

What's next after the MDGs?

How the UN post-2015 process is unfolding and how the Global Compact fits in

A full-scale review of the UN's priority agenda, now underway, takes its cue from a 2010 General Assembly meeting on the Millennium Development Goals.

With most of the time-bound MDG objectives expiring in 2015, Governments asked the Secretary-General to make recommendations on advancing the development agenda beyond that year. He will report to the General Assembly in detail in time for its 2013 plenary.

A second track opened in Rio de Janeiro in 2012.

Governments at the Rio+20 summit wrote the idea of sustainable development goals into their outcome document, *The Future We Want*. These goals were to be "consistent with and integrated into the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015". A 30-country open-ended working group was to be chosen by the General Assembly to discuss the possibility of SDGs, what they should cover and how they should be structured, and report back to the upcoming plenary in September.

So the two tracks converge in New York in September. *The 2013 General Assembly session is likely to be a pivot point in deciding UN priorities for years and probably decades ahead.*

The UN **Global Compact**, with 7,000 participating businesses worldwide, is fully invested in the post-2015 process and in supporting the Secretary-General as he works up options for the consideration of Member States.

With programme areas engaging business on water, climate change, women's empowerment, agriculture and nutrition, human rights and anti-corruption, the Compact is well positioned across the spectrum of UN issues. The Compact-organized June 2012 Corporate Sustainability Forum succeeded in bringing a raft of innovative ideas and corporate commitment, and an important injection of confidence, to Rio+20 -- the June 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development.

Inter-governmental developments

Interest in the possibility of sustainable development goals was sufficient that, in late 2012, 70 countries subscribed to an **Open-ended Working Group on the SDGs**. They are to serve on a rotating basis, to fill the 30 seats. The Working Group is staying abreast of consultations carried out by the Secretariat (*see below*).

A second Rio-mandated working group that is also likely to be influential, on Financing for Sustainable Development, is yet to be constituted.

Also decided at Rio+20 is an upgrade of the influence of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Its May 2013 meeting will be the Commission's last, when it will be replaced by an inter-governmental **High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**.

Secretariat consultations on post-2015

Already before the Rio summit, the Secretariat had developed a **Task Team** on sustainable development. Senior **Global Compact** staff have served on the Task Team from its inception, and contributed to its 2012 pre-Rio report.

The 2013 plans for the Task Team include:

- (1) facilitate inclusive consultation processes in at least 50 countries to stimulate the debate on the post-2015 development agenda via the UN Development Group (UNDG) and UN Development Programme (UNDP) resident representatives.
- (2) organize global and regional meetings with academia, media, private sector, civil society and decision makers (e.g., politicians, government officials, and parliamentarians) to discuss 11 selected themes on the post-2015 development agenda.
- (3) set up a web portal to allow open interaction and information exchange building on the SG's campaign 'The Future We Want'.

In July 2012 the Secretary-General named a **High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda**. Chaired by three Heads of State -- Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia, Elizabeth Sirleaf Johnson of Liberia and David Cameron of the UK -- the 27 members drawn from all regions and from diverse areas of expertise are holding consultations in the capitals of the three co-chairs and will issue a report to the Secretary-General.

Three business-related platforms will be among those providing input to the Panel -- the Sustainable Solutions Network of think tanks led by Dr. Jeffery Sachs; the World Economic Forum; and the **Global Compact**. One of two business leaders on the Panel is Unilever CEO Peter Polman, who is also a Global Compact board member; the other is Betty Maina, whose Kenya Association of Manufacturers hosts a Global Compact national network in Nairobi.

The **Global Compact** itself also has been assigned a position as one of six "work streams" that will feed input to the Secretary-General, in parallel and on a par with the High-level Panel, the UNDG national, regional and thematic consultations, and the UN Task Team (*see chart*). The Compact provides the only avenue of direct input to the Secretary-General's report to Member States deriving exclusively from the business community

Secretariat preparations regarding the post-2015 agenda are being coordinated by **Deputy Secretary-General** Jan Eliasson. Acting in an executive capacity is **Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Planning** Amina Mohammed, also an *ex-officio* member of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons.

Global Compact support processes

A consortium of large-scale, globally oriented corporations with advanced sustainability practices, Global Compact's **LEAD** is carrying out rigorous analyses of post-2015 prospects.

Fifty LEAD representatives spent a full day considering how to shape the next generation of planet-wide objectives, and how to best involve business, on 28 November at UN Headquarters in New York. Their conclusions will form a starting point for Global Compact recommendations. Further input is expected from CEOs of LEAD companies meeting in Davos, on the boundary of the World Economic Forum.

A major resource the Compact brings to bear on the post-2015 process is the participation of **Local Networks** based in more than 100 countries. Many of these networks will be holding consultations, providing regional and national shadings and the viewpoints of small and medium enterprises as well as multi-nationals. These national networks are also on call to assist with UNDP/UNDG-organized country consultations and take part in regional meetings that are being organized in association with Unilever for input to the Secretary-General's High-level Panel.

The Global Compact is formatting its portfolio of activities to be able to engage in areas of strategic advancement at the UN. **Private-public policy engagement** formats for dialogue on issues of common concern are operative in areas including water management, corruption reduction through good governance, and business-in-agriculture guidelines. There are particular focal points of activity around women's empowerment, human rights, and business conduct in conflict zones and peacekeeping operations.

The world's largest corporate leadership platform on climate change issues, with nearly 400 companies involved, **Caring for Climate** fosters collective action on low-carbon solutions. In 2013 C4C will host a UN-led leadership forum to feed directly to the Conference of Parties (COP) meeting in Poland. This is a platform that will allow companies and investors to contribute to the ideas needed for an effective global climate change policy agenda.

The UN-backed **Principles for Responsible Investment** will also consulted on post-2015 prospects. PRI members, collectively holding \$35 trillion in assets, represents a valuable pool of experience in incorporating sustainable development factors in investment decisions.