

### **PL-10** Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Asia: Toward a Common Language for Governance

10:45 – 12:45 24 July 2014

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In the wake of the 2012 Rio+20 conference, governments will soon begin to negotiate the post-2015 development agenda. The outcomes of those negotiations will likely yield a set transformational sustainable development goals (SDGs). The SDGs will help raise the profile of several new policies priorities, but the degree to which they improve the health of people and the planet will depend upon an often overlooked factor: governance. Many organisations underline that “good governance” will be essential to achieving the SDGs; however, operationalising the term remains difficult. Some organisations stress broad principles (such as rule of law or control of corruption) while others highlight narrow practices (such as engaging stakeholders or monitoring progress). This session will bring together policy-makers, experts and practitioners from Asia to outline these differences and work towards a common language for governance of the SDGs.

Beginning the session, Mr. Shrestha underlined some of the key lessons learned from MDGs such as a lack of ownership, an overly narrow focus on quantitative targets and a top-down approach. This was followed by a presentation from Mr. Olsen that drew on a discussion paper on good governance and three categories of means of implementation (MOI) (finance, technology and institutions). He contended that focusing on three baskets of MOI can help negotiations find a way forward for a transformational post-2015 development agenda.

Speaking from a global perspective, Dr. Someshwar pointed out that persistent poverty, worsening inequalities, global resource imbalances are unfortunate phenomena. He then stressed that governance - defined as the exercise of power - should be structured so as to be responsive to diverse spatial and temporal dimensions in an increasingly globalised economy. Prof. Kanie emphasised the importance of a multi-layered approach and three aspects of governance: good, effective, and equitable governance. He then noted that a stand-alone goal on governance should include all three of these aspects.

From the national/local perspective, Dr. Cadman recommended that SDGs require a governance framework applicable at multiple levels and that MOI needed to be embedded in each SDG. He further stressed that SDGs themselves require a “governance goal” to ensure consistency of implementation and to improve quality, effectiveness and legitimacy. Ms. Antonio then identified capacity development needs for implementing SDGs, and maintained that Asia needs more vertical/horizontal coordination and communication between multiple levels, stakeholder participation and regard for subsidiarity with emphasis on planning and operationalising priority capacity building requirements in Asia.

#### **Key messages of the session**

Lessons learned from the MDGs such as a lack of ownership, an overly top-down approach, and a narrow focus on quantitative targets should inform the design and implementation of the SDGs.

- The interpretation of governance and means of implementation (MOI) vary greatly across different stakeholders. There is a need to clarify these differing perspectives as well as the interrelationships between different MOI for a transformational, aspirational and integrated post-2015 development agenda.
- A multi-layered approach (global, regional, national and local) and stakeholder engagement at each level is crucial for not only designing and implementing SDGs, but also for promoting a common understanding of governance and MOI.
- In Asia, identifying the capacity-building needs of various stakeholders and actively engaging them in the planning stages of national targets and indicators could enhance implementation of the SDGs at the national and local levels.