



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

28 October 2011

Excellency,

As you are aware I convened an informal briefing by H.E Mrs. Tarja Halonen, President of Finland and H.E Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of South Africa, Co-Chairs of the (GSP) on the 20th October 2011, and the GSP panel members, such as Mr. Kevin Rudd, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Australia and Mrs. Luisa Diogo, former Prime Minister of Mozambique also participated. This was meant to further promote dialogue between the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability (GSP) and the United Nations Member States. The informal meeting discussed the emerging findings and initial recommendations

I am pleased to share with you the analytical summary of the second dialogue between the General Assembly and the Secretary General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability (GSP). The summary was prepared by the GSP Secretariat. I believe the summary will help to inform Member States and relevant intergovernmental processes, including the United Nations Conference on Sustainable development (Rio+20) and its preparatory process. The summary will also be posted on the GSP website.

Please accept, Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nasser'.

Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser

All Permanent Representative
and Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

Interactive Dialogue of the United Nations General Assembly with the Secretary General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability

Background:

On 20 October 2011, the two Co-Chairs and some members of the High-level Panel on Global Sustainability held an interactive dialogue with UN Member States at the invitation of the President of the General Assembly at UN Headquarters in New York. The opening of the event was attended by the UN Secretary General.

Summary

The President of the General Assembly opened the interactive dialogue by stressing the particular relevance of the work of the Secretary General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability. He said that the Panel can provide fresh thinking on complex issues, such as food, energy, water, oceans, land use, governance, and equity. In preparation for the historic 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development- Rio + 20 he further urged UN government representatives to review the Panel's report and consider its recommendations when it is released in January next year.

Referring to the morning's news headlines, the UN Secretary-General said a few words about the death of Col. Muammar Qaddafi and the end of the fighting in Sirte and other cities, and noted that the day marked an historic transition for Libya. He then called on the Panel to be courageous when it designs its sustainability roadmap. He urged for accelerating progress towards the MDGs, while developing a new generation of sustainable development goals. He referred to the need for greater accountability, good governance, greater equity, as well as to the role of the State in advancing this agenda.

President Halonen of Finland, Co-Chair of the Global Sustainability Panel, mentioned that the Panel was entering the last phase of its work and was reviewing drafts of its report. She presented the main ideas discussed by the Panel so far in the areas of economics, people empowerment and governance. She highlighted the still temporary nature of the draft and its recommendations and acknowledged comments and suggestions by a wide range of stakeholders.

President Zuma of South Africa, Co-Chair of the Global Sustainability Panel, spoke by video link from Pretoria and highlighted the timeliness of the Panel in the current context of turbulent times, and the relevance of its work for developing countries. He mentioned that sustainability initiatives were already happening in many developing countries and that developing countries were taking the lead in organizing global sustainability conferences such as COP17 and Rio+20. He further stressed that sustainable development is about finding a more equitable, cost effective path to long-term prosperity in the 21st century.

Panel member and Australian Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd, connected by video link from Manila, said that considering the linkages between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development was about efficiency. He mentioned the importance of taking into account planetary boundaries, addressing the food security challenge in a sustainable way, and empowering women to play a larger role in the economy. He noted the Panel's discussions on metrics that price externalities related to the environment, social injustice, and the financial system.

Panel member and former Mozambique Prime Minister, Luisa Diogo, recalled that reduction of global poverty was at the heart of the sustainability agenda – including through the challenges of access to food, water, energy as well as to economic opportunities. She noted that developing countries had an opportunity to do development with less environmental degradation. She mentioned the Panel's challenge of connecting the dots regarding a series of interrelated crises and suggested that the Panel's recommendations would need to be bold while being practical at the same time.

During the discussion that followed these presentations, representatives of UN Member States and civil society focused on the need to contextualize sustainable development and to take action on the ground.

Several speakers called for defining a new development model which would be fair and inclusive, while respecting the environment.

Many highlighted the importance of people's empowerment, access to information and participation in decision-making for delivering sustainability.

A couple of speakers noted the political nature of the Panel and highlighted the role it could play in providing a new narrative and a strong call for action, rather than expertise on the subject matter.

Several participants noted the connections between the work of the Panel and the upcoming climate negotiations at COP17, as well as the meeting of G20 leaders, and asked the Panel to ensure that the sustainability messages will be heard in these arenas.

It was further argued that the GSP report would also need to address the lack of implementation of commitments made at other international conferences of the United Nations, such as those on Social Development, Financing for Development and Women.

Member States welcomed the continued interaction of Panel members with UN Member States, civil society and the private sector. Some speakers asked the Panel to put forward an executive summary of its report in a timely manner, so that its recommendations can be taken into account in the negotiations for the Rio +20 outcome document.