

## DAVID DONOGHUE

### My perspective on the SDG negotiations

My role was that of co-facilitator, with the Permanent Representative of Kenya, for the intergovernmental negotiations at the UN which began in November 2014 and culminated on 2 August 2015 in an agreement among all member States on new global Sustainable Development Goals for the period 2016-30. This agreement, known as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, was formally adopted at a summit of world leaders held in New York on 25 September 2015. I was a member of, but did not have wider responsibility for, the earlier Open Working Group negotiating format which in July 2014 agreed on a draft set of goals and targets to be proposed to the General Assembly as the basis for the post-2015 development agenda. A main purpose of the intergovernmental negotiations (IGN) which began in November 2014 was to test whether the goals and targets proposed by the OWG would command consensus among the wider membership (the OWG had involved strictly speaking only thirty MSs whereas the IGN extended to all 193 member States). The IGN also had to agree a political declaration which would accompany the new goals and targets, to address the issue of 'means of implementation' for the latter (with a parallel Financing for Development negotiating track considering these issues in detail) and to propose arrangements at the global, regional and national levels for monitoring and review of implementation.

The first notable factor which helped us towards success in the IGN was the strong emphasis by the "G77 plus China" on the need for the OWG outcome to be preserved intact. Although some of its members entered formal reservations about aspects of that outcome when adopting it in July 2014, this large group of developing countries on the whole considered that any attempt to reopen the OWG package in the IGN risked undermining the delicate political balances which had been achieved during the OWG phase. They took the view that the outcome represented a careful and hard-fought compromise between many diverse interests; nobody had secured all that they were looking for, everyone had had to swallow hard and accept parts with which they were not comfortable and the entire edifice could collapse if efforts were made to adjust it, even marginally. While one or two member States (notably the UK) had toyed with the idea of seeking a reduction in the number of goals, it rapidly became clear that the G77 plus China would resist this tooth and nail. Furthermore, even if there were agreement to reduce the number of goals, it was clear that there would be no agreement on which ones should be dropped or amalgamated with others. When a wider number of member States wanted to carry out some technical refinements of the 169 targets (a number of which, it was widely recognized, had been rushed through without full technical appraisal in the final stages of the OWG negotiations), the G77 plus China were equally resistant. They feared that something represented as a "technical" improvement of a target would in fact amount to a substantive change and we would find ourselves on a slippery slope towards effective renegotiation of the targets concerned.

As it happens, changes to a dozen or so targets were ultimately accepted by the G77 as part of a package of trade-offs in the end-game of the IGN. This came about because over a period of several months the two co-facilitators kept their proposal for a small number of changes firmly on the IGN's agenda; we managed to wear down the G77's blanket refusal to even consider these changes and ultimately much of our proposal was accepted. But, leaving this relatively minor issue aside, the insistence from the outset by 134 of the 193 member States that the goals and targets as defined by the OWG could not be altered set strict parameters for the IGN. The clear signal to other groups was that no proposals for changes stood a chance of attracting consensus. It has to be said that many WEOG members were also of the view that it would be too risky to propose changes such as a

reduction in the number of goals or targets. (Incidentally, I am using “WEOG” here as shorthand for a wider set of countries including not only the WEOG members but also the members of the Eastern Europe Group, Japan and the Republic of Korea). Those who would in principle have favoured a smaller number (in either category) gradually accepted that there would be no substantive changes to what the OWG had agreed and focussed instead on getting a number of technical improvements to the targets.

The second notable success factor was that regional groups did not dominate the IGN to the extent that had been anticipated and a more fluid discourse developed which ultimately promoted cross-regional consensus. While the OWG’s informal working structure (which grouped participating member States into ‘troikas’, several of them cross-regional) could not be sustained in formal intergovernmental negotiations covering 193 member States, it nevertheless proved possible to retain in the IGN some of the informality which had characterised the OWG phase. While regional groups presented statements and intervened regularly in the various sessions, it was tacitly accepted – because of the importance of the post-2015 agenda for every country in the world -- that individual member States should also be free to convey views, supplementing the regional positions. Indeed, this was something which my Kenyan colleague and I actively encouraged, with the multiplicity of voices and perspectives allowing an easier triangulation as to where middle ground might lie.

It is also fair to say that the groups were not monolithic in what they had to say. It is not surprising, for example, that, with their very diverse membership and interests, the G77 plus China had difficulty in presenting a united front on several issues; individual members of this group insisted on taking the floor to set out their particular perspectives. The same held true to some extent for the EU, though there it was a case of one or two EU members wanting to emphasize particular aspects rather than diverging fundamentally from an agreed position.

The regional groups, it is true, came into their own at key moments in the negotiations. I think, for example, of the decisive role played by the EU Delegation and Iran (for the G77 plus China) in December 2014 in the final stages of the negotiations on the modalities for the IGN. The groups were also heavily involved in the sensitive discussions around the relationship between the post-2015 and FfD tracks and how coherence between both was to be achieved, both in the run-up to the Addis conference and in the treatment to be afforded to the Addis outcome in the post-2015 outcome document. The groups also played pivotal roles in deciding the crunch issues in the final stages of the IGN. Overall, however, the IGN involved a relaxed succession of interventions from groups and individual member States, with some important cross-regional initiatives also. This progressively built up consensus and laid the basis for eventual agreement on 2 August.

A third success factor was that it proved possible, against the odds, to keep the drafting of the outcome document firmly in the hands of the two co-facilitators. My Kenyan colleague and I chaired several monthly sessions from January 2015 onwards at which we invited member States to give us their views on what should be in that document. We took each of its main components in turn: the political Declaration which would accompany the goals and targets; the goals and targets themselves (with consideration also of work on global indicators which was proceeding outside the IGN); ‘means of implementation’ for the goals and targets; and arrangements for monitoring and accountability (for which, in deference to G77 sensitivities, we used the softer term “follow-up and review”). On the basis of what we heard in these sessions, my colleague and I prepared a “zero draft” (i.e., initial draft) of the full outcome document. We circulated this on 1 June. It was discussed in the IGN later that month; in the light of what we heard, we reworked our draft and tabled a revised version. Through an iterative process involving the presentation of six successive drafts (from 1 June onwards), we eventually achieved agreement on 2 August on the sixth draft. This represented a rare,

and possibly unprecedented, degree of success in terms of the co-facilitators in a process such as this maintaining control of the drafting. There are, of course, considerable benefits in terms of the succinctness and readability of a document if such control can be maintained. The WEOG states, in particular, are strong supporters of this approach. But traditionally the G77 plus China decide in the final stages that they want to take back some of the control from the co-facilitators. They usually ask that the basic draft plus all amendments/additions sought by regional groups be projected onto an overhead screen and that a process of collective editing/drafting begin. With the co-facilitators effectively sidelined, this is a recipe for chaos and, indeed, paralysis. Invariably a poorer text emerges than would have been the case if the co-facilitators were allowed to “hold the pen” to the end. My Kenyan colleague and I were determined to do everything possible to avoid finding ourselves in this position in the closing stages of the IGN. While my colleague had had some success in this regard in the end-game of the OWG, it was by no means certain that we would be able to resist pressure of this kind from the G77 plus China in the more formal and intergovernmental context of the IGN. However, we managed this. At no stage did the G77 plus China propose to move to screen projection and collective drafting. It probably helped that the initial draft on 1 June went down well across the membership, as did each subsequent draft, and this inspired a basic level of confidence in the co-facilitators. Delegations could clearly see that they had been listened to and that every effort had been made to accommodate their concerns and to maintain a fair and balanced approach. We also made ourselves available to all groups and member States on any issue of concern to them and tried to show in our drafting that we were responsive to these concerns.

More generally, my colleague and I sought in our interaction with delegations to signal unity of purpose at all times, both on procedure and on the substance of the negotiations. We deliberately projected to all our interlocutors quiet but firm authority on what would have to be included in the document as well as our joint resolve to complete the process on time. Naturally, reaching agreement ourselves was not always easy; there were countless challenges in terms of both tactics and substance. But we rose to these challenges in various ways. We knew that, as co-facilitators of such a vast and multi-faceted process, we would not succeed if we dealt with each other as representatives of our respective groupings, promoting WEOG and G77 perspectives respectively. We had to think of ourselves as a team detached, in a sense, from all groups. We also knew that agreement between ourselves was the first, and essential, precondition for making progress. If we could agree something together, however painfully and however great the concession on either side, we could then defend and promote that to all comers. If we failed to agree something, that would be apparent to our interlocutors and would prompt wider unease and pessimism about a successful outcome to the IGN.

We were fortunate in that we retained the confidence of delegations right to the end of the IGN. While there were some very difficult issues to be resolved in the final stages, at no point did it become necessary to seek the help of outside players (such as the President of the General Assembly or the Secretary General) to overcome any of these. Such mediation assistance had been kindly offered to us, should we ever need it, but in the event no need arose. Over the final two days, we encouraged groups and individual member States to form informal caucuses on specific thorny issues (such as the treatment of ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ or the reference which would be made to the UNFCCC negotiations). We practised ‘shuttle diplomacy’ to a significant extent, moving between these various groupings and trying to spur flexibility, compromise and trade-offs. On the final morning (2 August), there were particularly intensive exchanges as we sought to defuse a number of crises which had arisen (e.g., over various human rights references or over a proposed singling-out of SIDS in a particular target, which the LDC representative resisted). In the end, we managed, more or less, to extinguish all such “fires”.

As in many such negotiations, coalitions which developed on specific issues helped to prepare the ground for eventual compromise and agreement. In some cases, the coalitions came spontaneously into existence as member States, frequently on a cross-regional basis, recognized a mutual interest and pursued it. I think, for example, of a cross-regional group of countries which championed a particular approach to follow-up and review of the agenda and regularly made collective interventions in support of this. I think of another which pushed for recognition of the important links between culture and sustainable development. I think also of very effective cooperation between Brazil, France and Switzerland in the promotion of an agreement on a technology facilitation mechanism, an agreement which grew out of joint consideration of this issue by the post-2015 and FfD negotiating tracks. Sometimes, a coalition would develop for more defensive reasons, to resist some proposal which they found unacceptable; I think, for example, of a cross-regional group which strongly opposed language on UNCLOS in the wording of target 14c as it had emerged from the OWG.

In the final stages, and at the active instigation of the co-facilitators, ad hoc partnerships developed between a small number of key players in order to resolve major problems which were threatening a successful outcome. For example, from the beginning of the IGN there had been deep divisions between WEOG states, on the one hand, and the G77 plus China, on the other, over the issue of 'common but differentiated responsibilities' and the extent to which this Rio principle should be included in the post-2015 agenda. (WEOG states saw CBDR as applying only to environmental policy, the G77 plus China insisted that it applied to sustainable development in the broadest sense). With the two main blocs maintaining their positions unchanged throughout the IGN, this was one of a handful of thorny issues which was left to the end game. Another highly sensitive issue in the end game was what kind of reference there should be to the outcome of the Addis conference, warmly welcomed by the U.S. and other WEOG members but viewed with some unhappiness by the G77 plus China because of what they saw as an unsatisfactory agreement on international tax cooperation. Such difficulties were eventually resolved as part of a wider set of trade-offs in the last few hours of the negotiations. Bilateral contact between the U.S. and South Africa (as G77 chair), and also between several other key players, was instrumental in achieving these vital breakthroughs.

The task of reaching agreement on the post-2015 development agenda was undoubtedly made easier by the remarkable process of global public consultation, conducted over the couple of years prior to the IGN, on what that agenda should contain. This process was unprecedented in its scale and breadth. It gave negotiators from all member States a vivid sense of the importance of these negotiations and the responsibilities and expectations attached to them. It also brought out very clearly the consensus around the world that the new goals and targets should reflect a high degree of ambition and should be truly transformational, representing a clear step-change compared with the MDGs. This consensus was vitally important. It made itself felt through the strong participation of civil society, as part of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders, in both the OWG phase and the IGN. It was never far from negotiators' minds over the two or three years of this combined process; both in the OWG phase and in the IGN, statements by groups and member States frequently invoked findings which had been made by the MyWorld survey and emphasized the weight of public hopes and expectations around the world which that survey had revealed. Overall, the global consultation exercise made an important contribution to the quality and scale of the agreement which was eventually reached.

Civil society engaged energetically in both processes. They brought the wider public perspective to bear very effectively, worked to keep levels of ambition high and also contributed substantial expertise relating to the prospective goals and targets and other aspects of the new agenda. Although the G77 plus China did not disguise their reservations about civil society being

accorded too prominent a role in intergovernmental negotiations, it proved possible nevertheless to make steadily more inclusive arrangements in this regard. The co-facilitators of the OWG phase, Ambassadors Kamau and Korosi, worked hard to facilitate dialogue with the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders. They instituted hour-long sessions each morning before the OWG negotiations began in which the Major Groups were briefed on progress and were able to exchange views with delegations. Building on this, Ambassador Kamau and I introduced in the IGN a set of arrangements for structured interaction with the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders during each of our monthly negotiation sessions. These generally involved reserving a three-hour period, usually a morning in mid-week, when delegates would have an 'interactive dialogue' on the issues of the week with the Major Groups. In an organizational innovation, this dialogue took place in the main part of the conference room, with participants from both sides seated alongside each other and nameplates dispensed with for added informality. The Major Groups would select their own representatives beforehand for each dialogue and these would make short opening presentations. The UN Secretariat in turn would have invited individual member States in advance to respond.

Ambassador Kamau and I found these structured dialogues extremely useful – and we actively looked forward to them. While the OWG arrangement had suffered from a low turnout on the part of member States (to the extent that the morning sessions effectively became dialogues between the co-facilitators and the Major Groups), there was a much greater response from delegations to the arrangement introduced for the IGN. A genuinely inclusive and wide-ranging exchange of views took place on every occasion. Apart from the member States who had been invited to deliver statements (roughly six for each session), many other delegations joined the dialogue and participated actively. The informal seating arrangement, with delegations and Major Groups sitting side by side on the same level and with formalities such as nameplates deliberately discarded, made for a friendly and relaxed encounter. The Major Group representatives always came well prepared and made thought-provoking presentations which challenged the member States and had some influence, direct or indirect, on the subsequent negotiations. The topics for each session were chosen in light of the issues the IGN was considering at that time. It was left to the Major Groups to decide themselves who would represent them in a given session.

My fellow co-facilitator and I found the presentations invariably stimulating; we would generally ask questions of each speaker to clarify points or to prompt further avenues of discussion. On several occasions we noted formulations which, we privately agreed, could usefully be imported into the drafts we were preparing. The one I remember most clearly was a plea from a teenage girl, representing youth in one particular session, for the "infinite activism" of young people to be availed of as part of the worldwide effort to implement the new goals and targets. Ambassador Kamau and I were both struck by this and decided to incorporate that motif in the draft Declaration which we were preparing at that time. Edited slightly, it held its place in successive drafts and can be found in the final section of the Declaration as agreed. Many other eloquent and heartfelt presentations were made by representatives of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders in these dialogue sessions and had an impact on the co-facilitators and on delegates.

In addition, we received a constant flow of written contributions from the Major Groups during the period of the negotiations. Some of these amounted to complete drafts of, say, the Declaration or the follow-up and review section; others involved detailed commentary on, and suggestions for, individual parts of the text or particular themes which were arising in the IGN. Ambassador Kamau and I would also meet with groups at their request throughout the negotiations. Bearing in mind the vast range of issues which would potentially be addressed by the post-2015 development agenda, there was a breath-taking diversity among the groups who wished to feed in views and comments to the negotiations.

The Major Groups and Other Stakeholders displayed an impressive level of commitment to the process from beginning to end. They had, of course, already followed the OWG negotiations very closely and had inputted intensively on the various goals and targets as they emerged there. They were no less assiduous in accompanying the IGN. On most days of our negotiations, the gallery where they were normally seated was packed. There was also plenty of opportunity for them to mix informally with delegates during breaks in our proceedings and they took full advantage of that.

In large and complex UN negotiations of this kind, members of the G77 plus China tend to emphasize from the outset the intergovernmental nature of the process. They accept the engagement with civil society but, in the final stages of the negotiations (when pressures are rising and key compromises have to be made), usually seek to limit this engagement in some way. On this occasion, and for reasons which are not entirely clear, no such efforts were made. The easy rapport built up with the Major Groups through the monthly structured dialogues may have helped. Furthermore, while civil society energetically put forward its concerns and objectives (through this channel and otherwise), it did not try to intervene overtly in the negotiations or to subject delegates to unreasonable pressure in the corridors. Sharp differences continued, it is true, over various aspects of the emerging text; and a number of references touching broadly on human rights issues were to prove particularly problematic in the final stages. But overall a good working relationship was achieved between delegations and civil society representatives.

As the end game of this extraordinary process approached, and the enormous prize to be won came more clearly into view, there was almost a camaraderie between delegations and civil society groups who, from their different perspectives, had been working intensively on this project for up to three years. Trust and ownership had much to do with this. The combined OWG and IGN phases were so lengthy and intense that a bond of sorts developed among all involved, delegates and civil society alike. All of us had invested so much in the processes and had come to understand and respect each others' positions; we knew that, whatever our differences on substance, we were all working for the common good and for an agreement of singular importance to humanity.

In the final week, and in recognition of the IGN's intensive workload at that point, Ambassador Kamau and I modified the meeting with the Major Groups so that it involved a dialogue just with the co-facilitators. There was, however, appreciation on the part of the Major Groups for the opportunity afforded them to contribute views even at that very late stage. Civil society were present in large numbers during the final days of the negotiations, following all developments closely and continuing their informal exchanges with delegates on a round-the-clock basis. They were present for the whole night of negotiations from Friday 31 July to Saturday 1 August and throughout that final weekend. Most importantly, and most fittingly, they were present in large numbers on the afternoon of Sunday 2 August when the agreement was finally gavelled through. Everyone, delegates and civil society alike, applauded this moment enthusiastically. Whereas in the past civil society could reasonably have complained about key UN agreements being negotiated behind closed doors and in ways which denied them an opportunity to contribute, no such complaint could arise on this occasion. NGOs who had accompanied the process throughout were there at the moment when the new Agenda was born; they had witnessed the entire gestation process, had been able to contribute at all stages and had full ownership of the document when it was agreed on 2 August. This transparency would be of great importance; the new Agenda had in a sense been co-negotiated with the Major Groups and this would give it added strength and legitimacy.

There were also many interest groups and constituencies who were outside the Major Groups structure but who nevertheless made informal contributions to the process on specific issues. I think of issues as diverse as the links between sport and sustainable development, an appeal for greater

clarity on wildlife and endangered species within the Agenda or the scope for capturing intellectual disabilities more clearly. The co-facilitators received countless submissions and deputations on a wide range of deserving causes. One which reached them indirectly was a request – from no less than His Holiness Pope Francis – for the new Agenda to highlight the need to end human trafficking and modern slavery. (It proved possible to meet this request). Not surprisingly, many interest groups looked to the Declaration as a new text which could potentially accommodate new themes or new emphasis on issues which had not been fully developed in the OWG outcome.

Where was civil society's input most critical in terms of driving progress? As far as the IGN is concerned, I think that civil society's major contribution was to keep the level of ambition high: in emphasizing key concepts which belonged in the Declaration, in supporting to great effect the effort to ensure that each target was of the highest quality technically, in pressing for the strongest possible Addis outcome, in pushing for robust follow-up and review arrangements and in seeking to ensure no weakness or ambiguity in the various human rights references. While not all of civil society's objectives were secured, its powerful advocacy on many fronts undoubtedly helped to produce a stronger and more compelling Agenda at the end of the day. As an example, I think of the concept of "leaving no one behind", with the important addendum that "we will reach the furthest behind first". It is probably fair to say that civil society's constant emphasis on these ideas, which have since become emblematic of the entire Agenda, helped to secure them within the document.

The drafting of the Declaration was one of the more challenging parts of the negotiations. Delegations agreed early on that the Declaration accompanying the goals and targets should be concise (the co-facilitators favoured six to eight pages). Furthermore, as a pronouncement by the world's leaders on this unprecedented global agenda, it should serve the goal of communicating this agenda to the widest possible audience; it should be easily readable and should be couched in inspiring and motivating terms. At the same time, however, regional groups wanted it to cite a series of UN agreements deemed to have prepared the way for the Agenda and to include references to a range of principles and commitments, as well as caveats of one type or another, which were important for one or other group. There was also a tension, inevitably, between the need to capture the essentials of the Agenda – so as to communicate it to ordinary people – and the importance of not appearing to be selective, even obliquely, in relation to an integrated and indivisible agenda. There was also a temptation to include issues which had not featured in the OWG outcome or to expand on issues which had been treated somewhat cursorily in that outcome.

Various approaches were tried out in successive drafts of the outcome document. In the end, delegations agreed to (a) a short, one-page preamble which captured the essentials of the Agenda under five simple headings (each beginning with "p": people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships) but which avoided the trap of apparent selectivity; and (b) a main Declaration of ten pages which described more fully what the Agenda was about, summarised its key provisions (in a way which would also protect against "cherry-picking" allegations), set out the underlying vision of the world, dealt also with means of implementation and follow-up and review arrangements and ended with a stirring "call to action to change our world". Every word of the preamble and Declaration was carefully negotiated. One major concern was to ensure that, in everything said about the new goals and targets, a meticulous balance would be maintained between the three dimensions of sustainable development; the holistic nature of the Agenda, and the need to transcend traditional "silo" approaches, would also have to be brought out fully. A paragraph on the positive contribution of migrants to sustainable development was inserted, responding to a request from many delegations. There were also detailed paragraphs fleshing out key aspects of the OWG outcome. Much attention was paid to the placing of particular concepts within the text and the sequencing of references to particular landmark documents. There were inevitably many trade-offs

within the Declaration, with paragraphs of particular concern to one or other group being balanced by paragraphs to satisfy others. Some elements could only be agreed at the last moment (CBDR reference, mention of COP 21 negotiations, reference to the Addis outcome, human rights references). Overall, the Declaration and the preamble, though difficult to negotiate, met the criteria we had identified at the outset and were well received.

As regards interaction with the UN system during the negotiations, this arose particularly in relation to the targets and indicators. As indicated above, the issue of whether the targets proposed by the OWG could be modified in the IGN was hotly contested. While there was general agreement that the OWG compromise package could not be reopened, WEOG states made a distinction between purely technical refinement of a number of targets, which they saw as necessary, and fundamental substantive revisions. The G77 plus China would not accept this distinction.

The co-facilitators recognized that a number of the targets were indeed technically deficient (the best example being several where numerical values had yet to be filled in and which could hardly be presented in this state to HOSG). At an early IGN meeting in December 2014, we proposed that, as the work already underway in the UN system on draft global indicators would clearly have to look at each of the 169 targets, the co-facilitators would request on behalf of the IGN that each target be assessed in terms of a number of criteria: is it clear and specific, is it measurable, have all relevant international standards and agreements been taken into account in formulating it etc. This was agreed. A letter which then issued to the UN Statistical Commission from the co-facilitators launched a detailed interaction with the UN system on targets which was to last for the remainder of the negotiations.

The Statistical Commission, and its supporting division within DESA, sought advice from all relevant UN agencies on the targets for which each had responsibility, with particular reference to the questions raised by the co-facilitators. This advice, along with suggestions for related technical improvement, was in due course forwarded to us by the Statistical Division. Editing out inputs which had not adhered strictly to the questions we had put, we circulated a set of roughly twenty proposed technical revisions to the targets. These were welcomed by WEOG states (with some, indeed, favouring an even fuller set of revisions); however, the G77 plus China declined to engage. This stand-off persisted for a number of months. We adjusted our proposals slightly but the G77 resistance continued. With the appearance of the “zero draft” in June and the subsequent drafts over June-July, we variously appended the proposals to the document or incorporated them in the list of goals and targets. What we did not do was drop the proposals altogether. It gradually became clear that, even if their opposition in principle remained, individual G77 members (such as CARICOM members) were at least willing to discuss the substance of our proposals. The issue of target revisions ultimately became a bargaining chip for the end game; the G77 plus China finally accepted a dozen or so of our amendments and also agreed to two new revisions which had not been part of our package.

Meanwhile, the work continued on indicators. It was accepted from the outset that, while global indicators would form part of the new Agenda, they would not be negotiated within the IGN. This was a technical exercise which called for professional expertise and was best left to the Statistical Commission and supporting Division. Hopes were expressed initially that this work could be completed in time to be incorporated in the new Agenda before the 25 September summit. However, it became clear that a much longer timescale was required and that the indicators could not be finalized by the Commission before March 2016. That being the case, we sought in the IGN to provide for regular briefings from the Commission/Division which would give member States some measure of political oversight of this work and the opportunity to provide



political guidance. A UN Inter Agency and Expert Group was created to allow UN agencies and civil society to contribute views to the Commission/Division on the definition of indicators.

Another sensitive part of the IGN related to means of implementation for the new goals and targets. Linked to this was continuous tension over what should be the correct relationship between the IGN and FfD tracks and, in the final stages of the IGN, over the basis on which the Addis Ababa outcome (a disappointment for many G77 members) would be reflected in the post-2015 outcome document.

From the beginning, there had been deep divisions between the global North and the global South about the relative weight to be given to means of implementation within the post-2015 agenda. This led in turn to sharp divergences over the degree of interdependence between the two processes. While the G77 position was not monolithic and there were significant differences of emphasis among key players, the broad G77 view was that, as sufficient means of implementation and a credible Global Partnership would be critical to the success of the post-2015 agenda, these were a legitimate subject of interest in the IGN and could not be considered only in the FfD track. Goal 17 and the MoI-related targets were of fundamental importance to them. They saw the FfD as complementing and supporting the work on the post-2015 agenda; however, for them its scope went beyond financing the SDGs. Anything not addressed in Addis should, in the G77 view, be addressed in the IGN.

WEOG states, for their part, feared that the G77 would seek to exploit the two processes tactically and, in effect, to hold an IGN agreement hostage to securing what they would consider adequate means of implementation. While accepting that Goal 17 and the MoI-related targets would be part of the new agenda, WEOG states maintained that the FfD process was the appropriate place for detailed consideration of the means of implementation and a Global Partnership. The outcome of the Addis Ababa conference would, in their view, constitute the MoI component of the post-2015 agenda, encompassing both financial and non-financial means of implementation. They were opposed to duplicative MoI negotiations in the IGN and made clear that they would be unwilling to reopen in the IGN issues that had been settled in Addis.

These fault-lines persisted for much of our negotiations. Nobody disagreed, however, with the need for maximum coherence, complementarity and transparency between the two tracks. For this reason, the two sets of co-facilitators (Ireland and Kenya for the IGN, Norway and Guyana for FfD) agreed at the outset on the importance of mutual briefing arrangements: the IGN co-facilitators would brief the FfD negotiations on IGN progress and vice versa. Furthermore, as a number of issues could reasonably be regarded as appropriate to both tracks, we saw merit in holding a joint session in April, back-to-back with a FfD session which had already been scheduled for that month. This proved to be a very useful initiative in terms of clarifying the relationship between both tracks and defusing tension between them. The joint engagement of all four co-facilitators in this session sent a strong signal to delegations on coherence. It also served to strengthen the working relationship between all four and to give them a clearer sense of the shared challenges they faced over the coming months.

One concrete outcome from the joint session was that a day-long discussion devoted to the proposal for a technology facilitation mechanism succeeded in making significant progress on an issue which had been hotly contested between North and South for some time past. With Brazil and Switzerland leading the discussion, and an earlier French paper also helping, a positive dynamic developed which in due course, following further informal contacts, led to an agreement on this subject. While the substance of the mechanism was decided in the FfD track, the agreement was included in the post-2015 development agenda which was adopted on 25 September.

Another significant challenge for the IGN was to find a common understanding on the arrangements which would be needed to monitor, and review, implementation of the goals and targets over the next fifteen years. It was generally recognized that the bulk of the implementation effort would arise at national level but that effective follow-up and review arrangements would also be needed at the global and regional levels. A broad dichotomy emerged among member States. Given the ambition and complexity of the new agenda as well as the scale of the resources which would be needed to implement it, and recalling also the failure to equip the MDGs with good follow-up and review mechanisms from the outset, WEOG states favoured a rigorous and systematic approach to implementation. However, the G77 plus China resisted arrangements which they feared would place them under unreasonable pressure, bearing in mind (a) the fact that many of their members were at levels of development well behind those of the global North; and (b) the fragility of many of these administrations and, in particular, the lack of data collection capacity. They emphasized throughout, therefore, the need for any follow-up and review arrangements to be voluntary and for full account to be taken of member States' individual circumstances, their policy priorities and so on. These were the basic poles of the debate. A further sensitive aspect was whether there should be a distinct mechanism to monitor 'means of implementation' commitments under the new agenda. WEOG states favoured a single overarching monitoring and review framework for the entire post-2015 agenda, covering all aspects of the goals and targets and all means of implementation. The G77 plus China, on the other hand, wanted a distinct framework, under the authority of the General Assembly, which would track implementation of the MoI commitments.

In successive drafts of the outcome document, the co-facilitators worked towards a model for the follow-up and review arrangements which would balance these various concerns. This was centred on a set of guiding principles capturing the various desiderata. In one draft, the pendulum was considered to have veered too much towards the point of view which favoured a rigorously structured approach. Accordingly, in the next version it swung back towards the viewpoint which emphasized the voluntary nature of the arrangements and the need to take account of individual national circumstances. Gradually a text emerged which achieved a good balance and attracted consensus. It left open, necessarily, a large amount of detail about the precise functioning of the arrangements at the three levels. It was understood that this detail would be fleshed out in the period following adoption of the new agenda, particularly as member States prepared for the first meeting of the High Level Political Forum under the new dispensation.

## **Conclusion**

The moment of gaveling through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was one of the most satisfying of my professional career. It was the culmination of an extraordinary negotiation process which defied conventional UN experience in various ways.

First, the agreement reached was without precedent in UN history. The negotiation process, backed by a unique global exercise in public consultation, was the biggest undertaking at the UN in many years. It produced one of the UN's greatest achievements and the most comprehensive plan of action yet devised for humanity and the planet. Second, the IGN managed to reach agreement among 193 member States without reservations and some six weeks ahead of when that agreement was required. This was almost unheard of at the UN. While the co-facilitators had named 31 July as the deadline and had insisted that this was feasible, nobody believed them; negotiators had resigned themselves to working into August or conceivably into early September. (My Kenyan colleague and I had genuinely booked airline tickets for Monday 3 August but, when we mentioned this in the negotiations, delegations assumed this was a ruse to keep pressure up for an early agreement). Third, we managed to achieve the agreement of 2 August without any external mediation having to

be called in. And fourth, civil society had an unprecedented level of access to, and participation in, the negotiations which led to that agreement.

The 2030 Agenda went on to be formally adopted by world leaders at the UN on 25 September 2015. On 1 January 2016 it came into effect. Now comes the biggest challenge of all: implementation.