# Economic and Social Council

*Introduction*

The Economic and Social Council went through notable changes in the latter part of 2013, while conducting the preparatory activities of its Development Cooperation Forum (DCF). As part of its regular annual activities, the Council also presented its report for the year 2013 to the General Assembly. A new platform to provide leadership and recommendations, review national commitments and coordinate a global agenda on sustainable development was also introduced. This update will review the outcomes of the most recent session and examine ECOSOC's powers and organization, in order to gain insight into the way in which the Council functions. Finally, in order to advance understanding on implementation of resolutions, the update will review the ways in which implementation is measured and who carries out this implementation.

*Recent Activities*

In preparation for the upcoming 2014 Development Cooperation Forum, the Council organized a high-level symposium on the theme *"Development Cooperation in a Post-2015 Era: Sustainable Development for All."*[1] The meeting, held in Switzerland on 23-25 October 2013, was aimed at advancing the on-going discussions on the post-2015 development agenda through a focus on development cooperation.[2] It thus considered the potential contribution of funding mechanisms, multi-stakeholder collaboration and strengthened accountability tools, to a unified and universal development agenda after the Millennium Development Goals.[3]

In 2013, a third of the membership of the Economic and Social Council was also renewed or newly elected. The regional distribution of the seats were as follows: five for the African States, five for the Western European and other states, four for the Latin American and Caribbean States, three for the Asian States and one for the Eastern European States.[4] On October 30, the General Assembly (GA) elected and renewed the seats for 18 Member States, for a term beginning on 1 January 2014.[5] In November, the GA elected four additional members to the Council, for terms of one or two years only, also starting in January 2014.[6]

Finally, the Economic and Social Council presented the annual report of its organizational and substantive sessions to the General Assembly in November 2013.[7] The report summarizes the resolutions that were adopted by the Council, the work of its various segments and the numerous questions that were addressed throughout the year.[8]

*Recent Policy Outcomes*

As a follow-up to the 2005 World Summit Outcome, the GA adopted resolution 61/16 in 2006, which confirmed the reform of the Economic and Social Council and the strengthening of its mandate.[9] This document reaffirmed the role of ECOSOC in promoting dialogue and providing guidance on all relevant development issues and institutionalized the creation of the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) and the DCF.[10] The GA has since then regularly reviewed the implementation of this resolution.[11] In September 2013, the General Assembly adopted resolution 68/1, presenting

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[1] UN ECOSOC, *Switzerland High-Level Symposium on "Development Cooperation in a Post-2015 Era: Sustainable Development for All" - 24 to 25 October 2013*, 2013.

[2] Ibid.

[3] UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs & Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, *Programme*, 2013.

[4] UN Elections, *Economic and Social Council* (ECOSOC).

[5] UN Watch, *Exclusive: Tomorrow's Election-Winners at ECOSOC, 2013; Xinhuanet, China re-elected to UN ECOSOC*, 2013; RisingBD.com, *Bangladesh elected ECOSOC member*, 2013.

[6] UN DPI, *General Assembly Elects Four States to Economic and Social Council, One Judge for Former Yugoslavia Tribunal*, 2013.

[7] UN General Assembly, *Report of the Economic and Social Council for 2013 (A/68/3),* 2013.

[8] Ibid.

[9] UN General Assembly, *Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/61/16)* [Resolution], 2006.

[10] Ibid.

[11] UN General Assembly, *Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/65/285)* [Resolution], 2011; UN General Assembly, *Review of the*

the following arrangements: 1) ECOSOC shall organize its annual program of work around one central theme that would be further expanded to its subsidiary bodies; 2) the substantive session of the Council should be distributed around thematically different segments; 3) the Council should develop a special-needs approach to take into account the specificities of its Member States such as least developed countries and small island developing states.[12] The resolution furthermore confirmed the coordinating role of ECOSOC for the economic, social and environmental fields, and reaffirmed the need to engage all relevant stakeholders in the activities of the Council.[13]

ECOSOC also went through major structural changes since September 2013. Member States inaugurated a newly created High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development on 24 September, to follow-up on commitments made during the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).[14] This Forum replaces the Commission on Sustainable Development as the new platform to foster sustainable development objectives at the highest level of leadership.[15] It will meet every four years at the level of Heads of State and Government, under the auspices of the General Assembly. The Economic and Social Council will supervise ministerial meetings held on an annual basis.[16] Starting from 2016, the ministerial section of the HLPF will replace the ECOSOC AMR, thus being fully included in the substantive session of the Council, and will conduct regular reviews of the implementation of sustainable development commitments.[17] The inaugural meeting of the HLPF focused on the theme *"Building the future we want: from Rio+20 to the post-2015 development agenda."*[18] On that occasion, leaders and heads of state reaffirmed their engagement to promote and implement a sustainable approach to development, through poverty eradication, gender equality, environmental protection and public-private partnerships.[19]

*Policy Implementation*

The Economic and Social Council is mainly supported by the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA). The Office's primary responsibility is to second the work of the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum. It also facilitates the coordination between ECOSOC and other bodies, such as the Peacebuilding Commission and the GA Second Committee, and provides services to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations.[20] Within the on-going strengthening process of the Council, DESA is thus playing a key role in following-up and implementing the proposed reforms.[21] Within the Department, the Development Policy and Analysis Division also provides substantive input to ECOSOC on the post-2015 development agenda and emerging development issues, through its Committee for Development Policy and the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda.[22]

Considering its numerous subsidiary bodies and the extent of its mandate, ECOSOC is the largest body of the UN system. It is inclined to collaborate with various organizations, to ensure further integration of economic, social and environmental issues, ranging from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).[23] The Council accounts for around 70% of the total budget of the organization

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      *implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/68/1)* [Resolution], 2013.

[12] UN General Assembly, *Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/68/1)* [Resolution], 2013.

[13] Ibid.

[14] UN News Centre, *World leaders inaugurate new UN forum to boost sustainable development efforts*, 2013.

[15] UN News Centre, *After 20 years, UN commission on sustainable development holds final session*, 2013.

[16] UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)* [Resolution], 2013.

[17] UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *The United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*, 2013.

[18] UN General Assembly, *Summary of the first meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/68/588)*, 2013.

[19] Ibid.

[20] UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *About OESC*.

[21] UN DPI, *Partnerships vital for addressing sustainable challenges – UN officials*, 2013.

[22] UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Development Policy and Analysis Division: The Committee for Development Policy*; UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Development Policy and Analysis Division: UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda*.

[23] UN ECOSOC, *Hot topic: Science, technology and innovation*, 2013.

of the United Nations.[24] Recently, the General Assembly adopted the new 2014-2015 budget for the whole UN Secretariat, with a total of USD $5.53 billion.[25]

*Conclusion*

The Economic and Social Council is the central body for coordinating and advancing the normative policies on economic, social and environmental issues. It is recognized as a leader in its fields of mandate, and benefits from numerous tools, commissions and partners to assess gaps in policy and practice and strengthen programmatic work on key problems. The Council has an important role to play in shaping the future of the global development agenda, through an integrated approach of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

*The Economic and Social Council at NMUN•NY 2014*

**Format:** The Economic and Social Council is a resolution writing committee.

**Voting:** Each Member State present may vote once on procedural and substantive matters. Matters are decided by a majority vote.

**Membership:** ECOSOC membership is comprised of 54 Member States with the allocation of seats among regional groups. Current membership is as follows:

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|---|---|---|---|
| Albania | Austria | Belarus | Benin |
| Bolivia | Brazil | Bulgaria | Burkina Faso |
| Cameroon | Canada | China | Colombia |
| Croatia | Cuba | Denmark | Dominican Republic |
| Ecuador | El Salvador | Ethiopia | France |
| Gabon | Haiti | India | Indonesia |
| Ireland | Japan | Kuwait | Kyrgyzstan |
| Latvia | Lesotho | Liberia | Malawi |
| Mauritius | Mexico | Nepal | Netherlands |
| New Zealand | Nicaragua | Nigeria | Pakistan |
| Qatar | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | San Marino |
| Senegal | South Africa | Spain | Sudan |
| Sweden | Tunisia | Turkey | Turkmenistan |
| United Kingdom | United States of America | | |

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[24] RisingBD.com*, Bangladesh elected ECOSOC member*, 2013.
[25] UN DPI, *General Assembly Adopts $5.53 Billion Budget to Fund Worldwide Operations as Main Segment of Sixty-eighth Session Concludes*, 2013.

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http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/oesc/about/index.shtml

> *When looking at the functioning of a large body such as the Economic and Social Council, it is important to consider the department of the UN Secretariat in charge of supporting and implementing its work. In the case of ECOSOC, UN-DESA is the first entity with such responsibility. Within UN-DESA, the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination provides the Council with resources, inputs and advisory tools. The website of the Office can be a useful source of information on ECOSOC and other relevant organs for the delegates.*

United Nations, General Assembly. (2006, November). *Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/61/16)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 10 January 2014 from:
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/61/16

> *With the previous resolution 60/1 adopted as the 2005 World Summit Outcome, resolution 61/16 is a milestone for the structural organization of the Economic and Social Council. It lays out the mandate, role and functioning of the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum. It is also a founding document for the reform process of ECOSOC that is currently on going.*

United Nations, General Assembly. (2013, July). *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 10 January 2014 from:
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/67/290

> *A new platform to foster sustainable development policies at the global level has been launched in 2013. As it is called to replace a currently existing body (the Annual Ministerial Review), it is important to understand what is its mandate and how it functions. In this context, the first document of interest for delegates should be the GA resolution adopted in July 2013, which is instituting the high-level political forum.*

United Nations, General Assembly. (2013, August). *Report of the Economic and Social Council for 2013 (A/68/3)* [Report]. Retrieved 10 January 2014 from: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/3

> *The annual report of the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly provides a comprehensive overview of the substantive work of the Council all along the year. It presents a summary of the policy outcomes, resolutions adopted and reports published. It also enumerates the various events organized by ECOSOC and its Commissions. Finally, it reviews all the economic, social and environmental issues that were tackled by the Council during its annual session.*

United Nations, General Assembly. (2013, September). *Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/68/1)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 10 January from: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/1

> *This resolution is the latest review of the implementation of resolution 61/16 adopted in 2006 by the General Assembly. It presents the outcome of the most recent discussions at the GA on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council. Delegates sitting at the ECOSOC Committee should thus be aware of the recommendations developed in this document, as they shape the work and organization of their Committee.*

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http://www.risingbd.com/english/detailsnews.php?nssl=af3b6a54e9e9338abc54258e3406e485&nttl=8364#.UtAdpI
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# I. Promoting the Rule of Law to Facilitate Economic and Social Development

## *Introduction*

The promotion of the rule of law remains key in strengthening economic and social development as well as ensuring accountable and transparent policy making on national and regional levels.[26] The rule of law has regulated, enforced and enhanced capacities for shaping development processes and revealed its complex and multi-faceted relationship with the development sector at large.[27] In his recent speech at the United Nations (UN), the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon highlighted the importance of law and justice in seeking to end the crises in Syria, South Sudan and the Central African Republic as well as reaching the Millennium Development Goals.[28] As a way forward in 2014, the Secretary-General recognized that peace-building, facilitation of humanitarian assistance, progress on the post-2015 development agenda and the global agreement on climate change will only be enhanced through full cooperation with governments, states and their adherence to the principles of justice, human rights and peace and security.[29]

## *Recent developments*

This topic was featured extensively at the Conference of State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption held in Panama City from 25-29 November 2013.[30] At this forum State Parties discussed ways how to enhance international cooperation in order to strengthen civil and administrative proceedings in tackling corruption cases as well as how to identify assistance needed for other states to help them better detect corruption offences.[31] The conference urged the states to strengthen their commitment to the *United Nation Convention against Corruption* (A/58/4) adopted by the General Assembly on 31 October 2003.[32] The participants recognized the importance of ensuring conformity between national legal systems and the Convention and urged other states to ratify the Convention to strengthen wide-scale political commitment to fight corruption, which has been identified as a key obstacle for sustainable economic development.[33] Significant attention at the conference was directed towards the role of youth in fighting corruption and promoting the culture of justice and transparency.[34] State parties reached an agreement that it is vital to have a partnership with educational institutions to develop anti-corruption training for young people to raise awareness as well as involve youth in the development processes of public policies to prevent corruption.[35] It was also recognized that private sector and business community is a crucial partner in implementing anti-corruption ethics and promoting adherence to social responsibility.[36] It was agreed that collaboration and dialogue with these entities should be one of the priorities for ensuring transparency and accountability in the private sector as well as promoting the principles outlined in the Convention.[37] The conference concluded with a request that the Implementation Review Group continues gathering information and producing county reviews on the implementation of the Convention procedures, which could be assessed and discussed at the next meeting in the United Arab Emirates in 2019.[38]

At the regional level, especially with regards to the work of international tribunals, this topic continues to be key. In particular, the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), which was set up jointly by the UN and the Government of

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[26] Jahangir, *Rule of law, peace and security, development and human rights*, 2014, p. 2
[27] UNDP, *Rule of Law and Development* [Issue Brief], 2013, p.1.
[28] UN News Centre, *Ban calls on world for more resources to end conflicts, spur development, counter climate change* [Website], 2014.
[29] Ibid.
[30] UNODC, *Fifth session of the conference of state parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption* [Website], 2013.
[31] UNODC, R*esolutions and decisions adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption*, 2013, pp. 1-2.
[32] UN General Assembly, *United Nations Convention against Corruption* (A/RES/58/4), 2003.
[33] UNODC, *Resolutions and decisions adopted by the* Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption , 2013, pp. 3-4.
[34] Ibid, p. 20.
[35] Ibid, p. 20
[36] Ibid, p. 21.
[37] Ibid, p. 21.
[38] Ibid, p. 23.

Sierra Leone to ensure accountability for war crimes committed during the civil war was officially announced to have completed the work on 31 December 2013.[39] Since its establishment in 2002 the Court had a number of trials looking into the attacks against the UN peacekeepers, the use of child soldiers and saw convictions for many leaders in the country as well as former Liberian President Charles Taylor.[40] On 1 January 2014 the SCSL was replaced by the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone, which will address and deal with legal obligations arising from the tribunal and continue to ensure the implementation of the rule of law in the country.[41]

The Security Council also announced the extension of the mandates for 17 judges serving at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).[42] The Council stressed the importance for the ICTY to complete its work as requested by the resolution 1966 (2010) and the closure is scheduled for 31 December 2014.[43] The Tribunal has four trials to complete regarding the core statutory crimes before its mandate expires and the Residual Mechanism has already been set up to replace the ICTY and continue its work starting January 2015.[44]

*Social development - health and gender equality*
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in partnership with Women Asia Pacific Plus (WAP+) and the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation in Law (SAARCLAW), recently published a study demonstrating significant gaps in laws to provide protection against violation of rights at health care settings in South Asia.[45] This report revealed that discrimination at heath care settings is rather common in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan and has a gendered aspect as many women and girls infected by human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) face specific violations.[46] One of the key findings is the limited scope in domestic legislations which deal with discrimination that occurs in healthcare settings, however, there exist a number of Acts such as the Reproductive Healthcare and Rights Act released in Pakistan in 2013 and the Sindh HIV Control and Protection Act as well as national HIV bills in India, Nepal and Pakistan (still pending) that can be adapted to protect the rights of women and girls in healthcare settings.[47] The absence of a strong rule of law mechanism to ensure gender equality and equal access to healthcare creates barriers towards social development in the respective countries.[48] The study highlighted that this could be addressed and tackled by enforcing complaint mechanisms where patients can have access to legal services.[49] The study also outlined a number of policy recommendations which more of less stress the fact that access to legal services and promotion of the rule of law nationally and regionally interlinks with human development outcomes, especially gender equality and access to treatment without stigma or discrimination.[50]

*Economic development – environmental protection*
One of the key barriers to economic development and private investment in developing countries has been the absence of the rule of law and adequate legal framework in developing countries.[51] A guidebook and assessment study was recently conducted by UNDP and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) which looks into the role of legal instruments to support climate-resilient development and highlights the critical role of the rule of law in creating environment for investors to fund projects, especially those targeted towards environmental protection and sustainable development.[52] The key message highlighted in the tool is that the legal reforms alone cannot guarantee improved environmental outcomes and decision-makers are required to monitor and critically review legal reform

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[39] UN News Centre, *As tribunal closes, UN chief hails achievements in ensuring accountability in Sierra Leone* [Website], 2013.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] UN News Centre, *Security Council extends terms of judges serving on UN former Yugoslavia tribunal* [Website], 2013.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] UNDP, WAP, APN and SAARCLAW, *Protecting the rights of key HIV-affected women and girls in health care settings: A legal scan* [Report], 2013, p.4.
[46] Ibid, p.8.
[47] Ibid, p. 10.
[48] Ibid, p. 11.
[49] Ibid, p. 11.
[50] Ibid, p. 12.
[51] UNEP and UNDP, *The Role of Legal Instruments to Support Green Low-Emission and Climate-Resilient Development. A Guidebook on Assessing, Selecting and Implementing Legal Instruments* [Report], 2013, p.2.
[52] Ibid.

programmes to ensure they are sustainable and effective for realization of environment protection.[53] The study also indicated that environment impact assessments are effective legislative instruments for sustainable development outcomes, which can only be executed in a transparent and accountable decision-making system.[54] This guidance document builds on the toolkits previously developed by UNDP focusing on green, low-emission and climate-resilient development strategies (Green LECRDS) where the key focus was on outlining step-by-step guidance for stakeholders to develop coordination frameworks, formulating climate change scenarios, mapping climate change impact and designing adaptation initiatives.[55] The main difference in the current toolkit is the focus on recommendations and action plans for state legal capacity building to ensure environment protection and economic development at large.

*Conclusion*

Throughout 2013 and into 2014, there has been a significant focus on the rule of law by the UN agencies, programmes and funds. In particular, the ongoing discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and reports produced by the UN specialized agencies, civil society, academia demonstrate a strong linkage between development processes, outcomes and the rule of law which has been recognized as one of the key factors enabling progress to social and economic development. Currently, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is the most suitable forum to hold discussions and identify ways how to strengthen Members' legal systems and promote access to legal services for people experiencing stigma and discrimination, especially in healthcare settings as well as help countries to manage their resources more efficiently by developing environmental laws. ECOSOC plays a crucial role in streamlining the importance of the rule of law for economic and social development and post-2015 development agenda more broadly.

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[53] Ibid, p.47.
[54] Ibid.
[55] UNDP, *Green LECRDS Guidance Manuals and Toolkits* [Website].

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http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/dg-publications/governance-and-the-post-2015-development-framework/

> *The United Nations Development Programme issued this brief in order to frame the discussion on the relevance of the rule of law to development outcomes and show how both fields are interlinked. This paper offers insightful review on the lessons learnt from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and looks into how the rule of law enabled some of the development efforts. It also offers suggestions how the rule of law can be integrated in the post-2015 development agenda. This is a very useful resource which helps understanding the definition of the term and its linkage with economic and social development.*

United Nations Development Programme, Women Asia Pacific, Asia Pacific Network and South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation in Law. (2013). *Protecting the rights of key HIV-affected women and girls in health care settings: A legal scan* [Report]. Retrieved 13 January 2013 from:
http://www.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/library/hiv_aids/protecting-the-rights-of-key-hiv-affected-women-and-girls-in-hea.html

> *This report looks into the legal mechanisms and constitutional provisions in South Asian countries such as Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan and outlines which legal provisions offer protection of rights at healthcare settings. The focus on the report is on HIV-affected women and the violation of their rights in healthcare settings, however, the findings can be applied to larger population including marginalized poor groups and disabled persons. It offers a number of policy recommendations for strengthening protection against violence for the HIV affected women and girls in healthcare settings, and provides a detailed assessment of national and regional laws with regards to equal access to healthcare.*

United Nations Rule of Law Consultations. (N.D.) *Think Pieces* [Website]. Retrieved 11 January 2014 from:
http://blogs.un.org/ruleoflaw/#sthash.pBfrvfa2.dpbs

> *This website and survey initiated by the UN attempts to start a global conversation and consultation process with people, public, private institutions, organizations regarding the promotion of the rule of law for peace and security, development and human rights across the globe. It entails various background documents and key resolutions regarding the rule of law and its promotion at the UN as well as offers access to thematic think pieces by academics and thought leaders on human rights, development and peace and security. This is a very useful platform to familiarize with the new initiative as well as express your own opinion about the concepts of justice and the rule of law.*

United Nations Environment Programme and United Nations Development Programme. (2013). *The Role of Legal Instruments to Support Green Low-Emission and Climate-Resilient Development. A Guidebook on Assessing, Selecting and Implementing Legal Instruments* [Report]. Retrieved 13 January 2014 from:
http://www.unep.org/delc/Portals/119/publications/Role_Legal_Instruments_Climate_Resilient.pdf

> *This guidance document is written for policy makers and lawyers at the national and local levels who are involved in the implementation of environmental protection policies. It is a useful toolkit which entails case studies and approaches to legal reforms in the energy and environment sectors and the options indicated in the document can be adapted to country-specific contexts. This resource is very insightful and outcome-oriented as it focuses on laying out suggestions for the development of legal action plan and its implementation for various countries.*

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2013). *Resolutions and decisions adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (advance version)* [Outcome Document]. Retrieved 12 January 2014 from:
http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/COSP/session5/Resolutions_and_decisions.pdf

> *This document entails all six resolutions adopted at the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption as well as summarizes the key decisions taken. It is*

*a very useful resource for delegates to familiarize with because it reflects on the key discussion areas that State Parties drew attention to and identifies the outcomes and recommendations for the international community. It has been the 5<sup>th</sup> Conference so far focusing specifically on the rule of law and corruption. These global gatherings occur every five years and have been initiated by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime which recognize the importance of this topic and the need to systematically assess countries' progress towards reducing corruption offences at the global forums like this.*

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## II. Strengthening Global Progress Toward Sustainable Development Through Innovation in Science and Technology

*Introduction*

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), along with regional and functional commissions, brings the use of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) in sustainable development to the forefront of the United Nation's (UN) agenda. As a Principle Organ of the UN whose mandate is to provide a forum for discussion and to commission reports, studies and policy recommendations on economic, social, cultural, educational, and health related topics, the Council has increasingly called attention to the central role of STI in sustainable development efforts worldwide.[56] Concerning social development, STI and the spread of information and communication technology (ICT) can help facilitate dissemination of knowledge and information by governments, businesses, civil society organizations and individuals while also advancing social and political engagement.[57] In addition, STI can play a crucial role in promoting economic growth by enabling communities to "leap-frog" over technological barriers, generate employment and by providing access to sound financial institutions and credit.[58] Lastly, STI facilitates sustainable development through environmental preservation by increasing agricultural production, enhancing food security and improving renewable energy technologies.[59]

This topic has been addressed within the following UN entities in the past several months: the General Assembly, Third Committee, which published report A/68/448; the Economic and Social Council, which published relevant reports throughout 2013 including *Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels: Report of the Secretary-General* (A/68/65–E/2013/11), *Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General* (E/2013/54) and the 2013 Annual Ministerial Review (AMR).[60] The functional commission, United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), a subsidiary body of ECOSOC, also considered this topic in its Report on the Sixteenth Session (E/CN.16/2013/5) and within its 2013-2014 Inter-sessional Panel in Washington, DC in December 2013.[61]

*Recent Developments*

Regional commissions and specialized programs within ECOSOC focused on this topic during the past few months. These commissions and programs include the Economic and Social Commissions for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Project Working Group on Knowledge-Based Development (PWG on KBD) which hosted several meetings involving innovation on green technologies in the Central Asian region, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and finally, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) whose work is discussed in a consequent section.[62]

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[56] UN ECOSOC, *Science, technology and innovation* [Website].

[57] UN ECOSOC, *Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General (E/2013/54)*, 2013.

[58] United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (April 2013). *Report of the Secretary-General on "Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals" for the 2013 Annual Ministerial Review*.

[59] Ibid.

[60] UN General Assembly, *Social Development: Report of the Third Committee (A/68/448)*, 2013; UN ECOSOC, Progress *made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels: Report of the Secretary-General (A/68/65–E/ 2013/11)*, 2013; UN ECOSOC, *Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General (E/2013/54)*, 2013; UN ECOSOC, *2013 Annual Ministerial Review [Website]*, 2013.

[61] UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development, *Report on the Sixteenth Session (E/CN.16/2013/5)*, 2013. UN ECOSOC, The United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for *Development*, [Website], 2013.

[62] UN ESCAP, *Promoting regional information and communications technology connectivity and building knowledge-networked societies in Asia and the Pacific (Resolution 69/10)*, 2013; UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia,

While progress has been made over the last few months on this topic through meetings, initiatives and reports, the key documents discussed in the Background Guide remain the foundation of this topic. The 1987 *Stockholm Declaration* followed by the agreements and outcomes resulting from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, known as the Earth Summit) including *Agenda 21*.[63] *The Future We Want* (A/RES/66/288) and the *Millennium Declaration* (A/RES/55/2) both continue to underpin sustainable development through STI.[64] The primary entities responsible for coordinating related work at the UN includes the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), which submits relevant reports and draft resolutions to the Council for adoption and also includes the Council itself, which periodically adopts resolutions to promote the use of STI for development.[65] ECOSOC then uses these resolutions to make recommendations to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).[66] Finally, the Council coordinates substantive work on this topic through its Annual Ministerial Review.[67]

The growing prominence of this topic was highlighted in recent months as a result of UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon's announcement in September of the UN Scientific Advisory Board, held in January 2014.[68] The purpose of the initiative is to develop stronger connections between sustainable development and STI.[69] Second, the "11th African Crop Science Society Conference" drew attention to the use of STI in sustainable farming practices by bringing together Africa's premiere crop scientists to tackle issues related to this year's theme "Counteraction of food shortfalls caused by climate change through increased productivity of sustainable crops".[70] Outside the UN, the "2012-2013 German-South-African Year of Science: Enhancing Science Partnerships for Innovation and Sustainable Development" raised the profile of this topic across continents.[71]

*Science, Technology and Innovation for Social Development*
The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) published a report on 3 December 2013 entitled *Information Economy Report 2013: The Cloud Economy and Developing Countries*.[72] The report finds that cloud computing, an innovation that is "increasingly important in the delivery of public and private services", has the potential to promote social and economic development in low and middle-income countries.[73] Unfortunately, the gap in availability of cloud related infrastructure between developed and developing nations is growing. The report provides recommendations for addressing this problem and stresses the need for all countries to regulate internet privacy, data protection, information security and cybercrime.[74]

In addition to UNCTAD, ESCWA's Information and Communication Technology Division (ICTD) held a "Capacity Building Workshop on Measuring the Use and Impact of ICT on Social and Economic Development in the Arab Region" in December 2013.[75] In order for the region to take full advantage of the benefits of ICT, attendees

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*Knowledge-based development* [Website], 2013; UN ECLAC, *Women in the digital economy*, 2013; UN ESCWA, *Information and Communication Technology Division* [Website], 2013.

[63] United Nations, *UN Conference on Environment and Development* (1992) [Website], 1997; UN Office for Legal Affairs, *Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 16 June 1972)*, Rio *Declaration on Environment and Development* (Rio de Janeiro, 14 June 1992) [Website].

[64] UN General Assembly, *The future we want (A/RES/66/288)* [Resolution], 2012; UN General Assembly, *United Nations Millennium Declaration* (A/RES/55/2), 2000.

[65] UN CSTD, *About CSTD: Mandate and Institutional Background* [Website], 2013; UN ECOSOC, *Resolutions and Decisions* [Website], 2013.

[66] UN ECOSOC, *Science and Technology for Development (E/RES/2012/6)* [Resolution], 2012.

[67] UN ECOSOC, *2013 Annual Ministerial Review* [Website], 2013.

[68] UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, *The Scientific Advisory Board of the United Nations Secretary General* [Website], 2013.

[69] Ibid.

[70] African Crop Society, *11th Africa Crop Society Conference* [Website], 2013.

[71] German-South-African Year of Science 2012-2013, *Enhancing Science Partnerships for Innovation and Sustainable Development* [Website], 2013.

[72] UNCTAD, *Information Economy Report 2013: The Cloud Economy and Developing Countries* [Report], 2013.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

[75] UN ESCWA Information and Communication Technology Division, *Capacity Building Workshop on Measuring the Use and Impact of ICT* [Website], 2013.

discussed ways to build the capacity of relevant institutions, scrutinized current frameworks and measurement models that track the use of ICT, and shared national expertise to promote best practices of ICT use across the region.[76] Additionally, ESCWA published a report in early 2013 entitled the "Expert Group Meeting on Role of ICT in Socio-Economic Development" (E/ESCWA/ICTD/2013/WG.2/Report) resulting in targeted recommendations on actions to be taken.[77]

*Science, Technology and Innovation for Economic Development*
The Second Committee of the General Assembly and ECOSOC held a joint meeting on 8 November 2013 to look at the future of employment and the "implications of the digital revolution and new technologies" on labor markets in developed and developing countries.[78] Importantly, conference discussion emphasized that while new technology will spur economic growth, it will also exclude those lacking these technical skills from the labor market, which could result in the rise of unemployment and social unrest.[79] ECOSOC and the GA pledged to work together to address this issue in the post-2015 development agenda, currently under debate by the international community.[80]

*Science, Technology and Innovation for Environmental Protection and Preservation*
The UN's Solve the e-Waste Problem (StEP) initiative predicts a 33% growth worldwide in electronic waste (e-waste) in the next four years.[81] Experts from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) met in Geneva on 20 December 2013 to develop environmentally friendly international standards to reduce e-waste and green house gas emissions, increase energy efficiency, lay out an eco-design, and optimize the use of materials used in certain electronics.[82] Specifically, attendees developed standards for universal, green chargers for laptops and other portable devices and for green smart phone batteries.[83] According to a study carried out by the University of Genoa, such regulations could reduce annual e-waste by 300,000 tons.[84]

On 28 November 2013, as a side event to the EU-Africa "High-Level Policy Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation in Brussels", Belgium, CAAST-NET Plus, a Sub-Saharan Africa-EU STI initiative funded by the European Union, held "Joint EU-Africa initiatives on the role of science, technology and innovation in promoting food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture".[85] Attendees discussed current initiatives and planned the upcoming bi-regional cooperation projects in sustainable agriculture.[86]

*Conclusion*

Together, science, technology and innovation have the potential to ameliorate global problems in every aspect of sustainable development. As seen in the 2013 theme of ECOSOC's Annual Ministerial Review, throughout UN entities and in the international community, this topic will continue to attract the attention of developed and developing countries alike. With a wealth of sources available presenting a range challenges, recommendations and policy options available, future opportunities for concrete action on this topic abound.

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[76] Ibid.
[77] UN ESCWA, *Expert Group Meeting on Role of ICT in Socio-Economic Development* [Report], 2013.
[78] UN News Center, *Linking jobs, poverty reduction, sustainable development vital for post-2015 development agenda-UN officials* [Website], 2013.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] StEP, *What is e-waste?* [Website], 2013.
[82] International Telecommunication Union, "*New green ICT standards tackle e-waste and energy efficiency*" [Website], 2013.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] CAAST-NET Plus, *Joint EU-Africa initiatives on the role of science, technology and innovation in promoting food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture* [Report], 2013; CAAST-NET Plus, *Aims and Results* [Website], 2013.
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> *As an external partnership between the EU and Africa, this brief report provides delegates with an opportunity to explore an initiative taking place on a regional level. The initiative is particularly relevant for delegates representing the African or European continent. The policy and frameworks concerning food and nutrition security presented here could be easily translated to other regions. Delegates should pay close attention to the challenges facing the implementation of scientific and technological outputs raised here as they might be interesting areas to address in the committee.*

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. (2013, May 1). *Promoting regional information and communications technology connectivity and building knowledge-networked societies in Asia and the Pacific (Resolution 69/10)*. Retrieved 10 January 2014 from: http://www.unescap.org/idd/documents/69-10.pdf

> *The language and policy ideas expressed in this resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific act as an excellent starting point for delegates to familiarize themselves with existing resolutions on this topic. Although the document concerns Member States in Asia and the Pacific, this will not limit its utility to all delegates. The preambular clauses recall important resolutions and actions adopted/taken by the General Assembly and serve as a solid foundation for delegates' work.*

United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Sixty-eighth session. (2013, March 26). *Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels: Report of the Secretary-General (A/68/65–E/2013/11)*. Retrieved 8 January 2014 from: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/2013/11

> *Written as a part of the Secretary General's annual reporting to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (UNCTAD), this report acts as a progress report on the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). In addition to informing delegates of emerging obstacles like the digital divide between developed and developing countries, it also sites key facts that could prove useful knowledge for delegates. Sections one, ''Current Trends'', and two''Implementation and Follow-up at the regional level'', includes up-to-date information on technologies relevant to sustainable development.*

United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. (2013, October). *Women in the digital economy*. Retrieved 11 January 2014 from:
http://www.eclac.cl/publicaciones/xml/1/51141/womaninthedigitaleconomy.pdf

> *Women and girls face greater challenges in participating in and accessing the benefits provided by STI in social and economic development; therefore, it is important for delegates to consider addressing gender inequality while drafting their resolutions. This publication addresses key topics like how ICT can be harnessed to achieve gender equality, the opportunities and challenges available to women in the information and knowledge society and designing a "digital agenda" for a country or region. While writing and researching this topic, this publication is an in-depth and thoughtful resource that could be tailored to any region.*

United Nations, Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia. (2013). *Knowledge-based development* [Website]. Retrieved 12 January 2014 from: http://www.unece.org/speca/kbd_v.html

> *The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) under the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), hosts the subsidiary body the Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (PWG on KBD). This website is a gateway to a slew of documents resulting from the working group's activities. They address diverse issues related primarily to ICT the promotion of innovative green technologies and using innovation to combat climate change.*

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# III. Assessing the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Addressing the Challenges in Monitoring and Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

*Introduction*

Over the past several months, global leaders and the UN system have focused considerable attention on the post-2015 development agenda and the creation of sustainable development goals. Recognizing the challenges in implementation and progress on the Millennium Development Goals, discussions around the SDGs has included a focus on monitoring and assessment methodology, to ensure that the new goals are measurable and attainable. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon highlighted, the post-2015 development agenda, "must be universal, with ending poverty as its top priority, sustainable development at its core, and governance as its glue. It must find expression in a single set of goals. And there should be no hierarchy among the three dimensions of sustainable development – no deferring the environment or social justice for later, once economic growth is assured."[87]

As the 2015 deadline for the Millennium Development Goals approaches, the UN system is extensively considering the post-2015 development agenda, especially the creation of new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The General Assembly President selected "The Post-2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage" as the theme for the 2013 General Debate, held from 24 September to 1 October 2013.[88] In addition, ECOSOC has identified the sustainable development agenda as a thematic focus for their work in 2014, with the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) to be focused on "Ongoing and emerging challenges for meeting the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future."[89] Further, as the current Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) is focused on the future of development cooperation in the post-2015 era, a High-Level Symposium was held in October 2013 on "Development Cooperation in a Post-2015 Era: Sustainable Development for All."[90] A final preparatory High-Level Symposium is scheduled for 20-21 March 2014 around the theme "Accountable and effective development cooperation in a post-2015 era."[91]

Discussion of the post-2015 development agenda has occurred through two distinct frameworks; the 2010 MDG Summit called for discussion of the post-MDG development agenda, while the 2012 Conference on Sustainable Development initiated the creation of sustainable development goals.[92] These two frameworks have converged, with Member States, civil society, and private sector collaborating to design a single post-2015 development agenda built around the concept of sustainable development.[93] This work is being organized through several distinct entities, under the leadership of the Special Advisor on Post-2015 Development Planning, including the Open Working Group of the General Assembly, the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.[94] In addition, the United Nations Development Group has organized over 60 national consultations and eleven thematic consultations, providing a more inclusive conversation about the SDGs.[95] Scientists, academics, and research institutes have come together to form the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), which has established ten global expert groups, as well as providing technical support to the High-Level Panel.[96]

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[95] UN Development Group, *The World We Want 2015: Consultations*.

[96] Sustainable Development Solutions Network, *About Us*.

*Recent Developments*

*High-Level Political Forum*
Following the recommendation of the 2012 Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), the General Assembly adopted resolution 67/290 on the *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.*[97] The newly-established High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) will meet every year as part of ECOSOC's substantive session, and every four years as part of the General Assembly session.[98] The HLPF will complement the work of the Annual Ministerial Review through 2016, then replace it entirely in subsequent years.[99] By replacing the Commission on Sustainable Development, the HLPF is mandated to offer leadership and recommendations for sustainable development, review the implementation of sustainable development commitments, and ensure the integration of sustainable development dimensions across the post-2015 development agenda.[100] The inaugural session of the HLPF was held on 24 September 2013, addressing the theme "Building the future we want: from Rio+20 to the post-2015 development agenda."[101] Representatives from Member States and from social, economic, and environmental organizations participated in dialogues on moving from vision to action, global partnerships for development, and mapping the way forward.[102] Among the recommendations, leaders emphasized the need for a voluntary, state-led review mechanism to monitor commitments and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.[103] This session also launched the Executive Summary of the first Global Sustainable Development Report, *Building the Common Future We Want*, which will provide a scientific, evidence-based framework for reviewing sustainable development progress and methodologies for implementation and monitoring.[104]

*Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals*
Building upon Rio+20's calls for the creation of sustainable development goals, the General Assembly established an Open Working Group (OWG) to prepare a proposal on the SDGs.[105] Through eight meetings held across 2013 and 2014, the 30 member OWG will address different thematic areas to strengthen the SDGs; at the sixth session, held 9-13 December 2013, the group addressed the means of implementation and global partnership for sustainable development.[106] Recognizing that States bear the primary responsibility for implementation of the development agenda, the session addressed challenges such as financial support, access to technology, and national-level enabling frameworks.[107] This discussion highlighted that the UN, particularly ECOSOC, should play a key role in monitoring progress on development commitments.[108] At the eighth session, held 3-7 February 2014, focused on forests, oceans, and biodiversity; promoting equality; and conflict prevention, rule of law, and governance.[109]

*Challenges of Sustainable Development*
In developing a common framework for sustainable development goals, Member States agreed they must be "action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries, while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities."[110] Addressing these concerns in *An Action Agenda for Sustainable*

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[97] UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)* [Resolution], 2013.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid.

[101] UN General Assembly, *Summary of the first meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/68/588)* , 2013.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid.

[104] UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, *Global Sustainable Development Report,* 2013; UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Global Sustainable Development Report: Building the Common Future We Want*, 2013.

[105] UN General Assembly, *Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals (A/67/L.48/Rev.1),* 2013.

[106] UN General Assembly, *Co-Chairs' summary bullet points from OWG-6*, 2013.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid.

[109] UN General Assembly, *Eighth Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals* [Web Site], 2014.

[110] UN General Assembly, *The future we want (A/RES/66/288)* [Outcome Document], 2012.

*Development*, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) proposed ten priority areas, including ending extreme poverty, education and livelihood, gender equality and social inclusion, and development within planetary boundaries.[111] However, achieving these targets will require improved systems for data, monitoring, and accountability, including partnerships for national and global data collection and processing.[112]

### *Conclusion*

Much progress has been made over the last several months on the design and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. Over the next several months, ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, as well as the broader UN system will continue to consider the creation of effective and inspirational Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the framework and partnerships for their implementation.

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[111] Sustainable Development Solutions Network, *An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2013.
[112] Ibid.

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> *The Final Report of the SDSN offers a comprehensive proposal for the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as methods to overcome the shortcomings of the Millennium Development Goals. Published after extensive consultation with policy makers, private sector, civil society, and researchers, this Report offers an in-depth analysis of the topics that should be addressed by the new SDGs and how to improve their effectiveness. In particular, the Report offers proposals surrounding the implementation and monitoring of SDGs, such as technology sharing, financial resources, and accountability mechanisms.*

United Nations, General Assembly. (2013). *General Debate of the 68th Session* [Web Site]. Retrieved 10 January 2014 from: http://gadebate.un.org

> *The General Debate for the 68th Session of the General Assembly focused around discussion of the post-2015 development agenda, including global partnerships for development and sustainable development goals. This Web Site offers transcripts of the speeches made by the Secretary-General and 190 Member States, and will offer delegates tremendous insight into the framework of the debate, current proposals, and their country's policy.*

United Nations Development Group. (n.d.). *The World We Want 2015: Consultations* [Web Site]. Retrieved 9 January 2014 from: www.worldwewant2015.org/groups

> *This Web Site serves as a repository for the national, regional, and thematic consultations held by the United Nations Development Group on the post-2015 development agenda. These resources will offer a more inclusive discussion of the issues surrounding implementation of the SDGs, including voices from civil society and grassroots actors.*

United Nations, General Assembly. (2013, November 13). *Summary of the first meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/68/588)* [Note]. Retrieved 14 January 2014 from: http://www.undocs.org/A/68/588

> *The inaugural session of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development addressed many of the overarching themes in the debate around sustainable development goals. Delegates should consider the various speeches and presentations to gain a stronger understanding of the concerns and policies raised by Member States. This summary provides an overview of the topics discussed and a general framework for the issues that will be addressed at the second meeting in 2014.*

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> *The Open Working Group's sixth session, held in December 2013, included a focus on means of implementation. This Issues Brief provides an introduction to the topics discussed and a more technical understanding of the debate around implementation. This Brief, as well as the discussion from the OWG-6 will help delegates explore various proposals for strengthening the SDGs.*

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