be given an equal start and that they be empowered by an enabling environment to achieve equality of results. It is not enough to guarantee women treatment that is identical to men. Rather, biological as well as socially and culturally constructed differences between women and men must be taken into account'.<sup>cxvii</sup> Achieving substantive equality may thus imply what can be termed 'positive' discrimination, including according extra resources to specific services,

affirmative action or temporary special measures to take account of difference, structural disadvantage and historical discrimination. In the context of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the “denial of reasonable accommodation” to take account of different needs is itself understood as a form of discrimination – a reminder that to achieve equality, unequal situations need to be treated unequally.

31. **A human rights perspective is particularly concerned with systematic ‘horizontal’ inequalities between population groups, where these are the direct or indirect result of discriminatory laws, policies or practices or structural constraints.** Identifying inequalities in both opportunities and outcomes between different population groups can serve as a useful proxy for measuring the impacts of direct or indirect discrimination or such structural constraints. Clearly not all inequalities are unjust, nor are all ‘disparities’ in outcomes between population groups due to discrimination, as some may be due to differences in individual efforts or choices. However, where systematic ‘horizontal inequalities’ are observed, these inequalities are more likely to be unjust and the result of circumstances or barriers beyond the individual’s control. This could include e.g. consistently unequal health outcomes of minorities compared to the majority population, or systematically lower wages for women compared with men. Disaggregated data on opportunities and outcomes that helps to identify horizontal inequalities could thus provide revealing information on the impacts of discrimination, particularly where data is disaggregated in line with the grounds of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law. At the same time however, this kind of data on outcomes and opportunities should be supplemented with other kinds of data to more closely assess people’s experiences of exclusion or discriminatory treatment and to more precisely measure discrimination. This could include for example event-based data on hate crimes, perception surveys on experiences of discriminatory treatment, or the collection of data on discriminatory laws (e.g. UNAIDS collects data on laws that are discriminatory in relation to HIV/AIDS).

32. **A human rights perspective is also concerned with ‘vertical inequalities’ between individuals where these may affect the realization of human rights, including excessive levels of income inequality.** Vertical inequalities between individuals (rather than groups) can also exist in opportunities and outcomes related e.g. to education, health or wealth. UN human rights law sets minimum standards and thresholds below which no one should be allowed to fall, including ‘minimum essential levels’ for the realisation of economic and social rights. However, this does not mean that human rights are only concerned with those at the bottom of the ladder. A human rights perspective is concerned with the relational aspects of inequality, and the power relations between different individuals and between different groups, as well as with the social stigmatisation that can result from an inability to participate fully in economic, social and political life. The measurement of ‘relative poverty’ for example partly captures this relational aspect in terms of how far individuals are from the median standard of living, thus approximating levels of social exclusion. Measuring excessive levels of income inequality (as measured, e.g. through the *Gini coefficient* or the *Palma ratio*<sup>cxviii</sup>) is also important where this has an impact on the realisation of human rights. Although it is difficult to assess at what point income inequalities become excessive (some analyses have suggested that the tipping point is 0.4 measured by the Gini coefficient), the precise number is less important than the concrete impacts of this inequality - for example, high levels of income inequality can skew the political and economic system, if wealthy and powerful elites capture the policy-making and regulatory process.<sup>cxix</sup> Evidence also now suggests that income inequality can reach a level that destabilises the economic system and threatens the sustainability of economic growth,<sup>cxx</sup> which in turn threatens the realisation of a range of rights, including the right to an adequate standard of living. Extreme income inequalities are thus viewed as a risk for the realisation and equal enjoyment of human rights, and human rights also sets out a framework

for balancing the rights of different individuals, including through due process and limitations on certain rights, to ensure that the human rights of some are not violated in the quest for a fairer society. With regards to wealth and income inequality, human rights law also prohibits discrimination on the basis of grounds that include 'property' (which has been interpreted as 'income' or 'wealth') and means that it is not permitted to discriminate against the poor or less wealthy.

33. It is important to underline further that the international human rights framework takes account of the availability of resources and the different levels of development of Member States, since the realization of economic, social and cultural rights is subject to 'progressive realization' in accordance with the 'maximum of available resources'. However, the obligations of non-discrimination and the duty to give priority to achieving "minimum essential levels" of the realization of each right are not subject to resource limitations. The principle of 'non-retrogression' also implies that progress in living standards should be continuous and the commitment to use the 'maximum' of available resources implies that resources should be ring-fenced during crises and in periods of economic austerity to protect the existing levels of rights realization, or at the very least ensure that the impacts of policy changes do not disproportionately fall on the poorest and most marginalized.

34. **A human rights perspective is also concerned with the broader priority of more equal and equitable development at both the national and global levels.** The Universal Declaration on Human Rights requires the creation of 'a social *and international order* in which all human rights can be realized', and the Declaration on the Right to Development calls for 'eradicating all social injustices', promoting 'equality of opportunity for all' and ensuring the 'fair distribution of the benefits' as well as eliminating obstacles to development at the national and international levels. This implies addressing inequalities both within and between countries (which could be measured by focusing either on income inequalities between individuals across countries or by comparing countries), as well as promoting more equitable development through, e.g. fairer international trade rules, reforming the institutions of global governance and greater policy coherence of the trade, finance and investment regimes with the standards set in international human rights law.

35. In the context of sustainable development, the concept of **inter-generational equity** which considers the rights of both current and future generations, as well as justice in relationship between the generations, is becoming increasingly important.<sup>cxxi</sup> In the context of youth unemployment and poverty, and their role in protests and social movements, a focus on youth empowerment is critical.

## **VI - Approaches to Addressing Inequalities and Discrimination**

36. The deepening of inequalities and the persistence of discrimination is not accidental, unavoidable or inevitable, but are symptoms of a larger deficit of respect of human rights and often the direct result of legal, policy and cultural choices within and between countries. Combatting these phenomena is thus a matter of making different choices and taking concrete measures to reverse the trend of rising inequalities.

37. The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals identify many of the concrete measures that will contribute to reversing inequalities, if the Agenda is fully implemented. For example, at the national level, the new Agenda commits to eliminating discrimination in laws, policies and practice and addressing social, economic, environmental, political and cultural inequalities, including by implementing universal social protection floors, promoting equal rights to economic resources, access to health, education, water and sanitation, ownership and control over land and other property, enforcing

labour standards, building resilience to climate related hazards and events and other economic, social and environmental crises as well as protecting the environment from degradation. Targets range from supporting small scale food producers and rural areas to achieving inclusive industrialisation and full employment, protecting labour rights and adopting fiscal, employment, wage and social protection policies to progressively achieve greater equality, fighting against tax evasion and illegal money flows. It also aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, including by protecting fundamental freedoms, providing equal access to justice for all, promoting rule of law at national and international levels and ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. Similarly, at the global level, the Agenda includes a range of 'means of implementation' targets, including for example greater representation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance, as well as commitments to policy space and policy coherence.

38. The new Agenda is focused on addressing many different forms of inequalities, including income inequality, with a target on improving the incomes of the bottom 40% of the population at a faster rate than the national average.<sup>cxix</sup> This would be usefully complemented by a further indicator of inequalities as defined by the Gini coefficient, Palma ratio or other measure of inequality between rich and poor. Recent empirical work by the IMF shows that high levels of income inequalities can be bad for economic growth and that there is no stark trade-off between equity and efficiency or between equality and growth as often posited.<sup>cxixii</sup> The IMF research shows that high levels of income inequality bring more frequent economic and financial crises, negatively impacting on macroeconomic stability and economic growth.<sup>cxixiv</sup> They find that progressive tax and social transfer systems can contribute to economic growth. This research also challenges the belief in 'trickle-down' economics, finding an inverse relationship between the income share accruing to the rich (top 20 percent) and economic growth. In other words as the concentration of income increases, GDP growth actually falls. This implies that reducing inequality and improving the income share for the poor and middle class will bring greater economic growth.<sup>cxixv</sup> Progressive tax and social transfer systems are critical to addressing income inequalities, but also other forms of inequalities since taxes generate resources for social spending on health, education, social protection and other programmes. There is also a need to protect the affordability of social services for universal access, which may mean reassessing the role of the private sector in the delivery of social services, since the evidence suggests that the impact of privatisation is mixed, with UNICEF finding that the privatisation of education user fees/out of pocket payments for health services for example can lead to greater inequalities in economic and social opportunity.<sup>cxixvi</sup>

39. Reversing inequalities requires looking not only at the situation of 'those left behind' and the 'hardest to reach', but also at the situation of the wealthy and powerful, including questions of political and regulatory capture that distort democratic decision-making. It is critical to pay attention to the root causes and underlying determinants of inequalities, including the legal, policy and institutional processes that determine access to and control over political power and economic resources.<sup>cxixvii</sup> Measures need to take account of the distinct rights and needs of diverse population groups through legal, regulatory, policy, programming and other measures to address issues that are not always obvious (e.g. women may be denied legal capacity to make autonomous decisions resulting in inequality, or people who use drugs may be denied HIV prevention and treatment services). Structural impediments such as systemic discrimination, stigma, bias and invisible barriers that perpetuate inequalities must be addressed, including by ensuring that all stakeholders including the marginalized, disempowered and excluded groups take part in setting priorities and in holding decision-makers and duty-bearers accountable. This means focusing not only on empowering rights-holders to claim their rights, but also focusing on duties and building the capacity of duty-bearers, especially the State, to meet their obligations, as well as fulfilling the key human rights principles of participation, inclusion, accountability and the rule of law.

40. Many UN entities are already engaged in a wide range of these activities in their programmes. In addition, UN entities work in countries where there is instability and weak state structures to promote the rule of law and address abuses of power, impunity, corruption, unequal allocation of resources and crime. Others seek to address drivers of conflict and displacement, including by taking action to prevent and mitigate crises. Still others work at the global economic level, monitoring global macro-trends in inequality dynamics to design inequality-offsetting policies at the global and national levels and define changes required in the global economic governance architecture, as well as publishing data on inequality trends.<sup>cxxviii</sup> Some entities are also focusing on global action against climate change, tackling environmental inequalities and building climate change resilience, as well as promoting inclusive policies for natural resource management.<sup>cxxix</sup> Others work to narrowing the science-knowledge gaps, the digital divide, and promote social inclusion and intercultural dialogue. All agencies are engaged with different dimensions of gender equality, with some focused specifically on the empowerment of women and girls through universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights to accelerate a demographic dividend<sup>cxxx</sup> that in turn will result in more inclusive and equitable economic growth and expand people's rights and capacities.<sup>cxxxi</sup>

41. Many UN entities are thus already focused on reducing inequalities and discrimination, but taking a human rights-based approach may require revisiting traditional approaches and moving beyond 'business as usual' to ensure that the 2030 Agenda is consistently "implemented in a manner consistent with international law", including human rights law.

## **VII - Practical implications, tools and methodologies for a human rights-based approach to monitoring inequalities and discrimination in the 2030 Agenda**

42. To be 'fit for purpose', the UN System must respond to the call to 'leave no one behind', 'to reach the furthest behind first', by developing and building on existing tools and methodologies for monitoring the reduction of inequalities and discrimination. The practical implications of an approach to reducing inequalities and eliminating discrimination grounded in human rights standards should ensure that the UN is better able to identify who is being left behind and why, and to effectively monitor progress over the next 15 years. A human rights based approach would require moving towards an approach that includes:

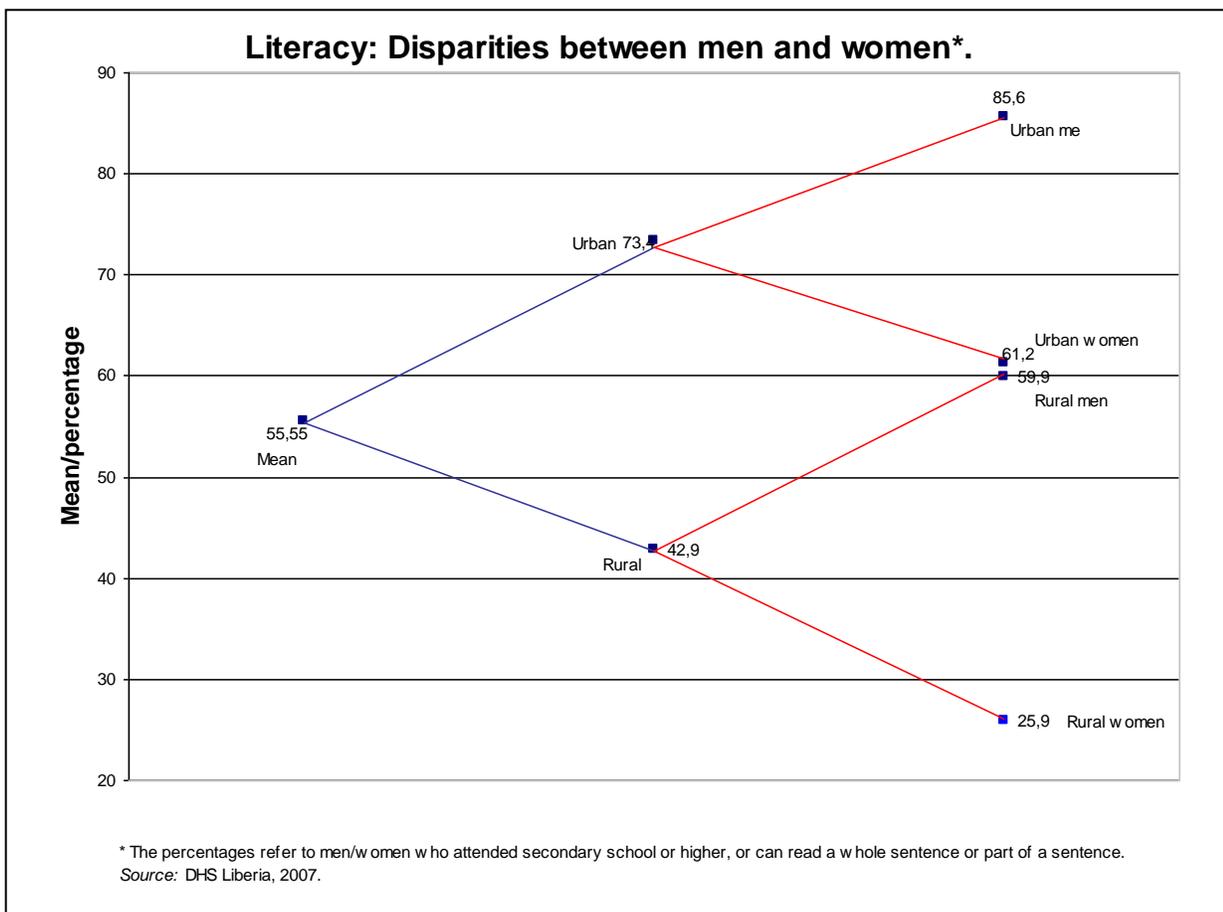
- **Systematically analysing data disaggregated or collected on specific population groups, placing a particular focus on those affected by prohibited grounds of discrimination and groups specifically protected under UN human rights and labour treaties.** As a result of the lessons learned from the MDGs, it is now widely agreed that aggregate and average statistics are insufficient for understanding the impacts of development on different population groups,<sup>cxxxii</sup> so the UN should strengthen and support the capacities of national and other partners in the collection of new kinds of data and use of a broadening of the variables for disaggregation to reveal the situation of different groups and the inequalities between them. The UN should adopt a common and consistent policy position on data disaggregation, which should closely linked to the list of 'prohibited grounds of discrimination' which relate to existing obligations of Member States under in international human rights law.<sup>cxxxiii</sup> The grounds of discrimination prohibited under international law include the grounds identified above, *inter alia* 'race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status' and have been extended further to include ethnic origin, disability, age, economic status, place of residence, health status, marital status, migrant status, sexual orientation and gender

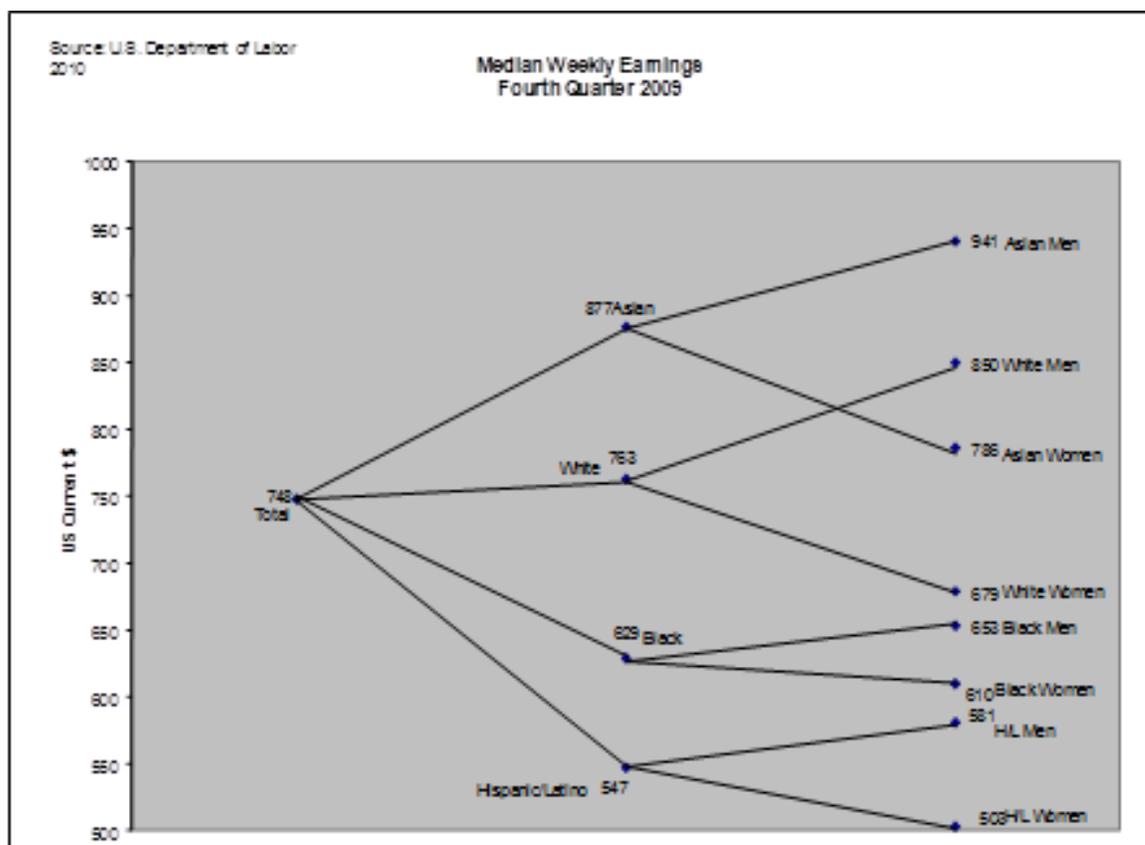
identity, with protection also for mobile populations and other groups (caste, minorities, indigenous peoples, HIV status, sex workers, marital status, slum-dwellers, homeless persons etc).<sup>cxxxiv</sup> This also means focusing attention on the groups of people particularly protected under specific UN human rights and labour treaties (e.g. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No.169) and conventions on refugees and stateless persons<sup>cxxxv</sup> etc.) including women, children, persons with disabilities, minorities, indigenous peoples, displaced and stateless persons, migrants, as well as other groups protected under discrimination provisions, e.g. older persons, youth, persons with HIV.<sup>cxxxvi</sup>

- Expanding the grounds of disaggregation will raise technical, resource and capacity issues. It will be essential to consider the costs and feasibility of expanding the number of variables captured in nationally representative surveys, since more variables of disaggregation will require a greater the degree of data stratification required, with either a loss in statistical precision and significance (if the sample size remains the same) or a significant increase in the size (and costs) of surveys. Given the limited statistical capacities (and resources) that exist in many less developed countries, this could pose a significant burden on Member States. It will thus be important to generate resources and to upscale capacity-building efforts, but also to consider taking a staggered approach, prioritizing and sequencing progress towards greater disaggregation in line with what is required by law. In addition, it will be important to think beyond disaggregation to consider small scale surveys and other methods to capture incidences and trends of discrimination, leveraging potential contributions of non-traditional sources and collectors of data (e.g. by working with civil society organizations carrying out data collection in specific domains with specific communities).

Similarly, expanding the variables for data collection raises some serious ethical challenges (e.g. censuses often include categories that are inherently political and related to the distribution of state resources, and dominant groups often have incentives to obscure information). In addition the collection of some types of information can be reviewed as divisive in and of itself (e.g. Rwanda does not compile data on ethnicity, as ethnic identification is seen as a threat to national reconciliation) and there will be a need to consider potential negative consequences for community relations in some contexts. Many groups want to be counted since this is necessary for inclusion in policy-making, but there is a need for safeguards to protect against potential risks (e.g. of data collected on ethnic groups, or LGBTI groups). This needs to ensure the right to privacy, free prior and informed consent and the participatory principle of ‘nothing about us without us’ to protect against the potential unintended consequences of documenting marginalized groups. A human rights-sensitive approach to data collection, analysis and dissemination should help to ensure protection against the potential misuse of data and invasions of the right to privacy. Lessons can be drawn from existing experiences of many UN agencies and countries which have developed strong safeguards on these kinds of issues.<sup>cxxxvii</sup>

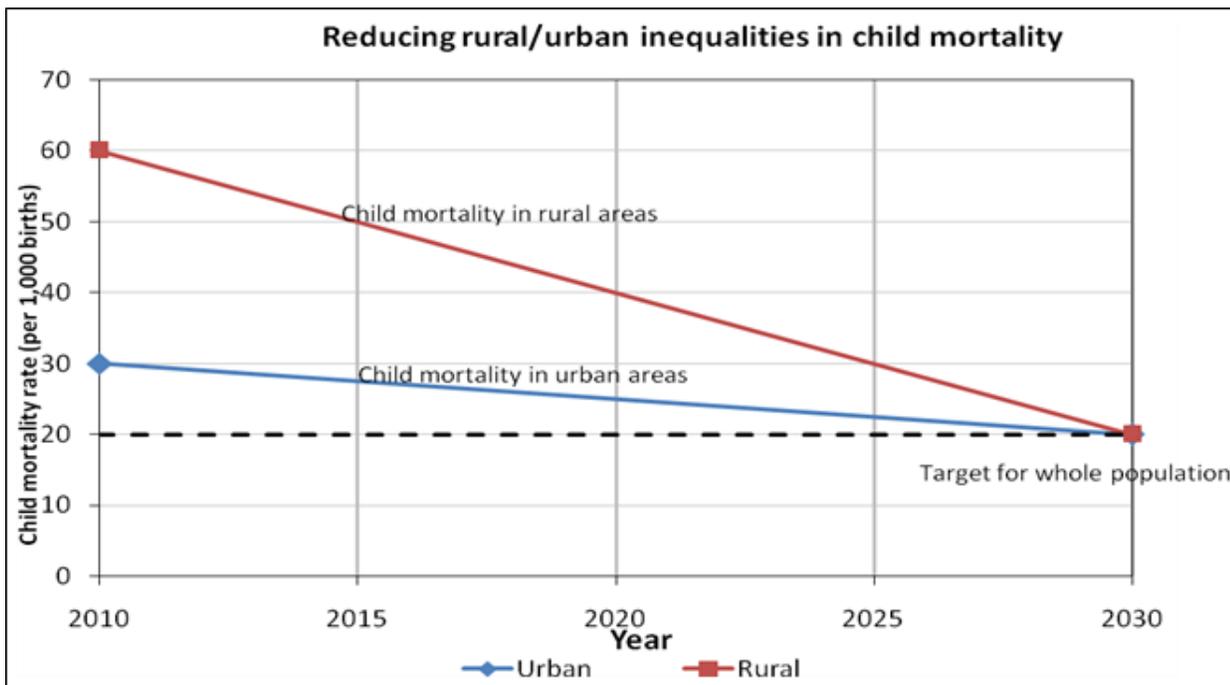
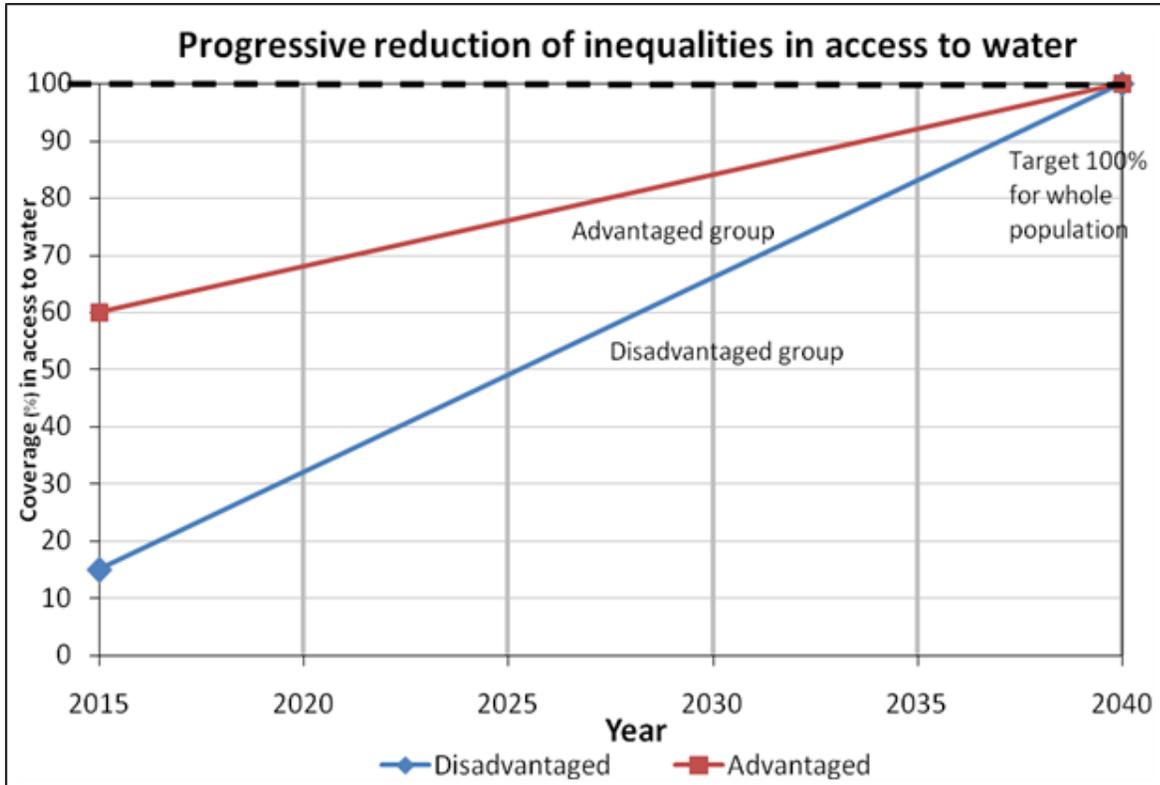
- Developing new tools to capture multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and other forms of exclusion and stigma.** It will also be important to pay special attention to the individuals and groups suffering from multiple discrimination, i.e. those groups suffering from discrimination on multiple and intersecting grounds that reproduce disadvantage in overlapping ways. New tools will need to be developed to capture these overlapping inequalities, as well as for assessing the experience of discrimination, exclusion and stigma (e.g. for example the HIV stigma index).
- For example, the below graphs show one simple way of graphically illustrating disaggregated data across multiple variables which help to identify the most marginalized and those being left behind, and captures the intersection of inequalities and multiple discrimination. The first graph below illustrates wide gaps between men and women’s literacy rates in urban and rural areas Liberia, identifying rural women as particularly at risk of illiteracy. The second graph illustrates weekly earnings by ethnicity and gender in the United States, highlighting that Hispanic/Latino women have the lowest wages.<sup>cxxxviii</sup>





- Developing equality/equity monitoring methodologies to monitor trends over time, to ensure the progressive reduction of inequalities:** Collecting disaggregated data will provide useful information on the gaps between social groups, but will not in and of itself ensure that the most disadvantaged are not 'left behind' or 'left until last'. The UN should develop common methodologies to monitor the trends and progress of the most disadvantaged groups, to ensure that they improve faster than other groups so that they catch up, assessing whether gaps, including gender gaps are being narrowed over time. WHO has developed a range of tools for health inequality monitoring, including monitoring change over time<sup>cxviii</sup> and equity-oriented monitoring in the context of universal health coverage.<sup>cxli</sup> UNICEF has similarly developed tools for equity monitoring.<sup>cxli</sup>
- In the context of water and sanitation, WHO and UNICEF with the JMP have also developed intuitively simple and clear graphic illustrations of progress in reducing inequalities, as illustrated in the simple graphic below.<sup>cxlii</sup> This can be used where targets are universal or 'zero' targets (e.g. 100 per cent access to improved water sources for all groups), and can show whether the rate of progress of the most marginalized groups is on track compared to the most advantaged groups by assessing progress at interim periods, e.g. 2015, 2020, 2025. Regular monitoring at interim periods will both ensure that the rate of progress is on track for all groups to reach the goals, as well as clearly show the progressive reduction in inequalities between social groups in achieving the targets. This approach may also be extended for the monitoring of

more complex cases that may not have zero or 100% targets, as in the graph on child mortality added below.



- **Moving beyond the focus on formal equality towards a focus on substantive equality, by measuring opportunities and outcomes, particularly in relation to horizontal inequalities.** Achieving substantive equality is particularly relevant in the case of horizontal inequalities. This will help to recognise the impacts not only of direct discrimination (which refers to intentional differential treatment with a discriminatory purpose), but also to indirect discrimination which occurs when laws, policies or practices appear neutral, but have a discriminatory *effect*, even if that is not the intention. Formal equality can result in indirect discrimination if it doesn't take account of differences. Differential treatment may therefore be necessary in order to reach substantive equality, e.g. through special measures or affirmative action. As noted above, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has emphasised the need to go beyond formal equality between men and women towards ensuring a substantive equality of result, so that eventual outcomes demonstrate effective equality. This approach should thus aim to measure both opportunities and outcomes and should apply not only to gender, but also to other horizontal inequalities related to group identities, such as race, ethnicity, language, religion or others, as discussed above. In relation to vertical inequalities between individuals, it could not be expected that all vertical inequalities would be eliminated, but these should be reduced where these inequalities have a substantive effect on the realisation of human rights (as discussed above).
- **Building joint analysis and programming to address the structural and root causes of inequality and discrimination in policies, programming and advocacy:** Building common tools and methodologies for monitoring and tracking progress in reducing inequalities will be critically important for evidence-based policy development, but the UN's human rights-based approach also requires analysing and addressing the structural and root causes that underlie the patterns of inequality and discrimination. This will mean moving beyond approaches that address the symptoms, towards approaches that may challenge existing patterns of power and privilege. Integrating programming and advocacy priorities for addressing structural and root causes in the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) while taking into account different mandates and capacities of the various UN actors, can help overcome the sensitivities that this may imply. There will be a need to define the role and actions that the UN could take at the legal level as well, including advocating for the repeal of discriminatory laws and policies that result in direct or indirect discrimination. There will also be a need to promote access to justice to ensure fairness and equality before the law, particularly in cases where the justice system may discriminate against those who are poor, illiterate, or belong to an ethnic or racial minority or are vulnerable in another way.
- **Strengthening participatory mechanisms of accountability:** The UN System should also work together to build inclusive and participatory accountability mechanisms at the local, national, regional and global levels. It would be helpful to agree a common proposal for modalities for the meaningful participation of civil society, particularly representatives of marginalized and excluded groups, in follow up and review mechanisms for the 2030 Agenda.<sup>cxliiii</sup> Promoting accountability also requires appropriate legal and policy frameworks, capable institutions and mechanisms, as well as empowerment of the media, civil society and rights-holders and capacity building of governments to respond to claims made by rights-holders. Efforts could extend from revising legal frameworks to establishing institutions or working with existing (e.g. National Human Rights Institutions), as well as building and strengthening existing social accountability mechanisms at the local level to effect sustainable results for rights-holders building linkages to existing UN human rights mechanisms for added pressure for accountability. Developing and

strengthening existing informal forms of accountability, including e.g. social accountability through promoting the participation of rights-holders in local government processes, monitoring and tracking budget implementation through community-based monitoring, social audits and other methods will also create an environment for ensuring that the SDG commitments are met.

### **VIII - Towards a Shared Framework for Action on integrating inequalities and discrimination in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda**

43. Given the threat of deepening and divisive inequalities to the three pillars of the UN's work, its normative responsibilities and the strong mandate given by Member States in the 2030 Agenda, the UN has a critical opportunity to put this imperative to 'leave no one behind' and to reduce inequalities and eliminate discrimination at the heart of system-wide efforts to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

44. The UN will be more effective by working together to achieve this objective, under a shared framework for action that is operationally oriented and grounded in the UN's normative standards. This will help to ensure that the UN is 'fit for purpose' and has a common position and strong voice on these issues – at both the national and international levels. This should focus on building synergies and coherence of the efforts of various UN entities, identifying critical priorities for the systematic integration of inequality, discrimination and equity issues into the UN's analysis, programming, policy support, monitoring and accountability, and drawing on the concepts and tools discussed above to integrate a human rights perspective. The process of developing such a shared framework will also provide a critical opportunity for the UN to share and develop joint tools and methodologies, building on existing materials and monitoring tools, in order to assess progress in achieving the reduction of inequalities and discrimination over the next 15 years.

45. Such a shared framework should not be separate from, but should rather be integrated into existing UN system-wide policy frameworks (e.g. UNDAFs) and new guidance being developed in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals through:

1. **Analysis:** Incorporating a strong focus on inequalities and discrimination into the analysis phase of the common country programming process will be critical to identify who is being left behind and why. As discussed above, this should include analysis of data disaggregated by age, sex, disability status and other grounds prohibited under human rights law. Analysis should also seek to identify the most marginalized and excluded, by analysing overlapping and multiple forms of discrimination (using simple tools like those illustrated above). Analysis should also investigate the root causes and drivers of inequality, both local and of a broader nature, marginalization and exclusion and on gaps in capacities or willingness to address inequalities. This kind of analysis could also effectively make use of existing analysis and recommendations carried out by the international human rights mechanisms (including the UN human rights treaty monitoring bodies, the UPR and special procedures, as well as the ILO supervisory bodies). This should be a part of efforts to develop 'joint analysis' under the SOPs for Delivering as One, in cooperation with UNDG's Programme Working Group. Joint analysis should combine deeper human rights and inequality analysis with other types of relevant analysis produced by all parts of the UN political, development and humanitarian system (e.g. conflict analysis, protection analysis and vulnerability analysis etc), breaking down a siloed-approach for a more integrated understanding.

2. **Programming and Policy Support:** Identifying concrete measures and actions to address inequalities and discrimination should be a central priority for programming and policy support in the context of SDG implementation. Better analysis will in turn help to identify which activities would be most effective. This imperative should also be integrated into revised UNDAF guidance as well as other UNDG guidance. It should also be integrated into the work under the HRBA under the auspices of the UNDG Working Group on Human Rights. It will also be critical to ensure more integrated programming and partnerships for addressing global inequalities.
3. **Monitoring:** Integrating inequalities and discrimination into monitoring will require 1) disaggregation and collection of data on the specific groups and 2) the development of tools and methodologies to monitor progress over time. As proposed above, the UN System should develop a common approach to data disaggregation that is grounded in international human rights and labour standards, whilst taking account of ethical and technical implications. This will also need to take into account the SDG indicators process that will be completed in March 2016, but UN agencies themselves are in some cases data collectors and can develop surveys and collect data for groups with which they are particularly concerned. The UN System should also develop new tools and methodologies to assess progress the commitment to 'leave no one behind' and 'reach the furthest behind first', building on and sharing existing tools for equity/equality monitoring. It would also be useful to develop or share common reporting frameworks, performance indicators and online knowledge repositories to ensure synergies and share information across UN entities. It will be critical to develop national capacities in this regard and to integrate the principle of meaningful participation by marginalized and discriminated groups in monitoring systems to track implementation of the SDGs to ensure independent monitoring and review and a meaningful state response.
4. **Accountability and Advocacy:** Ensuring accountability for reducing inequalities and eliminating discrimination, will require building effective mechanisms that have a mandate to track progress and to call governments and other actors to account if the situation is deteriorating, with the aim of getting back on track. It will also imply a UN role in advocating greater equality, as well as the protection of the rights of particular groups that face ongoing exclusion and discrimination.

46. The issue of inequality in the context of the 2030 Agenda is also closely connected with the issue of universality and the UN System will need to consider the implications and linkages between integrating an inequality-reduction approach with this key aspect of the agenda. The focus on inequalities is closely aligned with the idea of universality in that it takes a broader approach to sustainable development that does not focus only on 'developing' countries, but also on middle-income and developed countries. Patterns of excessive levels of inequality affect both developed and developing countries. The majority of the world's undernourished now live in middle-income countries and approximately 693 million people worldwide who live on less than US\$1.25 per day are now in Middle Income Countries. The universal agenda will thus bring a focus on people facing inequality and poverty in all countries, rather than focusing only on developing countries. This will require considering differentiated modes of UN engagement with different categories of countries. To be a truly universal, the new Agenda must aim to reach everyone in all countries, achieving universal access to services and equal rights. Universality also takes account also of global and common responsibilities in addressing cross-border impacts, and the need for differentiated national contributions to global goods.

47. As discussed under the auspices of the HLCP, the HLCP could set up an inter-agency task force, led by OHCHR and UN Women, with the participation of all interested UN entities, to develop such a shared

framework for action. This could take this HLCP Positioning Paper as a starting point for exploring these complex issues, providing an opportunity to share experiences and tools and develop strategic priorities for concrete action.

## **IX - Conclusion**

48. The imperative of 'leaving no one behind' and combating inequalities and discrimination is a central defining objective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the UN must be 'fit for purpose' and committed to action in assisting Member States in fulfilling this objective.

49. In the light of the mandate set by Member States in the 2030 Agenda as an Agenda for Equality, the UN System's existing mandate and responsibility to promote and encourage respect for human rights in line with the UN Charter, and with respect to the foregoing discussion, the HLCP would:

1. Invite the CEB to consider endorsing this HLCP Positioning Paper as a basis for initiating the elaboration of a UN system-wide shared framework for action, with the aim of operationalising the systematic integration of inequalities, discrimination and equity issues into UN efforts to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
2. Subject to such endorsement, invite the CEB to adopt a brief Policy Statement putting the imperative of 'leaving no one behind' and reducing inequalities and eliminating discrimination at the heart of the UN's efforts on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and calling for a shared framework for UN action in this regard.
3. On the basis of such a CEB Policy Statement, invite the HLCP to establish time-bound task force to elaborate this shared framework for action, enhancing the coherence and synergy of the UN's system-wide activities, building on the specific mandates, expertise and capacities of individual UN entities, and identifying and coordinating complementary and joint programmatic work.

**Appendix: Flagship Programmes/Relevant Agency Activities/Tools**

<b>IFAD</b>	Promotes inclusive rural transformation, greater focus on rural areas, women, indigenous groups, including investing in small holder family agriculture for food security and nutrition, improving rural livelihoods and ensure more inclusive and sustainable rural transformation.
<b>ILO</b>	Equality and non-discrimination are at heart to of the ILO's mandate to promote social justice and decent work for all. Non- discrimination, equal remuneration for women and men for work of equal value, are part of the ILO's core labour standards, along with freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, and the elimination of child and forced labour. These fundamental principles and standards are subject of specific regular follow-up and supervision. ILO principles standards are the basis for assistance to member States to address inequality. These include instruments addressing the situation of disadvantaged groups and workers more likely to subject to discrimination, such the ILO standards on workers living with HIV/AIDS, indigenous and tribal peoples, migrant workers or domestic workers. The ILO also has a Gender, Equality and Diversity programme, a disability inclusion strategy and a research programme publishing three flagship reports that provide analysis and statistical indicators that are essential to understanding income and other inequalities in the world of work. These are the World Employment and Social Outlook, the World Social Protection Report and the Global Wage Report. In the run up to the 100th anniversary of the ILO in 2019, several "centenary initiatives" will also focus on narrowing inequalities. These include the "End of Poverty Initiative" and the "Women at Work Initiative", which will be integrated into ILO programming.
<b>IMF</b>	IMF is working deepen analytical work on inequality and to bring policy insights into Article IV consultations with 25 country pilot studies. The work focuses on fiscal policy and structural reforms, gender equality, reforms of labour market and financial inclusion.
<b>ITU</b>	Promoting universally available, affordable telecommunications for all, and has established a methodology for measuring the digital divide in its "Measuring the Information Society" report, and the WSIS follow-up.
<b>OCHA</b>	OCHA is developing the Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) to improve data, including disaggregated data for humanitarian operations, enabling organizations to provide more targeted assistance, meet evolving needs and thus reduce inequalities. Its Gender Standby Capacity Project (GENCAP) focuses on gender equality programming in humanitarian action.
<b>OHCHR</b>	OHCHR works to promote and protect human rights for all, with a strong focus on ensuring equality and non-discrimination for all people, and with a mandate to assist governments and mainstream human rights within the UN system in line with the UN Charter. OHCHR has developed a range of tools on a human rights-based approach to development (HRBA), on a human rights approach to statistics and indicators, including disaggregation, and has a programme of work to ensure the human rights-based implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including on addressing inequalities and discrimination.
<b>UN HABITAT</b>	UN-Habitat mainstreams the human rights-based approach to sustainable urban development which entails applying human rights considerations to all parts of its work programme and to work for equality in cities. The Programme thus promotes and supports initiatives that reduce inequality and strengthen human rights in cities.

<b>UN Women</b>	Addressing gender inequalities is the core of UN Women's work and all programmes and activities aim to reduce and eliminate gender inequality and realize the full spectrum of women's and girl's rights. On the 'data revolution', this includes supporting the initiatives in the UN System Data Revolution Internal Programme of Work.
<b>UNAIDS</b>	UNAIDS has developed the GAP report identifying who is being left behind in the AIDS response. It launched 2020 targets towards ending the AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030. It has developed unique data collection efforts, including data on laws and policies, data collected by rights-holders themselves on stigma, and disaggregated data. The <i>Fast Track Approach</i> gives a priority focus to specific population groups and focuses on addressing specific changes e.g. to protect the right to privacy and confidentiality of communities that are often criminalized (e.g. men who have sex with men, sex workers).
<b>UNDESA</b>	UNDESA has been addressing dimensions of inequality, especially through its flagship publications and reports prepared for inter-governmental bodies. In addition, the Department prepares reports for inter-governmental bodies focused on the follow-up to and implementation of the main international instruments aimed at promoting the rights of several marginalized and vulnerable groups, including the Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the World Programme of Action on Youth.
<b>UNDP</b>	UNDP works to find innovative solutions to a set of complex and urgent issues that result in and perpetuate inequalities. UNDP's work on inequality reduction at the country level is in the following four areas: Broad-Based growth and employment generation, improved social spending to reach marginalized groups, mitigate and eradicate social exclusion, and protecting those most affected by climate change.
<b>UNEP</b>	UNEP systematically integrates a rights-based/equality approach in its Poverty and Environment Initiative for pro-poor environmental sustainability. UNEP also has an Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability Framework that embraces the precautionary approach and a human rights-based approach, plus nine specific thematic Safeguards Standards. Promotes climate change adaptation and resilience, universal access to science and technology, efforts to address patterns of consumption and production that degrade the environment and an Inclusive Green Economy, which aims to invest in the productive assets of the poor such as forests, fish, water and ecosystem services, diversification of livelihoods to avoid the 'resource curse' of dependence on one commodity or capital-intensive extractive industries. PCV addresses water pollution. Gender GEO focuses on gender aspects and will be expanded to focus more on inequalities and human rights.
<b>UNESCO</b>	Examples of monitoring inequalities include UNESCO's Education for All Global Monitoring Report (GMR), World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE), and the Gender Equality Action Plan with gender sensitive indicators developed by the World Water Assessment Programme led by UNESCO. UNESCO has also developed a Toolkit on "Embracing Diversity: A toolkit for creating inclusive Learning Friendly environments and an Equity and Inclusion Guide to support the integration of equity and inclusion issues in education sector plans.

<b>UNFPA</b>	Addressing inequalities and discrimination is central to UNFPA's mandate and is embedded in the current Strategic Plan 2014-17, which aims to achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health and the realization of reproductive rights, with a focus on the rights of women, adolescents and youth and marginalized populations. While one of the outcomes in the strategic plan (outcome 3) is centrally placed to address gender inequality and discrimination, those principles cut across all the other outcomes of the strategy, including outcome 1 on access to quality SHR services, outcome 2 on adolescents and youth and outcome 4 on data for development. UNFPA works to strengthen the equal impact of the <b>demographic dividend</b> through the promotion of investments in the empowerment of women, adolescents and youth through education and employment. These investments will enable people to achieve their capabilities, grow wealthier and contribute to collective development.
<b>UNHCR</b>	As part of its mandate to ensure the protection of and seeking lasting solutions for refugees, returnees, stateless people and internally displaced people, UNHCR works to create conditions which are conducive to the protection of human rights and the peaceful resolution of disputes including promoting more tolerant societies against racism and xenophobia. In all of its activities, it pays particular attention to the needs of children and seeks to promote the equal rights of women and girls. UNHCR developed a livelihood strategy to decrease dependency and increase self-reliance for people of concern and host communities, while advancing UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity approach by ensuring the active participation of diverse and representative groups of refugees. UNHCR will ensure inclusiveness and accessibility for specific groups of concern including women, adolescent girls and boys, older persons, the young, persons with disabilities, people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual or intersex, and women and men belonging to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities or indigenous groups. Globally UNHCR is making serious efforts to combatting xenophobia through a strategic approach, encompassing its guidance on Combating Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Further, in 2014 UNCHR launched its 10 year campaign to eradicate statelessness, thereby seeking to improve the lives and rights for at least 10 million stateless people."
<b>UNICEF</b>	UNICEF monitors equity through the Monitoring Results for Equity System, which focused on addressing bottlenecks that are impeding results for the most disadvantaged children in national planning and monitoring processes. The Monitoring Results for Equity System (MoRES) is a programming and monitoring approach that was developed in 2011 as part of UNICEF's refocus on equity. It builds on the existing human rights based approach to programming and helps sharpen the focus of programmes on the most critical bottlenecks and barriers that are preventing children, especially the most disadvantaged ones, from benefitting from basic social services, interventions, and care practices. It includes analysis of determinants or essential conditions required to achieve results for children, and it addresses the critical gap between routine monitoring of inputs/outputs and the monitoring of high level outcomes every three to five years for improved management of results. In particular, MoRES aims to ensure that a) plans, policies and budgets are equity-focused and address bottlenecks that are impeding results for the most disadvantaged children; b) reductions in bottlenecks (and thus effectiveness of services/interventions) are identified and periodically monitored to inform adjustments to plans and policies; c) the impact of reductions in bottlenecks on addressing child deprivations and improving child well-being is assessed. Thus, MoRES is not only about monitoring, but about good programming. The MoRES approach is applicable to all country contexts, including low income/high burden service-oriented settings and middle income countries, where cooperation is focused on policy advocacy, and in both development and humanitarian contexts."

<b>UNIDO</b>	Promotes shared prosperity and more inclusive patterns of industrial development.
<b>UNODC</b>	UNODC works to strengthen criminal justice systems to be fair, human and efficient, protecting the rights of suspects, prisoners, witnesses and victims of crime, including members of marginalized groups. UNODC works also to strengthen capacity of countries to provide evidence based and human rights based access to drug prevention, HIV services and drug dependence treatment
<b>UNU-WIDER</b>	Inequality has for many years been centre stage in UNU-WIDER research and policy analysis. A key database is the World Income Inequality Database, and projects include a research programmes on taxation and social protection, on disadvantaged groups and social mobility on gender and development, with many published papers on matters related to inequality.
<b>WFP</b>	WFP works to provide nutrition-based social safety nets and strengthening of productive assets for poorest communities for development in countries across the world, as well as enhancing safety nets and providing food in fragile and crisis-affected states.
<b>WORLD BANK</b>	Within the context of its mandate, the World Bank Group commits itself to ending extreme poverty by 2030 and promoting shared prosperity while supporting the imperative of 'leaving no one behind' and combatting inequalities and discrimination, and while supporting states in fulfilling their roles under the SDGs.

- <sup>i</sup> Opening Remarks of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the informal General Assembly thematic debate on inequality, 8 July 2013.
- <sup>ii</sup> IMF Staff Discussion Note, "Causes and Consequences of Income Inequality: A Global Perspective" (June 2015), p.4. Available here : <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2015/sdn1513.pdf>
- <sup>iii</sup> IMF Fiscal Policy and Income inequality <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2015/sdn1513.pdf>
- <sup>iv</sup> IMF Causes and Consequences p.20-14
- <sup>v</sup> See Thomas Piketty 'Capital in the Twenty-First Century', 2013.
- <sup>vi</sup> DESA, Report of the World Social Situation: Inequality Matters, 2013.
- <sup>vii</sup> DESA Inequality Matters, p.27
- <sup>viii</sup> IMF, Causes and Consequences p.15-16.
- <sup>ix</sup> IMF, Causes and Consequences.
- <sup>x</sup> IMF, Causes and Consequences p.15.
- <sup>xi</sup> See e.g. Bank of England, 'The Distributional Effects of Asset Purchases' (2012)
- <sup>xii</sup> See e.g. UNICEF, Austerity Measures Threaten Children and Poor Households: Recent Evidence in Public Expenditures from 128 Developing Countries (2011) Ortiz, I., Chai, J., and M, Cummins, UNICEF Social and Economic Policy Working Paper Number 2011-09, UNICEF Department Policy and Practice, and DESA 'The distributional effects of fiscal austerity', DESA Working Paper No. 129, June 2013.
- <sup>xiii</sup> UNDP, Humanity Divided: Confronting Inequality in Developing Countries (2014)
- <sup>xiv</sup> UNESCO, Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2015
- <sup>xv</sup> UNICEF, 2012 [http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Child\\_Poverty\\_Inequality\\_FINAL\\_Web\\_web.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Child_Poverty_Inequality_FINAL_Web_web.pdf) -p. p. 15-25
- <sup>xvi</sup> UNDP, 2014, p.16-17
- <sup>xvii</sup> This report can be found online here: <https://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/299198>
- <sup>xviii</sup> ILO, Equal pay, An Introductory Guide, 2013, ILO, Global Wage report 2014/15
- <sup>xix</sup> ILO, Social Protection for Older Workers, 2014
- <sup>xx</sup> For data on gender inequality and discrimination, see UN Women Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016, : <http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/>.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Claire Melamed, *Putting inequality in the post-2015 picture*, ODI, March  
See also *Inequality Matters: Report on World Social Situation 2013*, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ST/ESA/345, United Nations publications Sales No. 13.IV.2
- <sup>xxii</sup> **ILO, Global Wage Report 2014/15**
- <sup>xxiii</sup> In recognition of the fact that indigenous and tribal peoples are likely to be discriminated against in many areas, the first general, fundamental principle of ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous Peoples is non-discrimination
- <sup>xxiv</sup> The UNEP-UNDP Poverty and Environment Initiative APR 2014 states: "Increasing pressure on land and water resources is eroding the natural assets the poor depend upon. Access to environmental and natural resources is diminishing. Once open rangelands for pastoralists are progressively being closed. Land grabbing threatens the rural poor and indigenous peoples in many developing countries."
- <sup>xxv</sup> See, e.g., Tapio Lappi-Seppälä, Trust, Welfare, and Political Culture: Explaining Differences in National Penal Policies, Crime and Justice Vol. 37, No. 1, 2008
- <sup>xxvi</sup> See for instance, Harrison, A.; McLaren, J. and McMillan, M. (2010) 'recent findings on trade and inequality', NBER Working Paper Number 16425, for recent evidence on this. For example, the rise of the South and the growing competitiveness of emerging market economies in global manufacturing value chains, has led to the closure of manufacturing plants across North America and Europe, leading to loss of jobs and income opportunities for low-skill, blue collar workers. Daron Acemoglu at MIT estimates net job losses stemming from the rise in import competition from China at 2-2.4 million, between 1990 and 2011. On the other hand, the growing weight of emerging market economies transactions in international financial markets has boosted financial intermediation operations in global financial centres, such as London, New York and Tokyo, boosting incomes for workers in these sectors. Thus, according to McKinsey Global Institute, in 2010 emerging economies accounted for more than three quarters of the growth experienced in global stocks of loans held in the balance sheet of financial institutions, \$2 trillion out of a total of 2.6 trillion, with China alone accounting for \$1.2 trillion. Indeed, the rise of the South also offers new income opportunities for advanced economies and the possibility of offsetting these inequality dynamics. However, these transitions are not automatic and require of active policies in areas such as education, skills and technology capability upgrading, or industrial policy formulation
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Henk-Jan Brinkman, Larry Attree and Sasa Hezır, 2013. *Addressing horizontal inequalities as drivers of conflict in the post-2015 development agenda*. Mimeo
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Andrew Berg and Jonathan Ostry, 2011. *Inequality and Unsustainable Growth: Two sides of the same coin?* IMF Staff Discussion Note

- xxix Report of the Commission of Experts of the President of the United Nations General Assembly on Reforms of the International Monetary and Financial System, Ch. 2, paras. 122 – 24 (21 September 2009) (describes inequality as a cause of the crisis and noting that responses to the crisis like bank bailouts may exacerbate inequality). *See also* Report of the Secretary-General, *The role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order and an assessment of the implications of inequality for development*, A/67/394, paras. 13 – 14 (describes the financial crisis, financial globalization and deregulation as contributors to inequality and increasing inequality as a growing threat to economic stability).
- xxx See Laurence Chandy et al, 2013, *The Final Countdown: Prospects for Ending Extreme Poverty by 2030*. Brookings Institute.
- xxxI Key issues in this regard are illustrated e.g. in Save the Children, 2013. *Getting to Zero: how we can be the generation that ends poverty*. London
- xxxii Ibid, Branko Milanovic, 2011. *The Haves and the Have-Nots*, Basic Books, New York.
- xxxiii 2030 Agenda, para 14.
- xxxiv 2030 Agenda, para 35.
- xxxv 2030 Agenda, para 13.
- xxxvi 2030 Agenda, para 35.
- xxxvii 2030 Agenda, para 10.
- xxxviii 2030 Agenda, para 19.
- xxxix 2030 Agenda, para 18.
- xl These obligations derive, *inter alia*, from the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.
- xli Transforming Our World : *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (hereinafter «2030 Agenda »), Preamble.
- xlii 2030 Agenda, para 3 and Goal 5.
- xliii 2030 Agenda, Target 10.3 and Target 5.1.
- xliv 2030 Agenda, preamble, section on « People. »
- xlvi 2030 Agenda, para 3.
- xlvi 2030 Agenda, para 8.
- xlvi 2030 Agenda, para 19.
- xlvi 2030 Agenda, Target 10.3.
- xlix 2030 Agenda, para 4.
- l 2030 Agenda, para 23.
- li 2030 Agenda, para 35.
- lii 2030 Agenda, para 8.
- liii 2030 Agenda, para 29.
- liv 2030 Agenda, Goal 10.
- lv 2030 Agenda, Goal 5.
- lvi 2030 Agenda, Goal 4.
- lvii 2030 Agenda, Target 4.1.
- lviii 2030 Agenda, Target 4.3.
- lix 2030 Agenda, para 25.
- lx 2030 Agenda, Target 4.5.
- lxi 2030 Agenda, Target 6.1.
- lxii 2030 Agenda, Target 9.1.
- lxiii 2030 Agenda, Targets 16.b and 5.c.
- lxiv 2030 Agenda, Targets 10.3.
- lxv 2030 Agenda, Target 10.3.
- lxvi 2030 Agenda, Target 16.3.
- lxvii 2030 Agenda, Targets 10.2 and 5.5.
- lxviii 2030 Agenda, para 26.
- lxix 2030 Agenda, Target 11.2.
- lxx 2030 Agenda, Target 11.7.
- lxxi 2030 Agenda, Target 11.2.
- lxxii 2030 Agenda, Target 15.6.
- lxxiii 2030 Agenda, para 27.
- lxxiv 2030 Agenda, Targets 1.1-1.b.
- lxxv 2030 Agenda, Target 1.4
- lxxvi 2030 Agenda, Target 10.1.
- lxxvii 2030 Agenda, Target 10.4.

- lxviii 2030 Agenda, Target 10.5.
- lxix Transforming Our World : *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (hereinafter «2030 Agenda »), Preamble.
- lxxx 2030 Agenda, para 20.
- lxxxi 2030 Agenda, Targets 5.1 and 5.2
- lxxxii 2030, Agenda, target 5.3
- lxxxiii 2030 Agenda, Target 5.c
- lxxxiv 2030 Agenda, Target 4.5.
- lxxxv 2030 Agenda, Target 4.7.
- lxxxvi 2030 Agenda, Target 5.5.
- lxxxvii 2030 Agenda, Target 5.6.
- lxxxviii 2030 Agenda, Target 8.5.
- lxxxix 2030 Agenda, Targets 5.a and 5.4.
- xc 2030 Agenda, preamble, section on « Planet. »
- lxi 2030 Agenda, para 18.
- lxii 2030 Agenda, para 3.
- lxiii 2030 Agenda, para 16.
- lxiv 2030 Agenda, para 4.
- lxv 2030 Agenda, Para 68.
- lxvi 2030 Agenda, Target 17.10.
- lxvii 2030 Agenda, Target 16.8.
- lxviii 2030 Agenda, Target 10.a.
- lxix 2030 Agenda, Target 3.b.
- c 2030 Agenda, Target 10.b.
- ci 2030 Agenda, Target 10.6.
- cii 2030 Agenda, para 48.
- ciiii 2030 Agenda, para 48.
- civ 2030 Agenda, Para 74(e).
- cv 2030 Agenda, Para 74(g).
- lxi Although the text of the Outcome Document references national statistical offices, it is worthwhile to note that there are also important statistical offices in many ministries that should be targeted for capacity building to be able to collect, analyse and report on disaggregated data. For example, major data related to health comes from health information system within Ministries of Health.
- cvii 2030 Agenda, Para 76.
- cviii 2030 Agenda, Target 17.18.
- lix The term 'race' does not imply the acceptance of theories which attempt to determine the existence of separate human races. The preferred term today in most contexts is ethnicity.
- lx See General Comment no.20 (2009) of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- lxii It further requires States to declare and to pursue a national policy designed to promote, by methods appropriate to national conditions and practice, equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation, with a view to eliminating any discrimination in these fields. This includes discrimination in relation to access to vocational training, access to employment and to particular occupations, and terms and conditions of employment. The Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) similarly provides for measures to promote and ensure equal remuneration for work of equal value.
- lxiii See OHCHR, *SDG Indicator Framework: A Human Rights Approach to Data Disaggregation to Leave No One Behind*, 2015.
- lxiv The concept of horizontal inequalities is increasingly used in conflict research, as there is growing evidence that countries that have high levels of inequalities that are marked sharply across ethnic or religious lines are more likely to experience social division and conflict. See e.g. Stewart, Brown and Cobham 'The Implications of Horizontal and Vertical Inequalities for Tax and Expenditure Policies' CRISE Working Paper No. 65, (February 2009)
- lxv This distinction aims to distinguish between legitimate inequalities which arise from the exercise of personal choice, and illegitimate inequalities that arise from circumstances beyond the individual's control (such as their gender, race or other characteristic).
- lxvi For a more detailed discussion of this point, see Anne Phillips, 'Defending equality of outcome', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 2004, No.12, pp.1-19), available online here> <http://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/92657.pdf>

- cxvi UNICEF's equity approach aims to eliminate unfair and avoidable circumstances that deprive children of their rights, and sees disparities as unfair or unjust when the cause is related to social context, rather than biological factors, with the definition that 'equity means that all children have an opportunity to survive, develop and reach their full potential, without discrimination, bias or favouritism.' See UNICEF Monitoring Results for Equity System, Evaluation Report, 2014, p.34. In human rights analysis however, the concept of 'equity' is generally a narrower concept that refers to fairness in the distribution of costs and benefits of development, as emerging in jurisprudence of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the commitments of the Declaration on the Right to Development. See for example, how the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has emphasized in relation to costs of healthcare that "Equity demands that poorer households should not be disproportionately burdened with health expenses as compared to richer households". CESCR Committee, General Comment No.14, para 12. See also Article 2.3 of the UN Declaration on the Right to Development refers to the "fair distribution of the benefits [of development]".
- cxvii Committee the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, General Recommendation No. 25, para 8.
- cxviii Cobham and Sumner *Putting the Gini back in the Bottle? The Palma as a policy-relevant measure of inequality*, 15 March 2013
- cxix Oxfam, 'Even it up'.
- cxx Berg and Ostry, 2011. *Inequality and Unsustainable Growth: Two sides of the same coin?* IMF Staff Discussion Note
- cxxi FAO and UNEP have suggested adding more detail here – could they provide suggested text?
- cxixii An indicator which accords with the World Bank's perception of reducing poverty and inequality. The World Bank recently adopted new metrics for achieving the goal of ending global poverty: to end extreme poverty and promote "shared prosperity." Promoting shared prosperity is defined as "fostering income growth of the bottom 40 percent of the population in every country." See <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/publication/inequality-in-focus-october-2013>
- cxixiii Ostry, Berg Tsangarides, 2014
- cxixiv Ostry Berg etc. IMF
- cxixv IMF Causes and Consequences, p.7. ILO and OECD have published similar conclusions e.g. World of Work 2014; OECD Report 2015 "In It Together"
- cxixvi UNICEF to provide a reference ?
- cxixvii UNEP and the Work of Independent Expert on Human rights and the Environment have examined these links from an environmental perspective.
- cxixviii For example, UNDP's human development approach & contributions of Human Development Reports and HDI and other indexes (e.g. inequality-adjusted HDI, gender inequality index, MPI).
- cxixix For instance, the integrated land management aims at increasing synergies among multiple land-use objectives where the role of land-based natural resources such as forests and trees are better understood by all stakeholders from a broader perspective, encompassing forests, agricultural productivity, soil protection, water supply and distribution, biodiversity conservation, among others. Such an integrated approach to natural resource management will matter far more in the future when implementing the 2030 Agenda in view of increasing complexity of the natural resource use to meet growing demand for food, energy and water while balancing these needs with ecosystem services.
- cxixxx For more information on UNFPA and the Demographic Dividend: <http://www.unfpa.org/news/youth-empowerment-education-employment-key-future-development>
- cxixxxi This economic benefit can arise when a population has a relatively large proportion of working age people coupled with a history of effective investment in their empowerment, education and employment, which enables people to achieve their capabilities, grow wealthier and contribute to collective development. A dividend can only be realized if governments ensure the empowerment of girls and women, provide universal and high quality education that is tailored to new economic opportunities, and expand secure employment.
- cxixxxii It is not even known for example what percentage of the world's poor are women since poverty data is estimated using aggregate household level data. See UN Women, *Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights: Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016* (2015)
- cxixxxiii See OHCHR note on 'SDGs indicators: A human rights approach to data disaggregation' at <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/DataDisaggregation.pdf>
- cxixxxiv See the statement on indicators by the UNDG's Human Rights Working group from the Expert Group Meeting on the Indicator Framework for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, 25-26 February 2015.
- cxixxxv the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees and the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.
- cxixxxvi See the statement of the UNDG's Human Rights Working Group on the indicator framework, which also strongly recommended data disaggregation to the extent feasible by the "prohibited grounds of discrimination" to ensure that this process is based on existing agreed normative standards under international law
- cxixxxvii OHCHR is engaged in working in this area, see e.g. <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/StatisticsAndHumanRights.pdf>

- <sup>cxviii</sup> OHCHR sets out similar tools in its 'Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation', available here: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Indicators/Pages/documents.aspx>. Civil society organisations working on human rights have also developed similar tools – see e.g. <http://www.cesr.org/section.php?id=173>
- <sup>cxix</sup> WHO introduced the methodology to measure inequality over time through measuring how faster/slower the situation is improving in the disadvantaged than the advantaged in the **State of inequality: reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2015**. Several examples and graphs are presented to show simultaneously the improvement in the national average and within-country inequality (e.g. fig 4.5) and the methodology is explained in the annex. See also WHO, Handbook on health inequality monitoring with a special focus on low and middle-income countries, 2013. And see Hosseinpoor, A, Bergen N and Magar V 'Monitoring inequality: an emerging priority for health post-2015', Bulletin World Health Organisation 2015, 93. Hosseinpoor AR, Bergen N, Schlottheuber A. Promoting health equity: WHO health inequality monitoring at global and national levels. Glob Health Action 2015, 8: 29034.
- <sup>cxl</sup> Hosseinpoor et al 'Equity-oriented monitoring in the context of universal health coverage' PLoS Med, 2014, 11(9).
- <sup>cxli</sup> See e.g. UNICEF Monitoring Results for Equity System, Evaluation Report, 2014, at [http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/2120-UNICEF-MoRES\\_pubs-Main.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/2120-UNICEF-MoRES_pubs-Main.pdf). The Monitoring Results for Equity System (MoRES) is a programming and monitoring approach that was developed in 2011 as part of UNICEF's refocus on equity. It builds on the existing human rights based approach to programming and helps sharpen the focus of programmes on the most critical bottlenecks and barriers that are preventing children, especially the most disadvantaged ones, from benefitting from basic social services, interventions, and care practices. It includes analysis of determinants or essential conditions required to achieve results for children, and it addresses the critical gap between routine monitoring of inputs/outputs and the monitoring of high level outcomes every three to five years for improved management of results. In particular, MoRES aims to ensure that a) plans, policies and budgets are equity-focused and address bottlenecks that are impeding results for the most disadvantaged children; b) reductions in bottlenecks (and thus effectiveness of services/interventions) are identified and periodically monitored to inform adjustments to plans and policies; c) the impact of reductions in bottlenecks on addressing child deprivations and improving child well-being is assessed. Thus, MoRES is not only about monitoring, but about good programming. The MoRES approach is applicable to all country contexts, including low income/high burden service-oriented settings and middle income countries, where cooperation is focused on policy advocacy, and in both development and humanitarian contexts."
- <sup>cxlii</sup> See JMP 'Ending Inequalities' at [http://www.wssinfo.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/resources/Ending-Inequalities-EN-LowRes.pdf](http://www.wssinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/resources/Ending-Inequalities-EN-LowRes.pdf)
- <sup>cxliii</sup> With respect to UNEP for example, Rio+20 Outcome document clause 88(h) mandates that UNEP "[e]nsures the active participation of all relevant stakeholders drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions and exploring new mechanisms to promote transparency and effective engagement of civil society."

## The Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth

The strategy document

(22 October 2015)

### Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	63
1.1	Context.....	63
1.2	Youth Employment and the United Nations System .....	64
2	Vision and objective of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth.....	66
3	Guiding principles of the Initiative.....	67
4	Key elements .....	69
4.1	Strategic multi-stakeholder alliance.....	70
4.2	Regional and country-level action .....	71
4.3	Knowledge facility on decent jobs for youth.....	74
4.4	Funding modalities and resource mobilization.....	75
5	Launch and implementation of the Initiative.....	76
5.1	Success factors .....	76
5.2	Launch of the Initiative: Main results and benchmarks for the initial period of implementation .....	77
5.2.1	Action to launch and initiate operations.....	77
5.2.2	Action for the implementation the Initiative .....	78
5.3	Modalities for the launch and implementation .....	80
5.4	Key risks and mitigation measures .....	80
6	Annex - Mapping of selected multi-stakeholder initiatives and partnerships (by alphabetical order).....	82

Submitted to HLCP by ILO, chair of the Task Team composed of: FAO, ITC, ITU, UNCTAD, UNDESA, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNRWA, UN-WOMEN, UNWTO, WIPO, the World Bank Group and (ex officio) the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Context

The youth employment crisis has become a stubborn reality in most countries and in all regions. It has resulted in increased vulnerability of young people in terms of: (i) higher unemployment; (ii) lower quality of jobs and structural underemployment for those who find work; (iii) greater labour market inequalities across different groups of young people; (iv) a longer and more insecure school-to-work transition, and (v) increased detachment from the labour market.

Currently, two out of five young people in the labour force are either working but poor or unemployed. To overcome the challenge of providing more decent jobs for young people, economies would need to create around 475 million productive jobs over the next decade in order to absorb the current number of unemployed youth and provide job opportunities for the approximately 40 million labour market entrants - mostly young people - each year.<sup>1</sup> These trends call for sustained investment to ensure that countries reap the benefits of the demographic dividend, particularly those with a significant youth bulge, by smoothing the transition of young people to decent work.<sup>2</sup>

Of the estimated 200 million unemployed people in 2014, about 37 per cent (or about 73 million) were between the ages of 15 and 24.<sup>3</sup> In that year, the global youth unemployment rate was 13 per cent, which is practically three times as high as the adult unemployment rate.<sup>4</sup> Heightened youth unemployment is common to all regions and is occurring despite the improvement in educational attainment, thereby fuelling social discontent. Across the globe, the challenge is not only to create jobs, but also to ensure quality jobs for young people who are often underemployed and work in the informal economy, or are engaged in vulnerable employment. ILO school-to-work transition surveys conducted in 28 low- and middle-income countries show that almost eight out of ten young workers work in the informal economy, either as wage earners or necessity-driven self-employed. The incidence of informality and slower transitions to stable employment is even higher among young women. Interventions are required to improve the productivity, earnings, working conditions and rights of young people, and particularly for those who work, but cannot escape poverty. Of particular concern is the issue of young workers (aged 15-17) in hazardous jobs, who in 2012 were estimated to number 48 million.<sup>5</sup>

Addressing the massive youth employment crisis is of vital importance from an economic and societal perspective. While the youth employment crisis cannot be dissociated from the overall employment deficit, and the need for job-rich inclusive growth strategies that deliver the goal of full, productive, freely chosen and decent employment for all, the following factors justify a priority focus on Decent Jobs for Youth.

First, young people have been disproportionately affected by the crisis. The ratio of youth to adult unemployment has multiplied above historical trends, and young people represent a large share of those in informal jobs, low pay and working poverty. Furthermore, in economic terms, persistent and high unemployment and underemployment have important adverse, longer-term and scarring consequences

<sup>1</sup> ILO, 2014: *Employment policies for sustainable recovery and development*, International Labour Conference, 103<sup>rd</sup> Session, Report VI, Geneva.

<sup>2</sup> Decent work combines access to full and productive employment with rights at work, social protection and the promotion of social dialogue, with gender equality as a cross-cutting issue.

<sup>3</sup> ILO, 2015: *Global employment trends for youth 2015*. Within the United Nations System, and in all its statistics and indicators, young people are identified as those between 15 and 24 years of age.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> ILO, 2013: *Marking progress against child labour: Global estimates and trends 2000-2012*; and 2011: *Children in hazardous work: What we know, what we need to do*.

for young people that extend through their adult job and life prospects. These include a higher risk of future joblessness or poor quality jobs, a prolonged period of unstable jobs and potentially depressed income growth. Moreover, these effects are more severe for youth entering the workforce with low educational levels, who are in a relatively disadvantaged position compared with their better educated peers. There remains a serious gender gap in labour force participation rates of young women. Apart from their detrimental effects on future wages, employability and job security, youth unemployment and underemployment constitute important costs for society. Youth is a decisive period of life because it is a time of huge physical, psychological and social change. For most young people, the transition to adulthood coincides with the transition into the world of work. The costs of joblessness or poor quality jobs for individuals and societies include reduced self-esteem, discouragement and diminished levels of health and well-being, which may persist for many years in adulthood. In some cases, democracy itself and its underpinning political processes can be exposed to social unrest. There are significant economic and societal pay-offs if these situations are remedied.

Technology, innovation and other factors have led to rapidly changing labour market opportunities, conditions and skill requirements for young women and men. In some technology sectors, there is even a skills shortfall, leading to unfilled job vacancies and the need for new skills training. Young people are also increasingly engaged in new forms of work, which may offer new employment opportunities. They may also expose young people to greater insecurity compared to core workers. Entrepreneurship, including web-based start-ups, are emerging as a pathway for some young people. However, entering self-employment and succeeding at it has proven challenging for youth who often lack the experience and skills and face limited access to social and financial capital, all key to start businesses and make them grow. Addressing these emerging trends through innovative solutions is critical for the future of work.

While a comprehensive approach to sustaining aggregate demand and boosting overall employment is a necessary condition for improving youth employment prospects, focussed and specific attention on opportunities for young people is equally important. An integrated and coherent approach that combines macroeconomic and microeconomic interventions, addresses both labour demand and supply, and the quantity and quality of employment, and which scales up innovative interventions, is critical to addressing the specific vulnerabilities and needs of young people during the transition to the world of work.

## **1.2 Youth Employment and the United Nations System**

Youth employment has been a longstanding priority on the agenda of the United Nations. It is one of the main goals of the World Programme of Action for Youth. In September 2000, the Millennium Summit recognized the political urgency and relevance of addressing the youth employment challenge and issued a call to “develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work”.<sup>6</sup> This call was followed in 2001 by the establishment of the Youth Employment Network (YEN), a joint initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General, the Director-General of the ILO and the President of the World Bank, aimed at building international consensus and influencing the international agenda by engaging, educating and motivating actors for improved youth employment opportunities.

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<sup>6</sup> A/RES/55/2, para. 20.

In July 2011, the United Nations High-level Meeting on Youth reiterated the urgency of addressing the global challenge of youth employment through strategies for decent and productive work.<sup>7</sup> It also encouraged member States to develop partnerships involving governments, employers' organizations, trade unions, the private sector, institutions of education at all levels, youth organizations and civil society. This was reaffirmed by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012.<sup>8</sup>

In 2012, the United Nations Secretary-General outlined working with and for women and young people as one of the five generational imperatives of his five-year agenda. The United Nations, through its Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD), has developed a System-wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth-SWAP), one of the five priorities of which is youth employment and entrepreneurship. The most recent ILO resolution on youth employment, adopted in June 2012, calls for urgent action to tackle the unprecedented youth employment crisis through a multi-pronged approach geared to pro-employment growth and decent job creation, together with targeted interventions for disadvantaged youth.<sup>9</sup>

Much progress has been made, including through the development of the Youth-SWAP, awareness-raising by the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, the YEN and successful examples of joint programming, including under the Achievement Fund of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG-F).

A number of lessons have emerged from joint initiatives on youth employment. These include: the need to expand partnerships beyond the multilateral system at both the international and country levels by involving a range of key youth employment stakeholders; the need to balance the global, inclusive approach with and an agile action oriented platform; the importance of clear roles and responsibilities for all members, including national and other partners engaged in the development and implementation of initiatives; the development of policy and programme initiatives that extend over the long term; the enhancement of capacity to formulate evidence-based policies and programmes that can scale up innovative action; and the predictability of funding.

It is in this context that, in October 2014, the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) discussed decent jobs for youth, along with the urban agenda, as an area deserving its priority attention. The HLCP selected youth employment as a prototype for an issue-based initiative that applies the five key elements of the post-2015 development agenda identified by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), while supporting "fit-for purpose" efforts by mobilizing the capacity of the United Nations system and operationalizing issue-based partnerships.<sup>10</sup>

Following these discussions, the HLCP supported the establishment of a time-bound Inter-Agency Task Team, open to all HLCP members, to develop and launch a **Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth**. The Initiative aims to foster system-wide cooperation, strengthen policy coherence and coordination, mobilize and engage external partners, and enhance linkages between the normative and operational aspects of United Nations efforts for improved programming and delivery. The Task Team is chaired by the ILO and its core members are: FAO, ITC, ITU, UNDESA, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-

<sup>7</sup> A/RES/65/312.

<sup>8</sup> A/RES/66/288.

<sup>9</sup> *The youth employment crisis: A call for action*, resolution adopted by the 101<sup>st</sup> Session of the International Labour Conference, 2012

[http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/101stSession/texts-adopted/WCMS\\_185950/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/101stSession/texts-adopted/WCMS_185950/lang--en/index.htm).

<sup>10</sup> See Summary of conclusions of the 28th Session of the High-level Committee on Programmes, New York, October 2014. The key elements the post-2015 development agenda were: (i) universality, (ii) integration, (iii) equality, (iv) human rights, and (v) data revolution.

Habitat, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNRWA, UN-WOMEN, UNWTO, the World Bank Group and (ex officio) the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. UNCTAD and WIPO have joined recently.

As a follow up to the call made by the HLCP, this paper proposes a Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth and its related strategy. This draft was submitted on 31 August 2015 for comments by the HLCP. Following this discussion, the Task Team further refined the proposal and will initiate consultations with relevant actors engaged in the development and implementation of youth employment policies and programmes.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide an opportunity to scale up action on youth employment. Together with the achievement of relevant targets under Goal 8 on the promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, youth employment outcomes can be expanded by leveraging the targets of several SDGs, including through the implementation of a global strategy for youth employment.

## 2 Vision and objective of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth

The **vision** of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth is a world in which young women and men have greater access to decent jobs everywhere.

The **objective** of the Initiative is to facilitate increased impact and expanded country-level action on decent jobs for youth through multi-stakeholder partnerships, the dissemination of evidence-based policies and the scaling up of effective and innovative interventions.

This objective is directly linked to the achievement of the SDGs relating to youth employment and more specifically to the outcome document of the United Nations Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda titled "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", contained in resolution 70/1. The outcome document includes the following youth employment targets: (i) 4.4 "By 2030, increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship"; (ii) 8.5: "By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value"; and (iii) 8.6: "By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training".<sup>11</sup>

The objective will be pursued by using the power of the United Nations system to convene multi-stakeholder partnerships and by pooling cutting-edge advice, expertise, resources and support. More specifically, the objective will be operationalized by:

- a) engaging stakeholders and world leaders in high-level policy action on youth employment;
- b) expanding and scaling up context-specific interventions at the national and regional levels for systematic and coherent policies and interventions on youth employment;
- c) pooling existing expertise and enhancing knowledge development and dissemination on what works for youth employment, including through the development of tools and capacity building; and
- d) leveraging resources from existing facilities and mobilizing additional resources.

<sup>11</sup> With respect to means of implementation, target 8.b indicates "By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization".

### 3 Guiding principles of the Initiative

The Initiative aims to support efforts for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the area of youth employment by building on past and on-going experience gained from joint action, lessons learned and good practice on youth employment. The following principles have been identified as guidance for the Initiative and its implementation:

- a) ***Multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral approach.*** The strategy of the Initiative will be built on a multi-dimensional approach to ensure that young women and men in different contexts and situations, including in fragile states and states in protracted crisis, as well as among displaced populations, benefit from coordinated support. This reflects the universal nature of the SDGs.
- b) ***Rights-based approach.*** The Initiative will strengthen the links between the United Nations normative frameworks and operational activities. It will facilitate the effective application of standards and norms to operations on the ground. The rights-based approach will promote respect for human rights and the application of international labour standards and other United Nations normative frameworks relevant to the promotion of decent jobs for young people.
- c) ***Promotion of gender equality.*** The Initiative will mainstream gender equality concerns throughout its implementation. The interventions supported will pay particular attention to gender issues and their underpinning socio-economic factors, as well as gender-differentiated transitions to decent jobs and, where appropriate, will target young women through positive action. Interventions will need to address female entrepreneur's access to finance, and measures that reduce and redistribute caring responsibilities and promote men's role in sharing nurturing/paternity responsibilities to ensure that young women have the opportunity to seek decent work and training.
- d) ***Recognition of the heterogeneity of youth and the need to promote targeted approaches.*** The Initiative will address the importance of adopting targeted approaches and strategies, in recognition of the heterogeneity and needs of different groups of young people, which vary according to individual characteristics (gender, age, socio-economic and family background, educational level, national origin, refugee status, health status, disability). The Initiative will also address young people that are at risk of violence and crime or that have already been exposed to illegal and or criminal activities with the twin objectives of prevention and rehabilitation supporting their transition to a decent job.
- e) ***Balanced set of interventions.*** The Initiative will focus on support to member States to stimulate labour demand at all levels and improve education and training policies and systems so that they respond better to the current and future demands of labour markets, and to promote opportunity-driven self-employment and entrepreneurship as a career option for young people. It will promote inclusive growth and decent employment for young women and men in key economic sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, trade, ICT, digital economy, tourism, cultural and creative industries, and the green economy.
- f) ***Focus on the creation of decent jobs and the improvement of the quality of work.*** The Initiative will support countries in the identification of sectors and areas with job creation

potential and will give priority to youth employment interventions that address the twin objectives of improving the quantity and quality of jobs for youth. This includes measures to lift young people out of poverty or vulnerable employment, and to support their transition from the informal to the formal economy. It will also include innovative approaches and new schemes, piloted by a range of stakeholders, which can be scaled up.

- g) **Promoting the access of young people to productive assets.** Access to productive resources, including land, finance and technology, is an enabling factor for the employment and self-employment of young people in both urban and rural areas. The Initiative will promote the access of young people to assets and to environmentally-sustainable economies (green economy, management of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems).
- h) **Expanding investments in youth for quality education and skills development.** Education and skills development enhance both the capacity to work and opportunities to progress at work. The Initiative will promote increased investment in youth with a view to improving access to and the relevance of education and training, and strengthening the connections between education and skills development systems and labour markets. Particular attention will be paid to lifelong learning, quality apprenticeships and other work experience schemes that address skills mismatches. Awareness about risks, a secure path in the school to work transition, opportunities in the labour markets and rights at work will be promoted including through school curricula.
- i) **Promoting labour market policies, combining active labour market policies (ALMPs) and social protection measures.** The focus will be on the development of effective strategies that combine ALMPs with social protection measures, including unemployment benefits, and expanding outreach of effective labour market institutions, including employment services. Employment activation measures will be fostered, particularly for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds and young women, ensuring equal access to decent jobs.
- j) **Combining immediate action with long-term policy interventions.** In recognition of the urgent need to achieve better youth employment outcomes, as well as achieving sustainable results and impact, the Initiative will be implemented through a combination of time-bound actions and policy interventions addressing both cyclical and structural economic and social issues, and new emerging trends.
- k) **Complementarity and coherence between public policies and private sector initiatives.** Recognizing the key role of the private sector in job creation, the Initiative will actively engage the private sector and promote complementarity and coherence between public policy and private investment.
- l) **Involvement of organizations representing the interests of young people.** The Initiative will facilitate the involvement of these organizations in relevant policy and planning discussions by pursuing active engagement with organizations that represent young people and their interests in rural and urban areas.

- m) **Focus on achieving impact at the country level and pursuing regional perspectives, where appropriate.** The Initiative will be practically minded and focused on the end goal of achieving impact on the ground. The mobilization of and engagement with the United Nations country-based presence and coordination mechanisms is of key importance.
- n) **Leveraging existing platforms and lessons learned.** The initiative will build on past and/or existing youth employment networks and platforms, including those implemented through South-South and triangular cooperation mechanisms.
- o) **Expanded multi-stakeholder partnerships.** The implementation of the Initiative will involve multi-stakeholder partnerships, both within and outside the United Nations system. Partners will bring their own expertise and added value and will engage from the initial phase of the Initiative and throughout its implementation.

#### 4 Key elements

The strategy includes the following inter-connected elements:

- (i) **A strategic multi-stakeholder alliance.** The Initiative addresses decent jobs for youth as an issue of global concern which requires the highest possible level of policy attention and action. It is a development imperative that builds on and transcends the action of any individual organization or actor. The alliance will be set up by leveraging the convening power of the United Nations system, its overarching policy frameworks and its multiple and diverse partners from governments and non-governmental entities. It will bring together major actors of substantive significance to the issue of decent jobs for youth, including national institutions, the private sector, the United Nations system and other multilateral organizations, representatives of academia, representatives of the social partners and youth organizations. It will be an umbrella forum for global advocacy and will raise existing activities on youth employment to a higher level of action and impact. The main functions of the alliance will be to: (1) advocate high-level policy commitment and action on youth employment; (2) support policy convergence and coherence; and (3) stimulate innovative thinking and resource mobilization to scale up youth employment interventions and their impact.
- (ii) **Expanded and scaled up regional and country level action on decent jobs for youth.** The Initiative will promote and monitor multi-pronged interventions through broad partnerships and joint action on decent jobs for youth. These interventions will focus on scalable and innovative solutions that have proved effective in improving youth employment outcomes at the regional and national levels with a view to developing sustainable policies and institutions. This element will respond to national development priorities, support United Nations country programming and be implemented through broad multi-stakeholder partnerships under the leadership of United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs). It will involve governmental and non-governmental institutions, private sector actors, representatives of the social partners, youth and other organizations active in the region and/or country. In particular, support will be provided to UNCTs that are engaged in the implementation of the employment and entrepreneurship priority of the Youth-SWAP.
- (iii) **Knowledge facility on decent jobs for youth.** The knowledge facility will promote the sharing of knowledge and experience, capacity building and peer learning, including through

South-South and triangular cooperation mechanisms. It will facilitate the exchange of information and good practice on what works for youth employment, support the testing and evaluation of policy packages, encourage the development and implementation of innovative strategies and disseminate broadly evidence, guidelines and tools for the replication of effective and scalable youth employment responses. It will identify and document successful practices in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of interventions for decent jobs for youth. Finally, it will support policy and multi-stakeholder dialogue during the implementation of youth employment initiatives in pilot countries.

- (iv) ***Funding modalities and resource mobilization.*** This component will pool domestic resources and those available from existing funds.<sup>12</sup> It will mobilize additional resources where required. Funding will support innovative initiatives that have the potential for wide replication and high impact in selected countries.<sup>13</sup> Resources will principally be used to support youth employment action at the country and local levels, including work undertaken through the knowledge facility that is instrumental for country-level implementation. Resources management will be based on the criteria of efficiency, cost-effectiveness, accountability and transparency.

#### 4.1 Strategic multi-stakeholder alliance

Achieving decent and productive work for young people is a global concern that requires political attention and collaboration on a global scale. A strong global initiative on decent jobs for youth responds to the call by countries for the implementation of a global strategy for youth employment.

The international community, including the multilateral system, has an important role to play in creating global awareness of the importance of investing in youth employment and of concerted action to promote decent jobs for young people. This support is needed to build international consensus around youth employment and to mobilize political leaders in as many countries as possible with a view to making action on youth employment a top priority.

A global strategic alliance around the issue of decent jobs for youth will give visibility, create synergies and promote coherence among youth employment actors and initiatives. In view of the magnitude of the youth employment crisis, the alliance will function as an umbrella for existing youth employment activities and partnerships with a view to fostering coherence and bringing them to a higher level of action and impact. To this effect, the alliance will leverage existing platforms and interventions. It will serve as a global forum on decent jobs for youth and will offer the opportunity to connect existing youth employment related platforms, networks and interventions (see Annex 1 for a summary of these entities). Synergies across these platforms and networks will be established through the collaboration of various entities that are members of both the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth and of thematic platforms and networks, including the United Nations IANYD, Solutions for Youth Employment (S4YE),

<sup>12</sup> The recent discussion on financing for development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasize the need for investment and mobilization of domestic resources.

<sup>13</sup> An example of funding facility on youth employment that was successfully implemented in the recent past is the Achievement Fund of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG-F). Funded by the Government of Spain, the MDG-F provided financial and technical support to 15 UNCTs to pilot joint initiatives on youth employment and migration. These initiatives resulted in more integrated approaches in the operationalization of national youth employment priorities through partnerships involving national institutions and organizations and the UNCTs. They also helped build collective knowledge and expertise on effective approaches and develop tools for joint programming on youth employment.

the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) and the Global Partnership for Education. The supporting and embracing role of the alliance amid a multitude of efforts is an important value addition of the Initiative.

The alliance will build on the lessons learned from networks and interventions implemented by the United Nations in the area of youth employment. It will particularly draw on the experience gained from the YEN by enhancing global advocacy for country-level and evidence-based action. It will also build on experiences from other initiatives including the Youth Employment Inventory (YEI), which serves as a repository of evidence from youth employment programmes implemented worldwide; and the recently-established S4YE partnership, which seeks to promote the evidence-based use of existing and additional resources, increase coordination for impact and align resources to scale up proven demonstrations. It will also use the lessons learned from other global partnerships on specific issues, such as education, health, nutrition, sustainable energy, green growth and the digital economy. The lessons learnt point to the importance of balancing the need for inclusive engagement and participation of key stakeholders and coordination efforts with an agile governance structure that enables rapid deployment and scaling up action within reasonable time frames, using the specialised expertise of different partners in a coherent and transparent platform.

The alliance will be a flexible and nimble mechanism to leverage the collective capacity of the United Nations system and its multiple partners, including private sector and non-governmental actors. It will galvanize high-level attention on the need to take urgent action on youth employment and will disseminate messages and ideas on new approaches and partnerships for more effective ways to tackle the youth employment challenge. Its members will advocate increased efforts for the achievement of the youth employment targets emerging from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in developing countries and fragile states.

Convened by the United Nations, the alliance will involve world leaders and personalities from various backgrounds that are significant in the global quest for decent jobs for youth. Its members will act as global advocates for decent jobs for youth. They will discuss, with members of academia, parliamentarians and other national and global policy shapers, how to address the global drivers of change that may have an impact on youth employment. They will provide vision and guidance.

The main tasks of the members of the alliance will include: (i) the promotion of youth employment as a top priority on global, regional and national policy agendas; (ii) global advocacy for sustained and coordinated investment in youth employment through the mobilization of existing and new resources; (iii) consultation with a range of organizations, leaders and experts on practical approaches and innovative scalable solutions in the area of youth employment; (iv) support for the establishment of country-level multi-stakeholder platforms to steer action on youth employment; and (v) the preparation of a global report on youth employment, with recommendations for action.

## **4.2 Regional and country-level action**

### ***Regional level action***

At the regional level, the Initiative will promote regional partnerships for decent jobs for youth. Work at the regional level will include the development of regional programmes, capacity building, cross-country learning, resource mobilization and advocacy.

Regional cooperation can expand the impact of national efforts to improve youth employment outcomes. Action at the regional level will include the sharing of good practice and experience with a view to replicating approaches that have proved effective in other countries in the region.

The Initiative will promote regional capacity-building action to expand knowledge of evidence-based policies and interventions for youth employment. It will promote the establishment of broad partnerships and cross-country networks involving the regional networks of the IANYD, regional organizations and banks (capitalizing on existing UN platforms such as the UN Regional Commissions), national policy-makers and practitioners, youth and other civil society organizations.

The regional component of the Initiative will also be implemented through South-South and triangular cooperation modalities.

### ***Country-level action***

Country responses to the youth employment crisis have differed. Almost every country in the world has sought to address the issue, and a wealth of approaches has been implemented at the national level. However, many interventions have been confined to specific programmes that are narrow in scope and limited in time. The priority attached to them varies over time, and many programmes have failed to address the multiple aspects of the youth employment challenge and have focussed on labour market entrants, particularly in urban areas, while paying little attention to the poor working conditions of many young people. Finally, there is excessive fragmentation of interventions, with little coordination between implementing actors.

The Initiative will promote strong national ownership. Youth employment actors at the national and local levels will own the process from the outset, including requests for support by the Initiative.

Support by the Initiative will place emphasis on advancing action on youth employment by expanding and scaling up interventions through coordinated responses involving multiple stakeholders. The main focus will be on the development and implementation of national policies and strategies, and on interventions at the country and local levels, with a view to achieving impact on both the quantity and quality of jobs for young people, and their operationalization through large-scale youth employment interventions. This will be done through the development of time-bound national plans or programmes for decent jobs for youth, as well as interventions led by cities and municipalities. These plans, programmes and initiatives will be implemented through both public and private investment and will be instrumental in: (i) linking youth employment to national development plans and vision strategies, employment and job creation policies; (ii) bringing up to scale innovative initiatives that have worked in the country of implementation and in other countries for replication purposes; and (iii) forging broad partnerships for joint action. Country and local level interventions will focus on scalable solutions that have proved effective in improving youth employment outcomes. The knowledge element of the strategy will therefore seek to identify scalable solutions.

Subject to age-group definitions and types of interventions in the various national contexts, the ultimate beneficiaries will be young people with particular emphasis on disadvantaged and underprivileged youth.<sup>14</sup> Participation of young people and organisations that represent them will be proactively engaged in the process of consultation, design, dialogue, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of country level action.

In countries that will request the support of the Initiative, along the same lines as the strategic alliance at the global level, a multi-stakeholder partnership will be set up at country level to support the implementation of youth employment interventions, recognising the important role of the private sector

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<sup>14</sup> The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions used by Member States.

for job creation and the role of public policies to provide the overall enabling policy and normative frameworks and build level playing grounds. The partnership will include government institutions, United Nations entities, international bilateral and regional organizations and banks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private sector actors, representatives of the social partners and youth organizations active in the country.

During the initial period, in close collaboration with the UNCTs, the Initiative will identify a number of pilot countries for implementation. Priority will be given to countries with explicit interest in youth employment already reflected in national development plans and strategies and employment policies as well as countries wishing to focus on decent jobs for youth in national policy-making. Special attention will be paid to requests channelled through the UNCTs for implementation through collaborative undertakings, as advocated by Youth-SWAP<sup>15</sup> and/or in line with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). At the local level, action will be overseen by the UNCTs and implementation will involve local actors.

Special emphasis will be placed on action in fragile states and contexts characterized by protracted crises with a view to contributing to peace-building processes and enhanced resilience through job opportunities for young women and men and improved risk management.<sup>16</sup>

In view of the high share of young women and men in informal jobs, the Initiative will focus in facilitating the transition from the informal to the formal economy. Attention will focus on rural areas where levels of youth underemployment and working poverty are particularly pronounced. and scaling up effective interventions to improve the economic and job opportunities of disadvantaged youth living in urban areas.

In developing and emerging economies, the Initiative will provide support to national stakeholders to give effect to national priorities to address the youth employment challenge through the scaling up of innovative interventions. In advanced economies, the Initiative will disseminate knowledge on what works for youth employment and will support the development of innovative replicable solutions.

As there is no-one-size fits all approach to addressing the youth employment crisis, interventions will be tailored to the specific country or local context. They will be based on the guiding principles of the Initiative and the broad policy framework of the call for action on the youth employment crisis adopted by the 185 member States of the International Labour Conference in June 2012. Particular emphasis will be given in this context to the role that sectoral policies play in promoting youth employment.

Country-level support will combine technical assistance to strengthen the policy-making process with direct measures to scale up youth employment interventions. All interventions will be gender sensitive and focus on: (i) reviewing the effectiveness of policies, institutions (including legal frameworks and compliance) and programmes, and applying lessons from evaluation and good practices; (ii) developing policies that assign national priority to decent jobs for youth; (iii) implementing interventions through time-bound national plans for productive and decent jobs for youth and/or

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<sup>15</sup> See: <http://unyouthswap.org>

<sup>16</sup> The ILO 2015 Report of the International Labour Conference: Employment and decent work for peace and resilience, revision of the Employment (transition from war to peace) recommendation, 1944 (No. 71) reflects the expanded approach to crisis response taken by the ILO and the UN system with focus on employment generation, institution-building for constituents, social dialogue, social protection, and infrastructures for basic services, with particular attention to the most vulnerable groups in crisis situations.

programmes backed by public and private investments with a view to turning commitment into action; and (iv) monitoring and evaluating interventions.

Country and local level initiatives will be linked to the knowledge and advocacy component of the Initiative, which will analyse and disseminate effective practices, provide technical assistance and capacity building and support resource mobilization.

### 4.3 Knowledge facility on decent jobs for youth

Policy-makers, practitioners and the global development community are seeking solutions to the youth employment crisis. They are looking for innovation and evidence of what works and how to improve labour market outcomes for young men and women. In view of the scope of the challenge, the demand largely focusses on scalable and sustainable solutions that can enhance programming and policy-making, including through the exchange of practices amongst actors.

This element of the Initiative will leverage the collective experience of the United Nations and other partners to spur innovation and facilitate knowledge development and sharing in the field of youth employment. The demand for effective youth employment solutions has drawn attention to sources of information on the youth labour market and measures to support youth in the transition to decent jobs.<sup>17</sup> Seeking to maximize its added value, the knowledge facility will: (i) capitalize on the longstanding collective experience and knowledge of the United Nations and other organizations in supporting young people through decent jobs; (ii) serve as a meta-website mapping and linking knowledge on youth employment across the globe; (iii) link and expand the work of the various knowledge platforms; (iv) strengthen national capacity for the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of youth employment policies and programmes; and (v) communicate the objectives and results achieved by the Initiative and disseminate knowledge with a view to improving evidence-based policy-making. These objectives are described briefly below.

***Knowledge generation and sharing:*** building on the current state of the evidence, the facility will support the testing and evaluation of innovative policy packages and interventions across sectors. It will prioritize the generation of knowledge in areas where evidence from evaluation is scarce, including what works to: (i) promote job-centred growth, particularly in sectors with a high youth employment potential; (ii) improve youth labour market outcomes in conflict-affected and disaster-prone settings; (iii) support youth employment in rural areas; (iv) promote gender equality in employment, training, and occupations; (v) support disadvantaged youth; and (vi) support young women and men through entrepreneurship and self-employment.

The generation of knowledge will advocate rigorous and innovative methods of evaluation, experimentation and rapid assessment. The facility will position the Initiative as a youth employment knowledge gateway leading to the exchange of information and good practice on what works, why and how in youth employment. It will also identify and document research on youth employment, showcase youth employment and youth development databases, and share successful practices of the monitoring and evaluation of youth employment policies and

<sup>17</sup> Some of the most recognized global information platforms on the subject are: (i) [YouthStats](#), a database with reliable labour market statistics to inform policies on youth employment worldwide; (ii) [Youth Employment Inventory](#), a comprehensive, live database of youth employment programmes worldwide; and (iii) [YouthPOL](#), a global repository of youth employment policies. Global knowledge platforms that, in addition to being outside the youth employment spectrum, offer good opportunities for synergies include: the Green Growth Knowledge Platform ([GGKP](#)) and the Portal on Multilateral Environment Agreements ([InforMEA](#)).

programmes. In addition to the virtual exchange of information, the Initiative will also focus on the face-to-face sharing of knowledge and experience. Regional and country level work will be strongly linked to and supported by the knowledge platform.

**Capacity development:** the facility will act as a professional collaborative venue for experts and practitioners at all levels. It will provide tailored support and facilitate capacity building on the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of youth employment policies and programmes. In particular, it will promote peer learning, including through South-South and triangular cooperation mechanisms. It will also serve as a one-stop shop for capacity building and the strengthening of initiatives in the area of youth employment, focussing on efforts by United Nations organizations and other key stakeholders. Special attention will be given to strengthening the capacity of the range of stakeholders involved at the national level in the design, implementation and gender-sensitive monitoring of evidence-based youth employment interventions.

**Communication:** the facility will serve as a communication channel for the Initiative, showcasing interventions and achievements at the various levels, featuring technical discussions and the voices of young people, policy-makers, practitioners, the social partners, United Nations organizations and all other players active in the promotion of decent jobs for youth.

#### 4.4 Funding modalities and resource mobilization

The SDGs and the related youth employment targets can only be achieved through coherent and coordinated strategies and plans that are able to attract funding from diverse sources, particularly domestic, in both the public and private sectors. The relative significance of each source, and the associated leveraging challenges, differ between countries.

The Initiative aims to pool resources in support of youth employment interventions that have the potential for wider replication and higher impact at the country level. It will support the identification of strategic country-level opportunities that demonstrate the capacity to generate youth employment and will mobilize resources for the implementation of multi-stakeholder interventions on decent jobs for youth. Support will also be provided for knowledge development and dissemination purposes, particularly of good practice, capacity building, product development and the evaluation of policy packages.

The Initiative will follow a two-track funding approach by mainstreaming youth employment concerns and priorities into existing domestic and global facilities and funds, as well as mobilizing additional resources and funding mechanisms, including in relation to the Financing for Development and the SDGs which have placed a central focus on youth employment strategies.<sup>18</sup> Where appropriate, it

<sup>18</sup> The Outcome Document (Paragraph 16) adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, Addis Ababa, July 2015, indicates that "To enable all people to benefit from growth, we will include full and productive employment and decent work for all as a central objective in our national development strategies. We will encourage the full and equal participation of women and men, including persons with disabilities, in the formal labour market. We note that micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, which create the vast majority of jobs in many countries, often lack access to finance. Working with private actors and development banks, we commit to promoting appropriate, affordable and stable access to credit to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as adequate skills development training for all, particularly for youth and entrepreneurs. We will promote national youth strategies as a key instrument for meeting the needs and aspirations of young people. We also commit to developing and operationalizing, by 2020, a global strategy for youth employment and implementing the International Labour Organization (ILO) Global Jobs Pact".

will also facilitate the channelling of current and future investments in youth employment action, including through a thematic multi-donor facility. The various elements of the Initiative have different funding needs. Resources are required to support: (i) the generation and dissemination of global public goods, and the implementation of foundational activities and capacity building in pilot countries; and (ii) the implementation of youth employment interventions that operationalize policy priorities through action. Resources will be managed and allocated based on the criteria of efficiency, cost-effectiveness, accountability and transparency. Contributions from multiple resource partners will be pooled and allocated to technical partners to support implementation. Funding for regional and country-level action will be used to operationalize policy and investment priorities, and to scale up action on decent jobs for youth. The mix of domestic and foreign, public and private sources will correspond to the specific country context and youth employment challenge. Country-level efforts will be assisted through the identification and mobilization of resources.

The partners of the Initiative will be called upon to assist in linking youth employment action to existing funding facilities at both the global and national levels, and to develop a dedicated fund-raising strategy.

## **5 Launch and implementation of the Initiative**

### **5.1 Success factors**

The Initiative aims to expand action at the national, regional and global levels through transformational, innovative and evidence-based policies and approaches and to facilitate the scaling up of practical interventions that have an impact on youth employment outcomes. It is based on the diagnosis of youth labour markets in the aftermath of the global financial and economic crisis and is focused on the proposals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also builds on the assessment of and lessons learned from the present architecture and from the results achieved at the global, regional and country levels.

The four mutually supportive elements of the Initiative are intended to fill in the gaps identified, particularly in relation to the scale, pace and coherence of action. The strategy aims to facilitate systemic action on youth employment in the medium- to long term, while at the same time taking a pragmatic approach by making full use of existing thematic facilities that can be leveraged to contribute to the same objective in the immediate and short term, as well as tapping into emerging opportunities as they arise. In this respect, it proposes an 18-month plan to start operations and the implementation of action at the global, regional and country levels. During this period, the Initiative will develop a longer-term operational roadmap to be reviewed on a regular basis and adopted every three years.

The following factors will be pivotal in determining the success of the Initiative: (i) full ownership of the Initiative by countries in different regional and development contexts; (ii) the ability and readiness of the United Nations system to act rapidly and effectively as a global convenor and facilitator, reaching out to non-United Nations actors, mobilizing resources and building capacities and knowledge in support of country-level action; and (iii) the active engagement and coordinated action of diverse stakeholders (including Parliamentarians, the private sector and other non-state actors, youth organizations and other NGOs and academia) under the overarching umbrella of the alliance. Another critical success factor is coordination of the mobilization of existing and new funding with a view to achieving scale and impact.

A number of concrete and practical schemes have been identified with a view to kick-starting implementation as soon as the Initiative is endorsed by the CEB and launched. Other schemes covering specific themes, regions and countries may be identified during the implementation of the Initiative. The

proposed implementation strategy includes parallel and simultaneous action on the four elements of the Initiative, which will engage a large number of United Nations entities, governmental and non-governmental actors, and on issue-based innovative pilots, each of which will involve a more limited number of agencies and country coverage.

The 2016 edition of the Youth Forum<sup>19</sup>, which will take place from 1-2 February 2016, will look at ways that in which young people could contribute to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including youth employment. In this context, the Global Initiative will be featured as an initiative by the United Nations system to respond to the global priority of job opportunities.

The full impact of the Initiative will be realized when all of these elements are in place and interconnected coherently, and the shared responsibilities and duties of the partners are clearly established and owned at all levels by the participating agencies, regional organizations and governments.

The operational framework of the Initiative will establish the foundations for the coherence of youth employment action at the global, regional and country levels. The synergies established across the elements of the Initiative and through strong coordination between the various actors involved in youth employment will lead to the higher-level impact of policies and programmes on decent jobs for youth.

## 5.2 Launch of the Initiative: Main results and benchmarks for the initial period of implementation

This section describes the action to be taken to launch and initiate operations, and action for implementation during the first 18 months of the Initiative.

### 5.2.1 Action to launch and initiate operations

The action taken to launch and initiate operations during the first 18 months of the Initiative, including the expected deliverables and benchmarks, will produce the following results:

- ***Strategic multi-stakeholder alliance established and operational.*** A guidance note/Memorandum of Understanding will be prepared on the composition, rules of engagement, roles and responsibilities of the multi-stakeholder alliance at the global level. A consultation process will be launched to contact and engage leaders and personalities from various backgrounds and institutional affiliations who are of substantive significance to the global quest for decent jobs for youth. It is expected that, by the end of year one, the alliance will be established, will have held at least two meetings and adopted the three-year operational roadmap.
- ***Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth launched.*** A number of high-profile events to introduce the Initiative will be identified and a communication strategy devised with the participation by the United Nations Secretary-General, the ILO Director-General and the Principals of participating United Nations entities, government representatives and members of the multi-stakeholder alliance. A high level resource mobilisation event will be organised to formally launch the Initiative.

<sup>19</sup> The youth employment crisis has emerged as the one constant challenge which young people have addressed in their dialogue with policy-makers at the intergovernmental level during the annual ECOSOC Youth Forum. The Youth Forum, launched in 2012, has become an apex Forum for channeling the views of young people from around the world on a range of sustainable development challenges.

- ***Three-year operational roadmap finalized.*** A roadmap will be developed and endorsed detailing the operations and expected results of the Initiative over a three-year period. It will highlight priorities, achievable targets, measurable results and related indicators, timelines, the financial and human resources available and gaps for which additional resources may be required. The roadmap will be the main instrument for monitoring the implementation of the Initiative and reporting on its achievements. This result will be considered as achieved once the roles and rules of accountability have been endorsed by the different partners engaged in the implementation of the Initiative.
- ***A knowledge facility established to share evidence about what works in youth employment and to strengthen capacity building initiatives.*** The knowledge facility will serve as a one-stop shop to strengthen the capacity of policy makers and practitioners to develop effective youth employment interventions. This result will be produced once the virtual knowledge facility is operational and effective youth employment interventions have been proposed in support of policy and multi-stakeholder dialogue in at least five countries. Details of the management of the facility will be included in the operational roadmap.
- ***Existing and new evidence on innovative and effective youth employment interventions broadly disseminated.*** The participating entities will collect, analyse and disseminate existing and new evidence with a view to supporting regional and country-level action through the exchange of information and good practice on what works, why and how in youth employment, and particularly on innovative and scalable interventions. The results of this work will be packaged in a practical toolkit and will be accessible through the knowledge facility. This result will be achieved once the toolkit has been developed and disseminated in the regions and countries involved in the Initiative.

## 5.2.2 Action for the implementation the Initiative

The action to be taken for the implementation of the Initiative during its first 18 months of operations, including the expected deliverables and benchmarks, will produce the following results:

- ***At least two regional partnerships established under the Initiative.*** A consultation process will be conducted with regional organizations, regional banks and the regional networks of the IANYD to launch partnerships, including concrete action in at least two regions, with the aim of enabling cross-country learning, the development of regional programmes and capacity-building initiatives. This result will be produced once the partnerships have been established and an operational plan, including planned resource mobilization and advocacy efforts, has been developed for each region.
- ***A guidance note for country-level action developed.*** This note will detail the models of country-level engagement that work best, including the processes and expected outcomes of country-level action. It will also provide guidance on the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms at the country level and on implementation modalities. This result will be produced in consultation with the Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO) to ensure consistency with existing United Nations Development Group guidance and with the engagement of selected UNCTs and United Nations agencies.

- ***Scaled up action at the country and local levels on youth employment initiated in at least five prototype countries.*** A main deliverable of the Initiative is to assist in embedding youth employment priorities in national development plans and visions, setting up multi-stakeholder support groups at the country level, and embedding and reinforcing the priorities in common country programming documents. This action will be implemented in at least five countries during the first 18 months of operations. When identifying the countries, priority will be given to national commitment and ownership, and resource mobilization, supported by UNCTs that have already expressed interest in implementing the Youth-SWAP. This result will be produced once the country-level multi-stakeholder platform has taken full ownership of the country-level action and has developed a plan of action on decent work for youth, including priority sectors of intervention, major programmes to be implemented, roles and responsibilities during implementation and the domestic and other resources mobilized that are required for implementation. Interventions will be evaluated to gauge their impact on youth employment outcomes and to identify good practice for evidence-based policy-making.
- ***A capacity development programme developed and tested in at least five countries.*** The Initiative will develop a training programme and the related training materials to strengthen the in-country capacity of youth employment stakeholders, UNCTs and other development partners for the development and implementation of policies and programmes for decent work for youth. This result will be produced once the capacity development programme and training materials have been tested in at least five countries.
- ***Thematic and/or sectoral work led by members of the Task Team.*** This work will be piloted based on the mandate and expertise of participating United Nations and non-United Nations entities in support of country-level action and using the funding modalities as outlined in Section 4.4 above. At least three of the following thematic initiatives will be initiated during the first 18 months:
  - (i) Green jobs for youth in collaboration with the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE);
  - (ii) Quality apprenticeships in collaboration, inter alia, with the Global Apprenticeships Network (GAN);
  - (iii) Digital skills and “tech-hubs” to improve decent job opportunities for youth in the digital economy;
  - (iv) Youth in fragile states;
  - (v) Youth in the informal economy, promoting an integrated strategy for young peoples’ transition to the formal economy<sup>20</sup> in synergy with the current urbanization issue-based process initiated by HLCP/CEB in support of Habitat III;
  - (vi) Youth in the rural economy;
  - (vii) Linkages to global markets and investments to improve opportunities for young entrepreneurs, also with the Youth and Trade Initiative;
  - (viii) Transition to decent work for young workers (15-17) in hazardous occupations.

<sup>20</sup> The new Recommendation 204 Concerning the transition from the informal to the formal economy, adopted by the 104<sup>th</sup> Session of the International Labour Conference, 2015 provides the framework and guidance on integrated strategies including legal frameworks, employment policies and institutional development that can facilitate the transition to the formal economy.

- ***A resource mobilization strategy developed and implemented.*** The resource mobilization strategy will: (i) include modalities for the mobilization and use of domestic resources; (ii) identify engagement rules and establish administrative procedures to mainstream youth employment for funding already available under existing facilities of the multilateral system; (iii) convene a high-level event to mobilize additional resources for the implementation of the Initiative and its operational roadmap; and (iv) explore the feasibility of setting up a thematic multi-donor facility linked to the SDG process (such as the previous MDG Fund). This result will be produced once the funding gap has been filled.

### **5.3 Modalities for the launch and implementation**

The following mechanisms will be put in place to support the launch of the Initiative and the delivery of results during its first year of operation.

A Steering Committee will be established to provide guidance during implementation. The Committee will be composed of senior management of the United Nations entities participating in the Task Team which commit core human and financial resources for the achievement of the deliverables of the Initiative. This will allow the Initiative to work in an agile manner, but with a dedicated team and seed funds. Regular communication will be maintained with the entire Task Team, currently composed of 17 entities, until the multi-stakeholder alliance is set up and its operational rules established.

The Initiative will be co-led and managed by the ILO as permanent Chair, together with a rotating United Nations or non-United Nations co-Chair. Each component of the Initiative and specific thematic and regional work will be led by a dedicated United Nations agency and co-managed (after the first pilots) by an entity outside the United Nations system.

National ownership of the Initiative is essential for the sustainability of country and local-level action. Ownership of the Initiative by the Principals of United Nations entities will also be essential to ensure the highest possible level of policy attention and the dedication of technical staff and other resources by each entity for successful implementation.

A communication strategy will be established to explain, mobilize support and promote the Initiative.

### **5.4 Key risks and mitigation measures**

The strategy relies on the convening power of the United Nations system and the extensive technical knowledge, experience, tools and funding facilities across the system that are or could potentially be deployed in support of youth employment. It also builds on the experience acquired through previous partnerships and the explored complementarities with existing initiatives. This platform and its further development need the support, political commitment and leadership of national and local governments, parliamentarians, social partners, non-governmental entities, the private sector, personalities and opinion leaders. The personal engagement of CEB Principals in advocating and ensuring the support of key leaders among the partners of the multi-stakeholder alliance and in their respective constituencies will be key for the success of the Initiative as a major facilitator of the achievement of the SDGs and their related targets on decent jobs for youth.

Investment by a high number of entities (19) in the development and implementation of the Initiative is a positive indicator of the strong interest of all stakeholders in achieving impact on decent jobs for youth. This high number may also represent a risk of time-consuming coordination mechanisms, with significant transaction costs that may delay action and reduce impact. While working on

coordination and coherence, the Initiative should remain agile and able to respond rapidly to emerging opportunities. There needs to be a clear explanation strategy across the United Nations system at the global and country levels on the rules of engaging with the Initiative and a good understanding of the shared responsibilities.

With regard to existing United Nations inter-agency networks and other partnerships, the Task Team has clearly identified the scope of the Initiative as embracing and supporting networks and partnerships which pursue common objectives with a view to maximizing impact, avoiding duplication, internalizing lessons learned and strengthening links, synergies and complementarities. A thorough review of the existing efforts (Annex) confirms the need and unique value added of this Initiative. The communication strategy will promote the Initiative as an overarching umbrella that engages and supports relevant action by participating entities and the participation and/or membership of these networks in the multi-stakeholder alliance.

Experience and evaluation of policies and programmes to promote youth employment clearly point to the importance of country ownership and commitment of resources including domestic funds as well as international investments. To mitigate the risks of insufficient commitment and investment, ensuring high level of ownership and sustainable resource allocation will be a key priority and criterion for accessing the support of the Global Initiative for each country level initiative. While domestic ownership and funding should secure sustainability, additional external funding (when required) should contribute to economies of scale. The Initiative proposed resource mobilisation strategy (see section 4.4 above) and the participatory approach at country level aim at mitigating these risks. The participatory approach consists of fostering national and local ownership in accordance with the country's situation, context and priorities through broad based dialogue and implementation of coherent interventions by all relevant stakeholders (outlined in section 4.2 above) to secure relevance and sustainability.

While the Initiative will rely in its initial stages on the allocation of resources from within the entities participating in the Task Team, the main risk is that insufficient human and financial resources will be identified and redeployed by the entities in a timely manner. This can be mitigated through the full endorsement of the Initiative by CEB Principals and the follow-up implementation strategy of each individual entity. In any case, delivery of results and monitoring during the first year will require seed funding to supplement the resources deployed by the entities. As the resources pledged for youth employment are already significant, although too frequently spread around numerous small-scale interventions, the challenge is to mobilize resources to scale up successful, innovative and experimental action. The mitigation approach involves setting up a dedicated funding mechanism in the medium term (building on the experience of the MDG Fund) involving public-private partnerships. This mechanism will be governed by transparent eligibility criteria and will be open to all initiatives that support innovative solutions and the scaling up of effective interventions to ensure greater access to decent jobs for young people everywhere.

## 6 Annex - Mapping of selected multi-stakeholder initiatives and partnerships (by alphabetical order)

Overview	Partners	Mission	Governance	Comments
<b>1. Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP)</b>				
CGAP is a global partnership to advance financial inclusion through practical research and active engagement with financial service providers, policy makers and funders.	Various member organizations [a].	Improve the lives of poor people by spurring innovations and advancing knowledge and solutions that promote responsible, sustainable and inclusive financial markets.	Council of Governors (governance body); Executive Committee (board); Operational Team; Annual Meeting to review strategy and work plan.	Implementing partner of the G20 GPFI; Annual Microfinance Funder Survey; Focus areas include: digital financial services, graduation into sustainable livelihoods, financial inclusion.
<b>2. Global Apprenticeships Network (GAN)</b>				
GAN is a business-driven alliance where private sector companies, business federations and associations share best practices and commit to action around youth employability and skills development.	Various international companies, employer's federations and international organizations including ILO and OECD. [b]	Encouraging and linking business initiatives on skills and employment opportunities for youth, notably apprenticeship.	General Council (decision-making body); Management Board (strategic directions); Auditors. Coordinated by the IOE and the OECD's Business and Industry Advisory Committee (BIAC) with the support of the ILO.	Driven by business leaders; National networks; Principles: strengthen apprenticeships and internships, share best practices and encourage a network of committed companies and organizations.

Overview	Partners	Mission	Governance	Comments
<b>3. Global Education First Initiative (GEFI)</b>				
GEFI is an initiative of the SG to accelerate progress towards the Education for All goals and education-related MDGs. It aims to rally a broad spectrum of actors.	UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Women, United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education, the World Bank, Global Partnership for Education, Educate A Child, Education International, Global Campaign for Education, philanthropic and business institutions.	Priority 1: Put Every Child in School; Priority 2: Improve the Quality of Learning; and Priority 3: Foster Global Citizenship.	The Steering Committee provides strategic direction and guidance to the SG (chaired by SG); A group of MS serves as 'Champion Countries'; Youth Advocacy Group; The Secretariat provides overall support.	UNESCO holds the Secretariat. Eighteen young people serve as Youth Advocacy Group. It is supported by the United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education.
<b>4. Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW)</b>				
GEW is a global initiative for the promotion of youth entrepreneurship through a dedicated week of advocacy on the topic.	UNCTAD, ILO, UNIDO, ITC, WIPO, Kauffman Foundation, and Dell.	Promote youth entrepreneurship through global simultaneous activities, from large-scale competitions to events and fairs.	Annual Congress and Coordinating Committees at national level.	Active in 130 countries.

Overview	Partners	Mission	Governance	Comments
<b>5. Global Partnership for Education (GPE)</b>				
GPE is a global partnership that helps developing country partners to develop and implement education sector plans.	Developing countries (60), donor governments, international organizations, the private sector, teachers, and civil society/NGO groups. Youth engagement through advocacy team.	To galvanize and coordinate a global effort to deliver a good quality education to all girls and boys, prioritizing the poorest and most vulnerable.	The Board of Directors sets policies and strategies. Four Committees on coordination, grants, governance and strategy/policy; The Secretariat provides administrative and operational support.	Financed mainly through MDTF (\$3.7 billion as of 2013); Used for activities at the global and national (e.g. Education Sector Plans) levels; Governments provide majority of the funds for the operationalization of these plans. [c]
<b>6. Green Growth Knowledge Platform (GGKP)</b>				
GGKP is a global network that identifies and addresses knowledge gaps on green growth and offers policy guidance, good practices, tools, and data on the transition to a green economy.	Partnership for knowledge development and sharing among institutions and organizations active in the areas of green growth and economy;	Identify knowledge gaps and provide policy analysis, guidance, information and data in support of a transition to a green economy.	Steering Committee: Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), OECD, UNEP, and World Bank; GGGI and UNEP manage day-to-day operations; Independent Advisory Committee for strategic advice and guidance on research programmes.	GGGI and UNEP provide staff time and consultants; Office has been established.

Overview	Partners	Mission	Governance	Comments
<b>7. Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD)</b>				
The IANYD is a United Nations inter-agency network that brings together United Nations entities working in the area of youth development.	Over 40 United Nations entities.	Increase the effectiveness of United Nations work in youth development by strengthening collaboration and exchange among all relevant United Nations entities, while respecting and harnessing the benefits of their individual strengths and unique approaches and mandates.	The Network is chaired by UN DESA's as permanent co-chair. There is a rotating co-chair (currently UNDP) and thematic working groups. The Network has monthly and annual meetings.	UN-led. It spearheaded the development of the Youth-SWAP, which has been endorsed by the CEB. It works with non-United Nations partners, in particular at the level of working groups. It promotes similar networks at the regional and country levels.
<b>8. Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE)</b>				
PAGE is a response to the outcome document of Rio+20. It represents a mechanism to coordinate UN action on green economy and aims to support national green economy strategies.	UNEP, ILO, UNIDO, UNITAR, UNDP.	PAGE aims to support 30 countries over seven years to 2020 in building national green economy strategies that will generate new jobs and skills, promote clean technologies, and reduce environmental risks and poverty.	Management Board; Technical Team; Donor Steering Committee; Secretariat hosted by UNEP; Country focal points.	UN-led; Brings together networks of the participating agencies; Platform for exploring partnerships and exchanging experience, technical information and knowledge.
<b>9. Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B)</b>				
SPIAC-B is an inter-agency coordination mechanism for enhanced coordination and advocacy on social protection and international cooperation.	Several international and bilateral organizations as well as NGOs. [d]	Aims to better organize the efforts of the international development community at the global and country levels on social protection initiatives.	The Secretariat rotates between the ILO and the World Bank (co-chairs) and has been based in the ILO Office in NY.	Co-chaired by the ILO and the World Bank. It builds on the CEB Social Protection Floor Initiative with a focus on promotion, policy coherence, coordination and knowledge sharing.

Overview	Partners	Mission	Governance	Comments
<b>10. Solutions for Youth Employment (S4YE)</b>				
Solutions for Youth Employment (S4YE) is a multi-stakeholder coalition of public sector, private sector, and civil society actors that aims to provide leadership and resources for catalytic action to increase the number of young people engaged in productive work.	Founding partners: The World Bank Group, Accenture, International Youth Foundation, Plan International, RAND Corporation, Youth Business International and the International Labour Organization. [e]	To provide leadership and catalytic action and mobilise efforts to significantly increase the number of young people engaged in productive work by 2030.	The Board of Directors provides high-level strategic guidance. The Executive Committee is responsible for executive managerial decisions. The Secretariat manages the day-to-day operations. Partnership is a network of governments, foundations, private sector, civil, society, international organisations and youth networks.	Vision: A world where all youth have access to work opportunities that empower them to escape poverty, thus boosting shared prosperity worldwide. Goal: To provide catalytic support to employment and productive work for 150 million youth by 2030.
<b>11. Understanding Children's Work (UCW)</b>				
UCW is an inter-agency research cooperation to support statistical information on child labour and related policy approaches.	UNICEF, World Bank, and ILO.	Produce research aimed at informing policies in the areas of child labour and youth employment.	A Steering Committee comprising with representatives from the partner agencies is responsible for the Programme's overall strategic direction and goals. [f]	Policy oriented research platform for research cooperation, policy dialogue, partnership building and knowledge exchange.
<b>12. Youth Employment Funders Group (YFEG)</b>				
A group of donors and multilateral organizations working together to improve knowledge on what works while securing funding coordination and collaboration among members.	Core partners include USAID, Inter-American Development Bank/Multilateral Investment Fund, and the ILO; with a broader attendance from other donor agencies and foundations.	To generate and share more and better evidence on what works in the field of youth employment and act on that knowledge through each funder's technical capacity and funding mechanisms.	A Steering Committee comprised by technical experts from USAID, Inter-American Development Bank/Multilateral Investment Fund, and the ILO is responsible for the group's strategic activities. The Committee is supported by one coordinator.	Platform for coordination of youth employment investments. Important outreach among donor agencies and philanthropic foundations.

Overview	Partners	Mission	Governance	Comments
<b>13. Youth Employment Inventory (YEI)</b>				
YEI is a database with comparative information on the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of over 800 youth employment interventions to improve the evidence base for effective youth employment interventions.	ILO, World Bank, and the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).	Improve knowledge on youth employment interventions and their achieved results in order to increase the impact of interventions, expand its scope, disseminate information and facilitate public access to the data.	Managed by a Secretariat and supervised by a Steering Committee. The Secretariat is appointed on a rotating basis among the partners of the YEI consortium.	Web based platform. Based on existing documentation and evaluations of youth employment programs. Not confined to success stories. [g]

## Notes:

[a] See: <http://www.cgap.org/member-organizations>

[b] See: <http://global-apprenticeships.org/who-we-are/partners/members/>

[c] As per FAO case study

[d] See: [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---nylo/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_211034.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---nylo/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_211034.pdf)

[e] See: <http://s4ye.org>

[f] As per: [http://www.ucw-project.org/attachment/Brochure\\_UCW\\_final.pdf](http://www.ucw-project.org/attachment/Brochure_UCW_final.pdf)

[g] See: <http://youth-employment-inventory.org>