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Report Briefing Session on the Sustainable Development Goals

Paramaribo, DNA - October 9, 2015

ABSTRACT

This is a report of the briefing session organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in collaboration with UN Sister Agencies in Suriname with the intention to inform Parliament about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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Introduction

This is a report of the briefing session with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provided by the UNDP for the National Assembly (DNA) on October 9, 2015.

Opening remarks - Armstrong Alexis

Mr. Armstrong Alexis, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, welcomes the participants to the special session on behalf of the United Nations system in Suriname. He expresses his gratitude towards DNA for opening up its chambers to engage in the subject of the SDGs.

The SDG agenda will guide both human and social development in the next 15 years, until 2030. The Members of Parliament have key roles in showing local Surinamese commitment to the SDGs and Mr. Alexis looks forward to continuing the collaboration between the UN system in Suriname and the Parliament in Suriname in taking the SDG Agenda forward.

As Members of DNA, there are a number of key roles in support of the SDGs:

1. As representatives of local communities the members are a central channel between the local people and government, establishing both formal and informal processes and procedures. Allocating resources to sustainable human development is therefore one of the key roles that the members can play in reaching the SDGs.
2. At national level, the government can shape national policies through legislative development. Mr. Alexis advises therefore to ensure that the SDGs are enshrined in every bit of legislation formulated. Through legislation the members of Parliament should seek to develop quality of life, advancement of society and protection of the environment.
3. Hold the Government of Suriname (GoS) accountable for both local and international commitments. The GoS was one of the 193 countries present at the global summit where the SDGs were endorsed. Parliament should work closely with the GoS to achieve these goals as the executive arm of the government.

Opening remarks - Jennifer Simons

Mrs. Jennifer Geerlings - Simons, Chair DNA, welcomes the guests from the UN organizations in Suriname and all other guests. She thanks the UNDP for the efforts made to inform Parliament about the SDGs.

This is the first session where Parliament formally comes together to obtain information about the SDGs and the transformation from the MDGs to the SDGs. It is clear that sustainability is important in many different aspects. It is therefore essential to implement activities in the country in a sustainable manner so they have a positive impact.

It is very positive that Suriname participates in global agendas. This increases the chance, in particular for the smaller countries, to achieve good results. Countries can support and check on each other. DNA is currently in the process to strengthen its capacities, widen its horizon and has been more active internationally in the past years.

Suriname has been part of the process of the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs and supports these goals. However, in the transitional phase towards the SDGs, provisions have been included that suggest agreeing to closing of the Doha Development Round. This regards the round where the poor countries communicate to the rich countries they are not yet up to par and that exceptions still need to be made for them. Personally, Mrs. Simons thinks there is a need for discussion in this regard and Parliament needs to study what provisions have been included in the SDGs in this context. The development of the entire world is being supported with the adoption of the SDGs. However, it is also key that when countries meet in a different context to discuss trade and the economic status of different countries, these negotiations are in line with the provisions adopted in the SDGs. That is why Mrs. Simons asks the parliamentarians to attentively and critically listen to the information that will be provided.

The DNA Chair ends her opening remarks by wishing everyone a good session.

Video Message - Magdy Martinez -Soliman

Mr. Magdy Martinez-Soliman, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Government Policy and Programme Support, addresses Parliament via a pre-recorded video message.

A decade of progress has transformed Latin - America and the Caribbean as the deadline for the MDGs approaches, the region can show significant progress in the achievement of the MDGs. The region has already achieved the target of reducing levels of extreme poverty by half and the target for access to safe drinking water 5 years before 2015. Just between 2002 and 2012, around 62M persons were lifted out of poverty and around 70M joined the middle class. Latin America and the Caribbean is the only developing region about to reach the goal with regard to basic sanitation. The region is also on track to meet the goal of halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015 and provide access to primary education.

These are impressive achievements of development. Still, growth and the reduction of inequalities are slow and opportunities are unequal for women, youth and people of African and Indigenous descent. For sustainability of the development, the problem is that growth has largely come at the expense of environmental degradation. It is important to change this unsustainable course for the future.

There was an historic event in September 2015 at the Sustainable Development Summit in New York. Over 150 world leaders adopted 17 new SDGs as part of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that will take on the unfinished business of the MDGs while at the same time looking for prosperity for all. This agenda is universal as it touches on both developing and developed countries. Now there is the task to implement the agenda. UNDP stands ready and will support more than 117 countries to develop policies, leadership skills and institutional capabilities to achieve the sustainable development results.

UNDP has 5 decades of experience, leading the UN development work providing knowledge, practical expertise and a legacy of trust. It is hoped all countries will eradicate extreme poverty and roll back inequalities. The UN works on three fronts to achieve development that is sustainable:

- i. Encouragement of a shift to sustainability where there are economic growth benefits for marginalized groups and irreversible environmental damage is avoided.
- ii. Support of democratic systems to become included and accountable and able to meet expectations for participation, good service and security.
- iii. Backing of efforts to systematically identify and prevent big risks to development and help countries and communities to quick recovery and greater resilience to crises.

UNDP encourages the protection of human rights in all its activities and the advancement of women, minorities and the poorest.

Mr. Martinez - Soliman thanks everyone for their attention and wishes them a fruitful discussion.

Video Message - Patrick Keuleers

Patrick Keuleers, Director and Chief of Profession of UNDP's Governance and Peace Building Team in the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, addresses Parliament via a pre-recorded video message.

The Sustainable Development Goals that have now been approved by the member states of the United Nations represent an essential turning point for the mind-set concerning development policy. It is the first time a connection is made between sustainable development, peace, safety, justice and respect for human life.

The SDGs intend to achieve improved access for the public to social services and an improved quality of services and justice of the provided services for everyone, without prejudice based on class, gender, origin and religion. The collective effort to '*leave no one behind*' is very important in this regard. Policy should be focused on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. Sustainable development is equal to improving the opportunities and choices for all levels of society.

Goal 16 is about building a peaceful, just and inclusive society and encourages the development of accountable and transparent institutes and participative and representative decision making at all levels. That means the focus should be more on a direct and constructive relationship between parliamentarians and the public.

If member states want to move towards a more peaceful, just and inclusive community, the chance of making progress and achieving all other targets for sustainable development in 2030, also increases.

Presentation: From MDS's to SDGs - Faranaaz Pahalwankhan

Mrs. Faranaaz Pahalwankhan, UN Coordination Analyst, gives a presentation with regard to the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs.

Background

The Millennium Declaration was adopted in September of 2000. There were 8 development goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators. Based on the MDGs the Development Plan for Suriname for the period 2012-2016 was designed. To track the progress, Suriname prepared three reports: one baseline report in 2005 and two progress reports in 2009 and 2014.

Mrs. Faranaaz then gives an update on the progress made by Suriname on the MDGs based on the 2014 progress report.

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

One of the critical points for Suriname is formulating the poverty definition and establishing a poverty line. Because of a lack of the definition and a poverty line, Suriname has not been able to provide complete figures. Other indicators are related to work opportunities and sustainability of employment. The information included in the report, indicates that although there has been made slight progress in this area, there are still major challenges especially for youth.

To assess progress in this area, underweight of children is also measured. Since 2000 the prevalence of underweight of children has decreased.

Other major challenges Suriname faces with respect to progress in this area, concern non-communicable diseases and unhealthy lifestyles.

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

Nationwide there has been significant progress in terms of access to education. However, inequities between geographical locations (urban, rural and the interior) remain an issue. Another challenge is improving the quality of education.

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Gender equality in primary education is on track. However, the presence of boys decreases after primary level and the dropout rate among boys is higher than among girls in the education system. The figures also show a slight increase of women's participation in wage employment. Another indicator that was measured is the representation of women in Parliament. There was a steady increase of women parliamentarians until 2005. The 2010 elections showed a decrease in this area. But there was a substantive increase of women parliamentarians in the 2015 elections.

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality

There has been a steady decrease in both infant and under 5 mortality rates from 2011. Since 2004 the immunization coverage has been above 80%.

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

Although there has been fluctuation in the maternal mortality rate (MMR), for the period 200-2012, the overall trend is a decline in MMR. There have also been positive developments with respect to reproductive health, represented by an increase of the contraceptive prevalence rate, a decrease in adolescent birth rate, an increase in antenatal care and a decrease in unmet needs for family planning.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases.

Since 2003 HIV prevalence among 15-24 years old pregnant women has been stable. Condom use in higher risk sex among young men and women aged 15-24 years increased. The percentage of the population aged 15-24 with comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS has slightly increased. Annually, there is an increase in the number of adults who are on antiretroviral drugs.

With regard to Malaria, data shows that Suriname already achieved more than 90% reduction of Malaria incidence.

There are still some challenges in the area of Tuberculosis. The incidence is around 25% of the reported cases. Death rates associated with Tuberculosis are between 1-3 per 100,000 of the population. One third of the people who have Tuberculosis are also infected with HIV.

Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Suriname is on track with regard to forestry and biodiversity protection and ozone depleting substances consumption. The inclusion of sustainable development in Suriname has been reiterated by the Government, through its commitment towards the use of REDD+ as a planning mechanism for the wise use of the forest.

With regard to water and sanitation, the data shows an increased access to improved water and sanitation facilities. Also, there is an improved use of water sources in the interior.

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

The period 2000-2007 shows an upward trend in development assistance from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. A significant shift has been made onwards from 2010 in the concept of development cooperation, with the emphasis on non-OECD countries.

There has been an increase in the use of cellular phones and Internet. The number of fixed telephone lines per 100 households has been stable. The data also shows an increase in health insurance coverage for the period 2004-2012. However, there is no data with regard to access to affordable essential drugs.

Period 2015 and beyond

A number of strategies and actions in different areas have been proposed for the period after 2015.

Poverty:

- National definition on poverty and consensus on definitions for a poverty line in Suriname.
- Further implementation of social protection policies.

Labour market:

- Diversification of the economy to develop decent work, better employment opportunities and more utilization of the labour force.

Education sector:

- Strengthen and maintain human capital.
- Improve the quality of education.
- Reduce inequity in the education system between the geographical areas for all the education indicators.

Gender equality and empowerment:

- Improve gender equality in secondary and tertiary education.
- Increase the participation of women in decision-making and leadership.
- Address gender based violence.

Health sector:

- Improve the health services and health systems.
- Promote healthy life styles to tackle the increasing number of NCD's.

Environment sector:

- Use REDD+ as a mechanism tool for the wise use of the forest.
- Decrease the inequity between geographical areas with regard to access to improved drinking water sources and sanitation facilities.
- Increase the access to affordable housing.

Global development partnerships:

- The classification of Suriname as a middle-income country based on GDP and GNI per capita needs to be reconsidered.

- Diversification of bilateral relations and rationalization of existing relations. Investment in increased production and exports.
- Introduction of mandatory basic health insurance for all citizens.
- The use of ICT in building global partnerships development, especially in education and health provisions.

Mrs. Pahalwankhan thanks everyone for their attention and ends the presentation.

Presentation: The Sustainable Development Goals - Gonzalo Pizaro

Mr. Gonzalo Pizaro, Regional Policy Advisor on Poverty, MDGs and Human Development goes through the agenda for the SDGs that have been designed by the representatives of the different member states and invites the guests to think about the role that Parliament can have in striving to achieve these goals.

In 2000 the first actual Global Development Agenda was designed. It was an agenda agreed on by all Heads of State that focused on a group of goals and targets they all wished to report on with regard to progress. The focus of that agenda was mainly social in its nature. It touched on subjects such as reduction of poverty, reduction of mortality and basic education for everyone.

The agenda was transformative in many ways because the focus of international development aid was used for the national development agenda based on what a country needed.

There are still many challenges in today's world. Although poverty has been reduced by half, there are still people who live in extreme poverty. Challenges of today include issues such as extreme population growth and environmental degradation. The increasing growth of technology offers interesting opportunities. It has been forecasted that by 2020 80% of the adults will have a computer. However, there is also the issue of unstable consumption, with 20% of the population using 80% of the resourcing, consuming 30% more than can be regenerated.

There were different tracks to reach the social agenda of the MDGs. The Rio Summit was the most famous one. It provided a framework with regard to an environmental agenda. It was very successful in putting environmental issues on the table.

Increasing, on both the social side and the environmental side, was the realization that progress on social issues is not possible if environmental sustainability is not taken into account and vice versa.

In Rio+20 a decision was made to put the social and environmental issues together and the new Development Agenda that would replace the MDGs, would take into consideration both environmental and social issues. It would

have three pillars: (i) environmental sustainability, (ii) social development and (iii) economic growth.

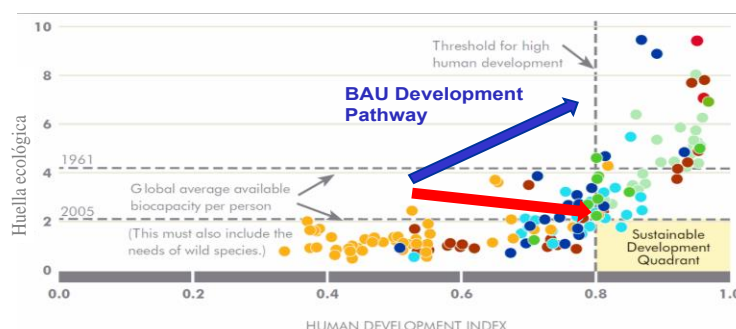
The process to get there included 2 years of negotiations between the member states. It was a highly participative process where civil society was consulted up to an unprecedented level, with over 80 national consultations. Also, there was an online survey where more than 7 million votes were casted by people, putting on the table the main issues that should be taken into consideration when designing the new development agenda. The representatives took all the input and then designed a new universal agenda.

This agenda gives development responsibilities to both developed and developing countries and identifies the challenges and responsibilities they have in a common future. The agenda is integral and interrelated. The SDGs can be organized in many different ways. There are 17 goals and 169 targets. The indicators have not yet been defined. Proposals for indicators for the SDGs will be submitted in March 2016 by the national statistical offices. It is important to think about how the targets are structured. The targets are specified using letters and numbers. The targets with numbers concern substantive targets (*'reduce poverty by 50%'*) and the targets with letters provide the means of implementation (*'use of partners, trade, south-south cooperation'*).

The SDG Agenda also sees to the unfinished business of the MDG Agenda. In addition, the agenda also focuses on issues such as the ecosystems, sustainable reduction of consumption, peace, governance, justice, prosperity and the infrastructure. In short, the agenda focuses on *'What is the future we want?'* And this includes goals like global wellbeing and justice, abundance and security and a healthy and resilient natural world.

Mr. Pizarro then shows the graph below of the Sustainable Development Pathways.

Sustainable Development Pathways



The graph illustrates where countries are in terms of the Human Development Index; the UN measure of quality of life. Through the assessment of things like health, education and income, the wellbeing of countries and their state of development is determined. It also shows the ecological footprint (the horizontal dotted line). On the top of the graph the red coloured countries, like the US and the European countries, score high on development, but also have an ecological footprint that is extremely high, partly due to their high energy consumption. The orange countries, like the Sub Sahara and African countries, have a low ecological footprint but also a low development level. The Latin American countries, the light blue dots, are somewhere in between.

Currently, the problem is that development is increasing, but the ecological footprint is increasing as well. The new Agenda helps countries to think about how to change their tactic, so they move more towards the lower part of the graph. The issues touched upon in the SDGs are not new. For years now countries discussed issues like taking care of the ocean, the ecosystems etc. Now countries have to understand how the different issues are connected and think of ways to change their pathway.

Because there are different countries involved, the answers and solutions to move towards a change in this pathway, will be different. Mr. Pizarro therefore invites the Members of Parliament to think about their role when it regards finding that particular path for Suriname. Some generic principles for parliamentary debate include democratic governance, human rights, sustainable development, equality and global partnership.

The challenge for Parliament will be how to make a reality of the SDGs and support the implementation. This will take activities with regard to follow up and review (e.g. free access to information, debates and field visits), budgeting (e.g. budget allocation discussions, budget implementation commissions etc.), representation (e.g. public meetings, media etc.) and legislation (e.g. introduction of bills, clarifications etc.)

Mr. Pizarro then thanks everyone for their attention and ends his presentation.

Questions & Answers

Question - Mr. D. Sharman: *It is difficult to achieve targets and maintain these. Creating ownership is important. The more we succeed in realizing a mindshift, the easier awareness can be created and goals can be achieved. How can we create this awareness?*

Response - Mr. G. Pizarro: *With regard to creating ownership, that is for you to know. You know your constituents best. Although we can support in advocating, this should come from you.*

Question - DNA Chair - J. Simons: The difference with the previous programme is clear. I would like to focus the attention on the last presentation. For the first time the importance of looking at the economy from a different perspective was emphasized. It is not only about human development, but also about what of the Earth is used to achieve this. Because if countries continue to use too much from the Earth, they will prevent other countries from using it and that are trying to develop. The question is therefore whether or not the UN addressed this issue. It is inextricably linked to other agreements. How will we achieve sustainable development if other countries that use too much will not go along with this model and follow a different path? How will the UN address this issue at international forums?

Question - Mr. Sapoen: We are moving from the MDGs towards the SDGs and thus from 8 goals to 17 goals. The 8 MDGs were realistically formulated. The new goals are formulated in a vague and abstract manner and this will make it increasingly difficult for countries that want to commit to these goals. Are these new goals a replacement of the MDGs, is it a way of continuing the MDGs or is it a separate process? I suspect that within the UN there is agreement on the names of the goals but not about the content.

Response - Mr. G. Pizaro: Going from 8 to 17 goals is difficult to communicate. The content is definitely finalized. The unfinished business of the MDGs is contained in the SDGs. The targets are evolving. All the issues that were pending in the MDG Agenda have been transferred. There have been issues added that are complimentary in the sense that they are interrelated to have a full sustainable agenda. Many issues that are included were already part of what the countries were tracking. The SDGs are definitely not separate from the MDGs.

Yes, the goals will be difficult to communicate. That is why it has been proposed to communicate the 17 goals through 5 subjects.

Question - Mr. M. Bouva: I support the comments of Mr. Sapoen. It is necessary to engage the society. Along the way the world leaders came to the conclusion that engagement of communities is necessary and that is why programs were developed to involve these in the process of achieving the MDGs. The engagement of government and society is very important to achieve the goals. Their engagement was insufficient in the process of achieving the MDGs and this needs to change.

My concern regarding the formulation of the goals is, what will happen now that we move from 8 goals that were already quite difficult to understand and implement for the average policy maker, to 17 goals? When you strive to achieve a goal, the process should be understandable to everyone.

I am looking forward to the indicators that will be linked to the goals, to know how we, as Parliament, can follow what the government is doing. Political involvement is very important. Some countries have monitoring and management bodies that report directly to the President. I am looking forward to an evaluation of the UNDP.

Response - Mr. G. Pizaro: About involving civil society and other marginalized groups: absolutely. This agenda was designed by your representatives. It is not designed by the UN agencies, but with the involvement and input of civil society, youth and representatives of many other organizations as well. It would not make sense to leave out these voices in the implementation. This agenda intends to address inequalities so it is important to listen to the ideas and solutions of different groups.

Mr. A. Misiekaba: Suriname is the greenest country in the world and has 94% forest coverage. This means we are already making a contribution, especially where it concerns emission of gases, our forests absorb a lot. Suriname is asked to preserve its forests and Suriname would be more than happy to comply with this request. But when will the rich countries make concrete contributions? The development of Suriname also needs to move ahead. We need to build schools, develop infrastructure etc. It will therefore not be possible to preserve all the forests. What is the opinion of the UN on this issue?

In addition, goals have been achieved, but today there are more armed conflicts. When you take this into consideration in the equation, you can almost speak of a negative outcome. What are the thoughts of the UN on this matter?

Response - Mr. G. Pizaro: These are not trivial issues. The agenda also mentions that we need a peaceful society. We are not achieving this in many parts of the world. There are also increasing tensions due to poverty etc. Often, conflict is the result of the lack of development. South Sudan is a perfect example of that.

In the COP21 that will be held in December in Paris many environment issues will be discussed.

DNA Chair - Mrs J. Simons: I would like to hear more about the intentions of especially goals 17.10 and 17.11. Also, I would like to support the comments made by Mr. Misiekaba.

Mr. W. Asadang: How will the SDGs be realized?

Mrs. Adhin: As a country we should ensure creating a balance between human development and ecological pathways. Does the UN have a framework for countries that can be used to work on per development goal?

Response - Mr. Armstrong Alexis: The approach to financing the SDGs is very specific per country. There will be discussions in the COP21 in December in Paris about environment related issues. There has been a conference in July titled 'Financing for Development'. The idea was to get the more developed countries to understand their role and responsibility with regard to financing the development for the next 15 years. This also included issues such as how to compensate countries for maintaining an eco-friendly development path. So for instance, if Suriname decides not to chop down its forests, how can the international community support Suriname in its development path? The REDD+ initiative can be used as an

example. It is expected to progress to point a where countries with intact forests will be compensated for maintaining the value of the forest. This is an on-going conversation.

Response - Mr. G. Pizaro: *In terms of a country development framework, there are some countries that have started developing analyses, including Columbia, Honduras, Belize, Mexico and Brazil. Most countries already have a national development plan. The SDGs will support in thinking along an eco-friendly national development path, taking into account the specific priorities of a country. The main issue is how to incorporate the principles of sustainable development within planning, that force you to change your horizon and also it is about working across sectors. The issues of the different sectors need to be taken into account when thinking of solutions.*

Closing DNA - Drs. Jennifer Simons

DNA Chair, Mrs Jennifer Simons thanks the presenters for the provided information. The DNA members are recognized for asking well-conceived questions. She asks Parliament to take a good look at the SDGs and also at what is happening between the different countries because this is not always in line with the SDG Agenda.

Mrs Simons emphasizes that she supports the SDG Agenda. It is an agenda that focuses on understanding that development is not about a country's GNP. The message to 'developed or rich' countries is that they can't use more than what they are entitled to. The role of DNA is, among other things, as the Parliament of a country such as Suriname that makes contributions but has to date received insufficient support from the international community in the area of its development, to work on the SDGs.

The Members of Parliament are asked to look at the economy from a different perspective. Mrs. Simons points out that the fact that economic growth has both positive and negative consequences. Having more police, jails and hospitals contributes to the GNP, but these are all negative things really. The economy should be assessed in a manner where the positive issues are placed opposite the negative issues, so it will become clear whether or not the chosen path is the right one.

Mrs. Simons recommends thoroughly studying the SDGs and in addition to the GDP taking into account the indicators, to assess whether or not Suriname is on the right path in striving to achieve the SDGs.

Annex 1 - Programme



DE
NATIONALE
ASSEMBLÉE
VAN DE REPUBLIEK SURINAME



Briefing Session on the Sustainable Development Goals Friday, October 9th 2015

09.30 – 10.00	Registration and Seating
10.00 – 10.05	Opening Remarks Armstrong Alexis <i>UNDP Deputy Resident Representative</i>
10.05 – 10.10	Opening Remarks Drs. Jennifer Simons <i>Speaker – National Assembly of Suriname</i>
10.10 – 10.15	Video Message Magdy Martinez-Soliman <i>Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Government Policy and Programme Support</i>
10.15 – 10.25	Presentation: From the MDGs to the SDGs Ruben Martoredjo <i>UNDP</i>
10.25 – 11.00	Presentation: The Sustainable Development Goals Gonzalo Pizarro <i>Regional Policy Adviser on Poverty, MDGs and Human Development</i>
11.00 – 11.20	Q and A & Discussion
11.20 – 11.25	Closing <i>Drs. Jennifer Simons</i> <i>Voorzitter van De Nationale Assemblée</i>