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The UN and Development: Objectives and Governance

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Abstract:

This chapter looks at the objectives and governance structure of the global system of development cooperation, and the role of the United Nations in this system. It first poses three basic objectives of international cooperation: managing interdependence, providing universal social goods, and reducing international inequalities of countries' levels of development. It then looks at the transition from the Millennium to the Sustainable Development Goals, the basic principles that underlined the design of the latter –the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, the universal character of the agreed goals, and the capacity to adapt them to national policy design—, and the two mechanisms that were put in place for their follow up, the High-Level Political Forum and the Voluntary National Reviews. It finally looks at relevant issues of global governance: the incomplete character of the development cooperation agenda, to what extent the governance structures of different international organizations guarantee the inclusive and effective character of cooperation, and the coherence of the system.

One of the success stories of the United Nations has been its capacity to serve as the forum to agree on global development goals. This success includes not only those set in the UN Development Decades but also in the global UN conferences convened since the 1970s and the series of summits that started with the 1990 World Summit for Children. It includes also the three major agendas approved in 2015: Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which succeeded the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, adopted in the third Financing for Development (FFD) Conference, which followed up a process that had been launched in Monterrey in 2002; and the Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted in the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit.

This success reflects not only the UN's convening power and its character as the most representative global institution but also its strong historical partnership with civil society. However, although goal setting has helped place many new issues on the global agenda, it has generally been characterized by a complex governance structure and weak monitoring and accountability for international commitments.

This chapter analyzes the major elements of this topic. Development is understood here in its broad sense, encompassing its economic, social and environmental dimensions, well captured in the SDGs. It begins with the objectives of international cooperation in relation to development and is followed by the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs. It then analyzes the governance of the system, including the proposal to create a robust UN Council on economic, social and environmental issues and ends with brief forward-looking conclusions.

The Objectives of International Development Cooperation

There are three basic objectives[1] of international cooperation in the economic, social and environmental fields: managing interdependence and providing the associated global public goods; promoting common international social norms and standards, which can be referred to as "universal social goods"; and reducing inequalities in development among countries. These objectives reflect not only the three dimensions of sustainable development according to the UN, but also the fact that the concept of "development" is used in the UN in a dual sense, to refer not only to developing countries but also, in the terminology of the Preamble to the UN Charter, to the promotion of "social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom" –a concept that applies, of course, to all societies.

This typology coincides with the historical origin of different forms of cooperation. Prior to World War I, international cooperation was essentially related to managing such technical interdependence as navigation treaties, contagious diseases, telegraph and postal services, and intellectual property rights (IPRs). The creation of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 gave birth to the second form of cooperation; to a lesser extent, the League of Nations also provided limited economic and social cooperation, and there was an attempt to coordinate the economic responses to the Great Depression of the 1930s, which largely failed. The third form of cooperation was born after World War II (WWII) and was linked to dismantling the colonial order.

All forms of international cooperation blossomed after WWII. The first two objectives gave birth to the elaborate system of funds, programs and specialized agencies of the UN system, including the Bretton Woods institutions (BWIs), but also some international institutions that never became part of it—notably those in the trade area, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and later the World Trade Organization (WTO).[2] Cooperation in the environmental field was a late arrival, which started with the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972.

The second form of cooperation includes the economic and social rights that became part of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the 1966 International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the multitude of UN conventions in the social field approved by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and by the intergovernmental organs of the specialized agencies; and the principles and plans of action agreed since the 1970s in the UN conferences and summits.

The third form of cooperation became largely the subject of the official development assistance (ODA) administered by the developed countries, and coordinated by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). South-South cooperation has become and additional and dynamic part of this form of cooperation in recent decades. Also relevant were the different forms of UN technical cooperation launched since the late 1940s, the creation of the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) in 1960, and the adoption of the principle of "special and differential treatment" in trade agreements. The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), created in 1964, led the way on the latter, which was adopted first by GATT and in a moderate form by the WTO after its creation in 1995.

The three forms of cooperation are conceptually distinct in terms of both national sovereignty and the demands for international cooperation. The first responds to the need for collective action to avoid the under or over-provision of the goods or services that are non-rival and non-excludable in consumption (which is what welfare economics defines as "public goods"), or that generate strong externalities (positive or negative). At the national level, the demand for collective action is reflected in the provision of those goods and services by the state, or regulating their provision, but also by different forms of communal or private (generally not-for-profit) cooperation. At the international level, the demand for collective action to manage interdependence requires sharing national autonomy, as well as "responsible sovereignty," defined by Kaul and Blundin as sovereignty exercised in a way that is fully respectful of the sovereignty of others.[3]

Managing interdependence basically involves issues of (economic) efficiency, whereas those that relate to the second and third objectives of cooperation relate to equity—equality of citizens and of nations, respectively. In the second case, the origin of "publicness" is the decision

by society that certain goods and services should be provided to all as citizens because of their social rather than technical attributes, or rules that they should respect in their interaction with each other (e.g., non-discrimination, protection of weaker members of society). In their provision or the enforcement of the associated rules, the state continues to exercise full autonomy, though following internationally-agreed principles/norms—"sovereignty embedded in broader values and principles," the concept that, as Jenks argues,[4] was at the center of early post-WWII conceptions of international cooperation.

In turn, the third form of cooperation is also related to the demand for equality, but in this case of equality among nations. It includes ODA, special credit channels for developing countries, and rules that create preferences for them in the trade or technology transfer, among other fields. It aims at compensating the large inequalities that characterize the world economy. National sovereignty to adopt development strategies should be the rule. However, to the extent that economic interdependence generated by globalization reduces the room for the effective exercise of such sovereignty, international cooperation should aim at enhancing it—at increasing the "policy space" that countries should enjoy, to use the concept that was coined in UN (particularly UNCTAD) debates.

From the MDGs to the SDGs

In terms of setting global development goals, the MDGs and, particularly, the SDGs represent some of the most ambitious UN decisions. The MDG experience can be praised on several grounds. It set a concise set of clear and measurable social and environmental goals, with a high level of visibility. They served not only for advocacy but also as a framework for numerous global, regional and national debates and, most importantly, for the design of the development

strategies of several countries. The BWIs strongly backed them, as did the ODA community and numerous civil society organizations (CSOs), thus realizing the aim of using the representative character of the UN to lead global action. Although accountability continued to be weak, the monitoring process and common data base put in place by the UN, with the support of many other organizations, represented a significant advance. It furthermore included high-quality regular reports on the MDGs as well as those of the MDG Gap Task Force (MDG-8) on the global partnership for development.

However, the MDGs were deficient in many ways. Although they were drafted on the basis of the Millennium Declaration, the selection of the goals and targets was a highly centralized process that lacked participation by UN members. It was perceived to be donor-centric, a view that was enhanced by its similarity with the OECD Development Assistance Committee's (OECD/DAC) 1996 agenda.[5] Several targets were relevant only for the poorest countries and left little room for the adoption of targets appropriate for other countries (e.g., for middle-income countries). Moreover, MDG-8 on the "global partnership for development" was one of its weakest points.

Beyond that, many critics pointed out that the MDGs left aside most of the environmental sustainability, but particularly the *economic* development issues, including one crucial socio-economic variable, employment. In that regard, the 2005 Summit that reviewed the Millennium Declaration added the objective of "achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all." However, it was included as a target for MDG-1 rather than as a new goal, thus significantly reducing its scope. More generally, the MDGs captured only a small segment of the "internationally agreed development goals"—that is, the goals agreed in the UN summits and conferences, which constitute the broader UN development agenda. The targets were also clearly

incomplete –as it was argued, among others, on MDG-3 on gender equality and empowerment of women.

For the launch of the discussion of what came to be called "Agenda 2030," the UN considered three major reports: that prepared in 2012 by a task force of UN agencies, the report of the High-Level Panel convened by the Secretary General for this purpose, and the Secretary-General's own report to the 68th session of the UNGA debate on "Post 2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage."[6] These reports are subsequently called "UN Task Force," "High-Level Panel (HLP)," and "SG Report.". An additional useful document is the summary of the elaborate "global conversation" on the post-2015 agenda set up by the UN Development Group (UNDG).[7]

Important agreements arose from these reports. The first was that the new agenda should integrate the three dimensions of *sustainable development*: economic, social and environmental. The second was that the agenda should be *universal* –that is, it should apply to *all,* and not only to developing countries. The third area of consensus was that, although goals should be guided by universal vision and principles, they should take into account regional, national, and local circumstances and priorities. In particular, they should leave ample space for national policy design and adaptation to local settings. This was critical to guarantee the "ownership" of this agenda by national governments and societies—without which it would not be realized. The fourth was that goals should be "bold but practical"—that is, they are achievable within the chosen time framework—and include clear measurable indicators that should be subject to monitoring and accountability.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly from the point of view of the process, there was the implicit agreement that the post-2015 agenda should be adopted by the UNGA and not the

way that the MDGs had been formulated. The process was to be open and consultative. In particular, it should converge with the discussion that had already started of the open working group on the SDGs to implement the agenda agreed in the 2012 Conference on Sustainable Development.

Both the UN Task Force and the HLP also proposed that the new agenda should incorporate, not only areas that were covered by the MDGs, but also some that were left out of that agenda as well as "emerging issues." Two common themes on which the two reports agreed were peace and security, and good national governance. This understanding reflected the conviction that the most limited progress and even the retrogression in development had affected most severely countries afflicted by armed conflict, and that "peace and good governance were core elements of wellbeing, not an optional extra," in the HLP's words.[8] In turn, the list of emerging issues that the UN Task Force proposed was a long one: the persistence or increase in inequalities, including gender inequalities; large and growing knowledge gaps between and within countries, and loss of traditional knowledge; shifting demographics (rapid population growth in Africa, population aging, internal and international migration, urbanization and the growing population living in slums); and a growing environmental footprint (shrinking forests, growing scarcity of water, land degradation, climate change, biodiversity loss) and incidence of natural disasters.

More broadly, the UN Task Force proposed a vision based on the fundamental principles of respect for human rights, equality, and sustainability. They proposed an agenda with four interdependent dimensions: inclusive social development, through universal access to basic social services and the eradication of hunger; inclusive economic development, including productive employment and decent work, and reduction of income poverty and inequalities;

environmental sustainability, which requires, among others, new consumption and production patterns; and peace and security, which includes national governance based on the rule of law and the principles of political inclusion and participation.

In turn, the HLP report began by stating: "Our vision and our responsibility are to end extreme poverty in all its forms in the context of sustainable development and to have in place the building blocks of sustainable development for all."[9] It then proposed five "big, transformative shifts": leaving no one behind, taking into account income, gender, ethnicity, disabilities, and geography; placing sustainable development at the core, integrating its three dimensions; transforming economies for jobs and inclusive growth; building peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all; and forging a new global partnership.

The major difference between the two reports was in the proposed vision: while sharing the theme of sustainability, the HLP proposed that fighting multidimensional poverty should be at the center of the agenda, whereas that place was occupied in the UN Task Team by the issues of respect for human rights and overcoming inequality. In UN terminology, the latter was a "rights-based approach" to development. It was also closer to the basic values agreed in the UN Millennium Declaration: freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibilities.

The emphasis on overcoming inequality, and not only poverty in its multiple dimensions, was also at the center of the UN Task Force, the SG Report, and the UNGA discussion that followed. It involved not only international inequalities but also the rising domestic inequalities that have affected a large number of countries –developed and developing alike— in recent decades. This meant that rising domestic income inequality was one of the most important "emerging trends" that had to be addressed by Agenda 2030. In its 2013 report, UN Committee

for Development Policy (CDP) also argued that the reduction of inequality should be included as a specific goal in the post-2015 agenda, with measurable targets, adding a specific reference to overcoming the high levels of abject poverty.[10]

The UNGA discussion generated a heated debate on the institutional issues, in particular about how to include peace and security and national governance in the agenda. Developing countries raised, in particular, the need to respect national sovereignty in the choice of institutions, and to avoid adopting *measurable* targets in this area, given the imperfections and controversial character of all existing indicators of national governance—including those used by the World Bank.

Developing countries also raised the need to include good *global* governance in the agenda and to significantly improve the MDG-8 on the global partnership for development. The agreement also went well beyond the multi-stakeholder partnerships proposed by the HLP to include *inter-governmental* cooperation, including in finance, trade, technology, and systemic issues. It also included the commitment to "Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance" (target 16.8 of the SDGs), to reaffirm a principle that had been agreed in the first UN Conference on Financing for Development.[11] The UN Task Force also called for the UNGA to reaffirm the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" agreed in the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, but the HLP shied away from even mentioning it and implicitly reformulated it as "shared responsibilities in accordance with respective capabilities."[12] This reflects the wide disagreement that still exists among UN member states about the application of this principle beyond the environmental area.

The results of the open and extensive debates, which involved multiple consultations with academia and civil society, were the 17 SDGs approved in 2015. The SDGs meet the criteria that

were agreed at the outset: they include all the dimensions of sustainable development, they are universal in scope, and leave ample space for national policy design. It also reflects in a better way the broader agenda agreed in the UN summits and conference, and brought back economic development to the UN agenda –a major issue for developing countries. The new agenda has also been amply recognized by international organizations, including the BWIs, the official development assistance community, and by global civil society. Several national governments that have incorporated them into their national agenda, and several major municipal governments that have done the same. It is, however, a complex agenda, which was translated into 169 targets, several of which cannot be measured in precise terms. Despite its complexity, i no doubt leaves aside some issues that, as we will see in the next section, have still not been incorporated in the global development agenda.

Two additional important innovations adopted were related to the mechanisms put in place for the follow up of Agenda 2030. The first was the creation of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), which combines very well the political profile of the UNGA with the responsibility of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to follow up on the implementation of the outcomes of all major UN conferences and summits in the economic, social, and environmental fields. According to the relevant 2013 UNGA resolution, the HLPF would be convened by the UNGA every four years at the heads-of-state level to provide political leadership, while the regular follow-up of the SDGs would be undertaken by ECOSOC during its annual ministerial meetings The second was the mechanism that was put in place to follow up on the implementation of Agenda 2030 at the national level, the Voluntary National Review (VNRs), which built upon the "annual ministerial reviews" adopted by the 2005 World Summit for countries to voluntarily report to the other UN members how they are fulfilling the different

goals and targets. This mechanism has some similarities with OECD's "peer reviews", and was preferred to evaluations by the UN Secretariat.

The VNRs have been successful, as suggested by the rising number of countries willing to do their reviews in ECOSOC's annual sessions: 22 countries in 2016, 43 in 2017 and 46 in 2018. However, it should be improved. According to the CDP's evaluation: "VNRs could become more effective instruments to share lessons learned and promote mutual learning by including more explicit and detailed discussions on national strategies for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Substantive coverage of the VNRs should be more comprehensive; reporting should not be selective and leave out major areas, particularly considering that the 2030 Agenda is intended to be indivisible and integrated."[13]

This is combined with the reports of UN-DESA on the SDGs at the global level, which improved on the previous ones on MDGs. Both have been supported by an elaborate system of indicators of the MDGs and now the SDGs, which is coordinated by the UN Statistical Division but with collaboration from a large number of international organizations. Evaluations and pressure from international civil society are also very important complements in the follow up of these goals.

The Governance of Global Development Cooperation

In terms of governance, global development cooperation faces three crucial issues: the incomplete character of the international agenda; the imperfections in the existing governance structures; and some problems of coherence of the system.[14]

Referring to the first issue, there are areas in relation to interdependence where cooperation is well developed and accepted (contagious diseases, international trade and

transportation rules), others in which there are significant gaps (climate change, global macroeconomic and financial stability, and international tax cooperation), and some in which there is no or very limited cooperation (economic migration). Furthermore, vacuums in the regulatory space tend to be filled by powerful countries or powerful private actors.

In the intergovernmental process, power is reflected in the role assumed by groups of major countries—for instance, the Group of 7 (G7) or Group of 20 (G20)—their control of decision making in different organizations (notably of the BWIs by developed countries), the inadequate financing given to international organizations to achieve their assigned tasks, and the different degrees of power and autonomy of the secretariats[15] of different international organizations. The major issue is the limited capacity of many developing countries to be part of the decision-making process, but also that of smaller developed countries.

In most of these cases, the problem is how to guarantee the inclusiveness of international cooperation, and the legitimacy associated with it, while guaranteeing effective decision making and efficient performance. To try to match power relations with some level of inclusiveness, the BWIs adopted a system in which they mix weighted votes, essentially based on the quotas/capital that take into account the economic relevance of different countries but mixed with a small number of basic votes that are given equally to all members, and a constituency system that guarantees that all countries have a representative at the table. However, the process of redefining the weighted vote to take into account the growing share of developing countries in the world economy has been extremely slow.

In turn, the WTO model is based on consensus building through a system of "concentric circles," as characterized by WTO's former director-general Pascal Lamy:[16] negotiations are made within and then between coalitions to facilitate building consensus—a process which, in a

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sense, matches the way parliamentary decisions are taken within countries, as negotiations within and then between political parties. The consensus principle also gives all countries the possibility of blocking an agreement, though the effective capacity to do so depends on the power of individual countries. However, this system has proven to be relatively ineffective in terms of decision making and has thus been strongly criticized.

The transition from the G7 to the G20 as the major decision-making body of major countries was, of course, a step forward in terms of representation of developing countries; it was effective in helping mitigate the 2007-09 North Atlantic financial crisis, strengthening financial regulation, and promoting new areas of international cooperation, notably in taxation. However, it obviously excludes most countries and has not been particularly effective after its initial decisions.

The UN decision-making rule based on "one country, one vote" is, of course, the most inclusive and has facilitated consensus building at different times, but frequently it leads powerful countries to disregard the associated decisions, and has also been characterized in recent times by lack of agreement on major issues among the increasingly diverse community of developing countries. In several cases, it led to the use of the UN for consensus building, but then to actions by organization beyond the core UN. This is what Toye and Toye called the "twin-track system," according to which: "The UN General Assembly provides a world forum where economic ideas, interests and policy proposals are presented, discussed, and negotiated. Its authority is, and can continue to be, a moral authority […] Once the process of UN discussion and negotiation produces agreements, however, their implementation is delegated to executive agencies in which the countries that will foot most of the subsequent bills place their confidence."[17]

The creation of IDA in the World Bank group and the adoption of the principle of special and differential treatment by GATT are interesting historical cases already mentioned, to which can be added the 2014-2015 decisions on sovereign debt resolution. Their inclusive character implies, however, that, under any arrangement, the UNGA and ECOSOC should be recognized as the most open and democratic and, therefore, as the most appropriate forums for debate and consensus building. In the words of Rosenthal, ECOSOC –and by extension, other UN process— "has been quite successful in promoting the development debate, identifying emerging issues, and offering guidelines for policy makers," and "the non-binding nature of decisions and resolutions has been an asset in furthering the policy debate, which has contributed to the organization's considerable achievements in the development of ideas, in its advocacy role, and in its ability to shape public awareness."[18]

It must be underscored that, beyond the UN system, global civil society also plays an essential role in placing new issues in the agenda and in overseeing the implementation of international agreements. This role has been well captured by the UN Intellectual History Project's concept of the "three UNs": member states, international secretariats, and civil society.[19] In any case, it is interesting to note that that role predates the UN, as reflected in the anti-slavery movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the struggle of the sequence of socialist internationals for better labor standards, and the fight of the international feminist movement for the right to vote for women. Today, it is, of course, much more active and heterogeneous. It takes place in a parallel manner to intergovernmental processes, as reflected, among many other areas, in the persistent struggle of the feminist movements and the international movement to enhance the rights of indigenous peoples. ECOSOC is the most open

forum to civil society, and therefore plays a useful role in giving it voice in inter-governmental processes.

In terms of coherence, any instrument to enhance inter-governmental cooperation must take into account that the current system was designed as a radically decentralized one. Proposals to create an apex organization to direct and coordinate the UN system have been in the agenda for the past quarter-century. In 1992, UNDP's *Human Development Report* proposed replacing ECOSOC with a 22-member Development Security Council, with the capacity to take decisions and not only formulate recommendations, following the powers that the UN Security Council has –hence its proposed name. According to the proposal, the new Council would serve as the framework to design global policy frameworks in all key economic and social areas, preparing a global budget of development resource flows, and provide a policy coordination framework for the smooth functioning of international development and financial institutions.[20] A similar proposal for an "Economic Security Council" was made three years later by the Commission on Global Governance.[21] Similarly, the 2006 Panel on System-wide Coherence proposed the creation a Global Leaders' Forum of ECOSOC (also called L27, as it would be made up by half of ECOSOC's member.[22]

Along these lines, in 2009 the Stiglitz Commission convened by the President of the UNGA proposed the creation of a Global Economic Coordination Council (GECC).[23] Its major role would be the direction and coordination of the UN system, including the BWIs, as well as WTO, which should be brought into the system. It would also have as special responsibilities the identification of gaps in the current system of cooperation, and of the spillovers among the areas of responsibilities of individual agencies that would need attention (e.g., environmental effects of trade policies and social effects of budgetary policies). It would be a small decision-making body

at the heads-of-state level, supported by subsidiary ministerial bodies. It would combine the participation of systemically important countries with universal representation through a mechanism similar to that of the BWIs –a constituency system with weighted votes based on economic weight of countries mixed with some basic votes that equal for all. The latter element is essential to guarantee that the most important countries must be at the decision-making table, or otherwise they will tend to ignore its decisions. In any case, the GECC would leave to the more specialized bodies the specific decisions in their area of work.

One alternative would be for the G20 to be transformed into a more representative, and thereby legitimate mechanism of international economic cooperation —in a sense, into a GECC. This is similar to the Palais Royal Initiative's proposal to reform the international monetary system: a three-level governance structure for the global economy that would have a reformed G20 at the top, based on a constituency system.[24]

If the current G20 continues and exercises its role as "the premier forum for our international economic cooperation,"[25] it would have to change its operating style, and avoid stepping onto the mandates and governance structures of representative international institutions. It would also have to avoid adding issues into its agenda, which lead to no or very limited action. Essentially, it would have to essentially operate as a "steering committee,"[26] to help generate consensus among the most powerful countries. According to Kemal Dervis,[27] it would operate as an informal mechanism that interacts with the formal international organizations, playing a complementary role, with the informal setting being particularly important, according to his view, to permit bolder proposals. Furthermore, the interaction between formal and informal processes works best when it facilitates a variable geometry of informal dialogues, as not all countries are equally relevant for specific international decisions.

Under any arrangement, ECOSOC should continue to be the inter-governmental organ in charge of the economic, social, and environmental responsibilities given to the UN Secretariat, funds and programs—the core UN organization, to distinguish it from the UN system as a whole, which also includes the specialized agencies. It should play at least in part the role given by UN Charter Article 62, according to which it "may co-ordinate the activities of the specialized agencies through consultation with and recommendations to such agencies and through recommendations to the General Assembly and to the Members of the United Nations." The additional function of following up on the SDGs and the plans of action of major UN summits and conferences may be particularly important in this regard. An interesting case is the follow up of the Financing for Development Summits from Monterrey to Addis Ababa, which has generated a new way of interacting with the BWIs. The Charter does not mention humanitarian affairs, an area in which ECOSOC came to be the main mechanism of coordination at the global level. The Council should also continue to play the task of convening global debates on development crises and emergencies, with the objective of contributing in this way to a timely and effective global response.

As already pointed out, a definite asset of ECOSOC is the confidence in it of developing countries. Given that it provides possibly the most open intergovernmental forum on economic and social issues, civil society also has a preference for ECOSOC as a forum. With the increasing openness of the UN to the private sector, ECOSOC's convening power has also been manifested in this area. Further, its network of subsidiary and expert bodies is also a source of strength, as shown in the success of many of them.

The UNGA will also continue to play an important role in global development cooperation, reflecting its capacity to serve as an effective mechanism for consensus-building

and generating new ideas for international cooperation. In this regard, the convening of UN summits and conferences, as well as high-level technical groups (also convened at times by the Secretary-General) have played an important role. However, there is, in this regard, a potential conflict with the responsibilities of ECOSOC, which has surfaced on many occasions. So, it should be understood that the UNGA is the main *political* organ and has universal membership (a characteristic that ECOSOC lacks), but ECOSOC has the major responsibility for following up on world economic, social and environmental issues.

Conclusion: Looking to the Future

The world still needs stronger mechanisms to fulfill the three objectives of international cooperation: managing interdependence, providing universal goods and reducing international inequalities in levels of development of different countries. The UN is uniquely positioned to provide a forum and facilitate consensus building in all of these areas, with an active participation of civil society and the private sector. However, the coherence of the system as a whole through the creation of a special Council, as well as of mechanisms that guarantee the implementation of global development cooperation should continue to be on the agenda. This requires, of course, a persistent commitment to multilateral cooperation, with major powers recognizing its virtues over unilateral action and a return to the unsuccessful eras of confrontation.

As pointed out, in terms of the UN governing bodies, the High-Level Political Forum is a novel model, which can enhance the complementarities and comparative advantages of the UNGA and ECOSOC while avoiding duplication. The objective is to provide political leadership by the heads of state with the regular follow-up of the SDGs by ECOSOC during its annual

ministerial meetings. It should be complemented by ECOSOC's broader responsibility to follow up on all UN conferences and summits. A final but crucial issue is the maturing and improvement of the mechanism adopted for countries' own evaluations, the Voluntary National Reviews.

Additional Reading

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Notes

[1] This section and that on governance draw partially from José Antonio Ocampo, "Global Economic and Social Governance and the United Nations System," in *Global Governance and Development,* ed. José Antonio Ocampo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), chapter 1. See also United Nations, *World Economic and Social Survey: Retooling Global Development* (New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2010), chapter VI; and on global public goods, see Inge Kaul, Pedro Conceicao, Katell Le Goulven, and R Mendoza, eds, *Providing Global Public Goods: Managing Globalization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Inge Kaul and Donald Blundin, "Global Public Goods and the United Nations," in *Global Governance and Development,* ed. Ocampo, chapter 2.

[2] The International Trade Organization, which had been created at Havana in 1948, was not approved by the US Congress, and thus the GATT agreement, signed in 1947, became the major instrument of trade cooperation until the creation of WTO in 1994.

[3] Kaul and Blundin, "Global Public Goods."

[4] Bruce Jenks, "UN Development Cooperation: The Roots of a Reform Agenda," in *Global Governance and Development,* ed. Ocampo, chapter 5.

[5] OECD/DAC, *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation* (Paris: OECD/DAC, 1996).

[6] UN, *Realizing The Future We Want, Report of the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda*, June 2012 ; UN, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development, Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, May 2013 ; UN, *A Life of Dignity for All: Accelerating Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and Advancing the*

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[7] UN, *The Global Conversation Begins: Emerging Views for a New Development Agenda*, 2013.

[8] UN, *A New Global Partnership*, 9.

[9] Ibid, opening statement of the executive summary.

[10] UN Committee for Development Policy, *Report on the fifteenth session*, 18-22 March, 2015.

[11] As stated in the UN, *Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development*, 2002, para. 62, to "broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition in international economic decision-making and norm-setting."

[12] UN, A New Global Partnership, 3 and 9.

[13] UN CDP, *Report on the Twenty-First Session*, UN document E/2019/33, 11-15 March 2019. See a more detailed evaluation of the 2018 VNRs in UN CDP, "Voluntary National Reviews Report—What Do They (Not) Tell Us*," CDP Background Paper*, no. 49 (July 2019).

[14] There are other issues, particularly strengthening the mechanisms for monitoring, accountability and, ultimately, enforceability of international commitments, to which I refer in this chapter only in relation to the MDGs and SDGs.

[15] Following UN practice, I use this term here to refer to the elected officials and the international civil service that administer the different international organizations.

[16] Pascal Lamy, "Statement to Delegations" (Geneva: World Trade Organization, 2005), http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news05_e/stat_lamy_nov05_e.htm.

[17] John Toye and Richard Toye, *The UN and Global Political Economy: Trade, Finance and Development* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 280.

[18] Gert Rosenthal, "The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations," in *The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations*, ed. Thomas G. Weiss and Sam Daws (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 143.

[19] Thomas G. Weiss, Tatiana Carayannis, and Richard Jolly, "The 'Third' United Nations," *Global Governance* 15, no. 2 (2009): 123–142; and Tatiana Carayannis and Thomas G. Weiss, *The "Third" United Nations: How Knowledge Brokers Help the UN Think* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). See also UN, *Delivering as One, Report of the Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence*, UN document A/61/583, 20 November 2006, para. 59.

[20] UNDP*, Human Development Report: Global Dimensions of Human Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 82-83.

[21] Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[22] UN, *Delivering as One*, para. 59.

[23] UN, *Report of the Commission of Experts Convened of the President of the UN General Assembly on Reforms of the International Monetary and Financial System* (New York :UN Stiglitz Commission, 2009) ; José Antonio Ocampo and Joseph E. Stiglitz, "From the G-20 to a Global Economic Coordination Council," *Journal of Globalization and Development* 2, no. 2 (2011) : Article 9.

[24] Palais Royal Initiative, "Reform of the International Monetary System: A Cooperative Approach for the 21st Century," in *Reform of the International Monetary System: The Palais Royal Initiative,* ed. Jack T. Boorman and André Icard (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2011), 24.

[25]G20*, "Leaders' Statement, The Pittsburgh Summit, 24-25 September 2009," para. 19.

[26] Paul Martin, "The G20: From Global Crisis Responder to Global Steering Committee," in *Global Leadership in Transition: Making the G20 More Effective and Responsive,* ed. Colin I. Bradford and Wonhyuk Lim (Seoul and Washington: Korea Development Institute and Brookings Institution Press, 2011), 13-15.

[27] Kemal Dervis, "Towards Strengthened Global Economic Governance," in *New Ideas on Development after the Financial Crisis*, ed. Nancy Birdsall and Francis Fukuyama (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2011), 191-212.