

Business closing statement

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The business sector would like to congratulate the Inter Agency and Expert Group for the progress they have made thus far: your task is truly Herculean. The SDGs represent a significant evolution from the Millennium Development Goals. The goals for governance and means of implementation, for example, often address areas beyond the traditional reach of statistical agencies.

We would like to thank the IAEG-SDGs for giving us a separate business voice. Business, civil society and academia have all benefited from the opportunity to present their views. These views are often similar, but there has been an advantage for countries and Agencies to hear these separate voices, each supporting the work of the IAEG.

The importance of business in achieving the SDGs was recognised through the whole process of the 2030 Agenda, most notably in Addis Ababa at the FfD conference. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda emphasises that we can only achieve the full ambitions of the SDGs with the full participations of business. The mantra is “from billions to trillions” and this can only be achieved with the help of business.

“Business” is a broad category. It ranges from a small farmer who sees the opportunity of working with fellow farmers to source inputs and market their produce. It’s the entrepreneur who sets up a small business in a developing country that eventually becomes a global enterprise. It’s the company that makes your cellphone; it’s the companies that mine and process the essential materials to make that phone possible. Small farmers, who are also businesses, now have access to information and to financial services through low-cost handsets. Businesses, large and small, enabled this.

Business has already begun implementing the SDG goals and targets. Businesses in many sectors including agriculture, fertilizers, chemicals and extractives have begun to embed the SDGs in their business models. This work is just at its infancy, but it is getting the serious attention of the business community even as indicators are still being finalised. For example, through the coordination of the World Economic Forum, the UNDP and the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment, a mapping initiative is underway on opportunities and challenges for the extractives sector in addressing SDGs. It was the subject of a meeting of over 300 representatives from mining companies, governments, business and civil society last month in Toronto.

Business recognises that it faces a fundamental and difficult challenge but one with significant opportunities. Society is expecting that our activities deliver a net positive sustainable contribution over the long term and we recognise that. The development and implementation of SDG indicators is one of the key variables in ensuring we deliver on an ambitious 2030 agenda.

Business has been fully involved in the indicators process and we hope this will continue as we move to the next stage of detailed work by Agencies. We have to use all the available resources. Business and civil society sometimes have more up-to-date and accurate statistics than government. Data is expensive to collect. Big data is out there, let’s use it. I note this morning’s presentations did not explicitly address a role for non-government data.

We look forward to working with the agencies tasked with developing the Tier II and Tier III indicators. We look forward to the High Level Group opening up to participation of non-government stakeholders.

Talk to us, listen to us. Let us be part of the solution. We have data, we have expertise, and we have resources, and we are here to help.