ECOSOC OAS Dialogue with the Executive Heads
24 February 2014, 15:00-18:00

Statement by Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin,

Executive Director UNFPA

On how UN entities can sustain MDG development gains and contribute to the sustainable development paradigm in a coherent manner while preserving their own mandate

Mr. Vice-President,

Distinguished Members of the Economic and Social Council,

Colleagues and friends,

MDGs progress to date
Since the turn of the Millennium, much progress has been made towards realizing the vision embodied in the Millennium Declaration and the
international community’s collective resolve expressed in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The proportion of people living in extreme poverty has been halved at the global level, and the MDG target of halving the proportion of people suffering from hunger by 2015 is now within reach. Over 2 billion people gained access to improved sources of drinking water, and remarkable gains have been made in the fight against malaria and tuberculosis.

However, not everyone has benefited equally from this progress. While economic growth has brought many out of poverty, many others have been left behind and more than 1 billion people continue to live in extreme poverty. The global economic downturn, increasing conflicts and climate change impacts – including more frequent natural disasters - have hit the poorest and the most marginalized, minorities, women and girls hardest. Persistent inequalities – between and within countries, especially between urban and rural areas – are hampering progress in meeting the MDG targets and threatening to reverse achievements and undermine future gains with especially negative impacts on young people.

Among the targets that lag farthest behind are MDG 5: Target 5A, to reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters; and, Target 5B, to achieve universal access to reproductive health. Most maternal deaths are preventable, yet at present about 222 million women continue to lack access to modern methods of family planning. Many more suffer from
discrimination and violence, and lack basic control over their bodies and fertility. Another off-track target is MDG 6B, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS. While there is positive progress in many countries, there are others where HIV incidence is increasing, particularly among young people, and most key populations for the epidemic are underserved in terms of access to information and services for prevention, treatment, care and support. We must redouble our efforts to address these off-track targets.

*Accelerating progress towards MDGs*

The MDG Acceleration Framework – MAF – has been an effective mechanism to tackle off-track MDGs and address implementation bottlenecks. Building upon existing country knowledge and experiences, as well as policy and planning processes, the MAF helps the development of country-level partnerships, with mutual accountability of all partners, towards the efforts needed to reach the MDGs by 2015. In so doing, the MAF helps countries to focus on disparities and inequalities, two of the major causes of uneven progress, by particularly responding to the needs of the vulnerable.

Using effective mechanisms like the MAF and strengthened partnerships, we need to continue to focus on the MDGs that are most off-track, as well as on countries that are facing particular development challenges, including least developed countries and countries affected by conflicts or disasters. Indeed, challenges as regards access to sexual and
reproductive health care, including voluntary family planning, are the
greatest in least developed countries. The least developed countries
have by far the highest adolescent pregnancy rates, the lowest
contraceptive prevalence rates, and high rates of unmet need for family
planning.

Since 2013, the Principals of the UN system have been meeting twice a
year to review progress and challenges in MDG implementation at the
country level, underscoring the collective resolve and shared sense of
urgency of the UN system at the highest level to do our utmost to meet
the MDG targets. This has allowed for the UN system and the World
Bank Group to focus on scaling up support to a number of countries that
have already made substantial commitments towards accelerating MDG
implementation. Building on the MAF, the UN system and the Work
Bank Group are supporting these countries to address bottlenecks in
achieving the MDGs that are most off-track. This has contributed to
greater alignment of the UN system and the World Bank Group’s
programmes around country priorities, and strengthened collaboration
across the UN system and promotion of South-South cooperation.

Such UN system-wide efforts to accelerate achievement of MDG targets
at the country-level is setting a stage for implementation of the post-
2015 framework, based on stronger partnerships with stakeholders, including the World Bank Group.

**Unfinished agenda of the MDGs and carrying it forward to the post-2015 framework**

Mr. Vice-President,

Despite UN system-wide efforts to support countries in accelerating progress towards achievement of the MDGs, there is undoubtedly an unfinished agenda as evidenced mainly by the gaps in health. While initiatives such as Every Woman Every Child and the Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health have provided additional momentum, it is clear that the MDGs associated with women’s and children’s health – MDGs 4 and 5 – will likely not be achieved at the current rate. As for MDG 6, to halt and reverse AIDS is not sufficient: we must work towards the end of AIDS. Fifty percent of those living with HIV are women, 39 percent of new infections occur in young people, and elimination of mother-to-child transmission – which is within our grasp – requires family planning access for women living with HIV. We must ensure that women and young people’s health is central in the post-2015 framework.

People around the world – particularly young people – are asking for a forward-looking development agenda that is anchored in human rights
and dignity for all. Through the *World We Want* and the 20-year review of the International Conference on Population and Development, we have heard an urgent call for equitable and inclusive sustainable development that puts people, their human rights and dignity, at its very heart.

Post-2015 must be an era of equality and human rights, with choices and opportunities for all. Gender equality and women’s empowerment, including fulfilling their sexual and reproductive rights and ensuring their freedom from violence and from HIV, will continue to be crucial in this sustainable development paradigm, as will investments in health, education and the capabilities of women, adolescents and youth. Universal access to sexual and reproductive health and comprehensive education on health, sexuality, gender equality and human rights, must be fully integrated into and explicitly mentioned as part of the new global sustainable development agenda.

*Coherence vs. Agency Mandates*

Mr. Vice-President,
We fully support the universality of the development agenda, and the entire UN development system needs to work together collaboratively and support each other on all aspects of both the unfinished agenda of the MDGs and the sustainable development agenda.

With my fellow Principals last November, we agreed that successful implementation of the sustainable development agenda requires the coherent integration of policies across the three dimensions of sustainable development, with poverty eradication as a key objective. We also agreed that the UN must achieve this integration across institutional lines in its own policies and in delivering as one its programmes and operations, as well as effectively supporting Member States in their efforts.

For the UN system to remain relevant, able and ready to support Member States in implementing the development agenda, the UN system must build on the lessons learned from past experiences, including “Delivering as One” at the country level and the multisectoral joint programme approach of UNAIDS. The Standard Operating Procedures for Countries Wishing to Adopt the “Delivering as one” Approach – or SOPs – are a concrete step forward, giving guidance on how the UN development system should be working together while avoiding duplication. There are many good examples of how the UN
Country Teams are jointly delivering results together around shared visions and objectives. Guided by the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, the UN system would need to continue operationalizing One UN more broadly and deeply and converge around the conceptual, procedural and operational challenges to deliver on the sustainable development agenda. We need to work effectively and efficiently together as a system in order to optimize our mandates’ comparative advantages and deliver quality results.

An important underlying element for coherence will be data: there is a call for a data revolution and capacity building to gather, disaggregate and analyze data, including population data, which is key to delivering the sustainable development agenda and joint results of the UN development system.

Furthermore, in the ever-changing development landscape, the roles of civil society and the private sector are increasingly important in advancing equitable and inclusive sustainable development. Governments, supported by the UN system, will need to strengthen partnerships with civil society organizations and the private sector, not least to promote innovations.

Mr. Vice-President,

The recently released Report of the Operational Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International

The MDGs gains over the past 14 years are also human rights gains. We must protect and advance these hard won gains, make further progress and, where they are under threat, continue to raise our voices for the voiceless whose rights are most at risk. Until the human rights gains of the MDGs are universally realized, until everyone is able to reach their full potential, humankind cannot advance, and truly equitable, sustainable development will remain out of reach.

I thank you.