

**Opening speech by Sascha Gabizon**, WECF International, 15 September 2014

**Thank you chair**, honourable delegates, ladies and gentlemen

**It is an honour to participate** as a representative of civil society major groups in this distinguished opening panel, and to present some key perspectives from the **Women's major group** of which I am one of the organising partners.

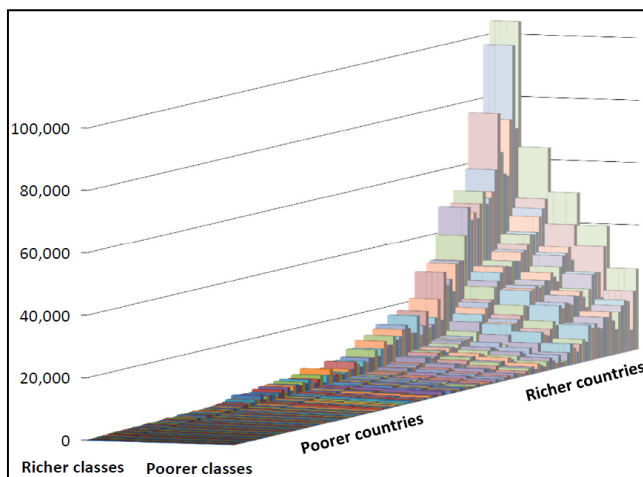
**The UNECE region is very diverse**, and has many of the richest nations in the world, as well as many transition countries.

**This region is historically the largest polluter** worldwide, the biggest contributor to climate change.

**That gives us a special responsibility** to help implement global Sustainable Development Goals to end poverty whilst ensuring a decent life for all within planetary boundaries.

MDGs aimed to help reduce the inequality between the poor amongst the poor – **but in the end, MDG1 has not been achieved in many countries**, especially in LCDs. In many cases poverty increased, despite a progress in GDP. There are more rich people **as well as** more people living in poverty.

**In the rich countries**, inequality is the highest (see slide in-equality). **How can we accept the fact that 1% of the world population owns as much as the other 99%?**

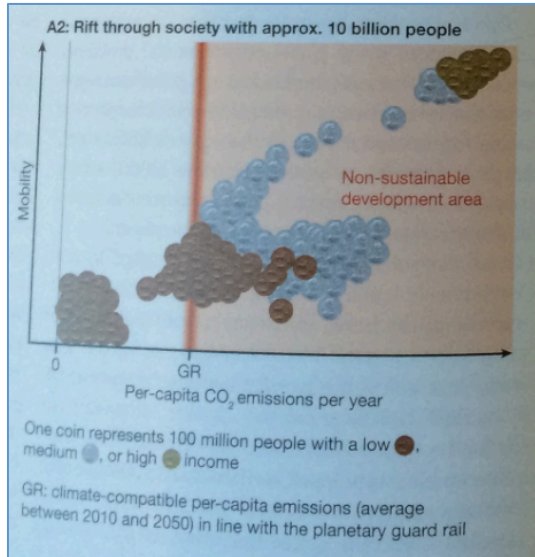


Source: Ortiz and Cummins. 2011. *Global Inequality*. UNICEF

**Our economic model of development** is inequitable leading to social conflicts and is bringing the world on the verge of planetary collapse.

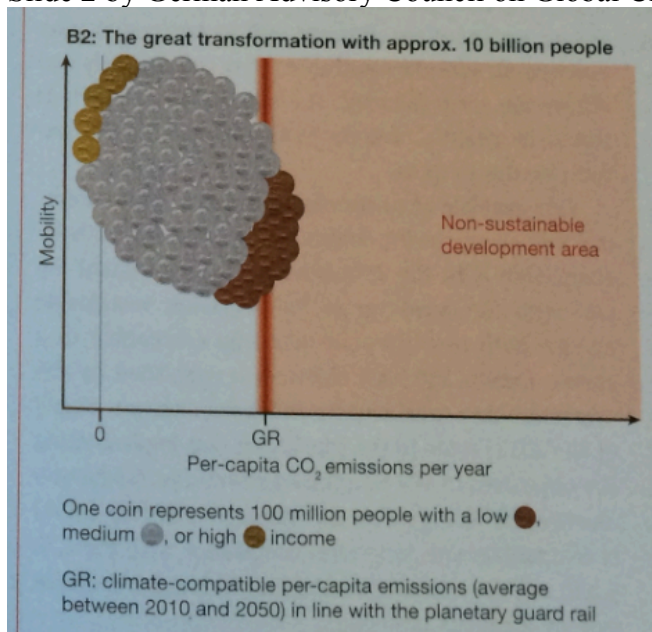
**If we continue this pathway**, we will have more and more people living in extreme poverty, and a handful of extreme richest trying to grab the remaining resources and trying to protect themselves from increasingly violent environmental disruption.

Slide 1 by German Advisory Council on Global Change (Sept 2014).



**The only alternative pathway** is the one of sustainable development, where those who have the most means and the greatest historic responsibility, take the greatest strides in reducing their ecological footprint, and sharing ecological space equitably.

Slide 2 by German Advisory Council on Global Change (Sept 2014).



**Key is therefore that the SDGs post2015 agenda apply** the “Common But Differentiated Responsibilities” (CBDR) – which means **this region, needs to move FASTER** than the other regions, towards lowest possible resource use, whilst ensuring social justice.

**We therefore welcome that the governments agreed in July this year on the proposal for SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals, which refer to the CBRD.**

**There are 17 SDGs proposed.** Of which the **goal on reducing inequalities** - within countries, and between countries - is key, especially for this region.

The new SDGs of the Post2015 framework needs to be **an equal framework for all, with indicators for global goals** on which countries report and are held accountable.

Those countries **which want to go further** should be appreciated for that, those countries that lag behind **should be encouraged** to speed up.

**We need a combination of giving incentives** through providing the right and sufficient Means of Implementation, **and peer reviews, similar to the UPRs** – the Universal Periodic Reviews -, which is the mechanism used to monitor country's human rights obligations, to keep up the pressure and momentum.

The UNECE region **needs to take a serious look at its contribution** to sustainable development. What should it be doing different? How should the **other regions hold this region accountable?** For examples for **closing its tax havens.**

**How can countries in Africa develop** when each year almost double the amount of illicit funds flow into tax havens abroad than received in ODA, money lost for social services, schools, health etc?

This UNECE region is in a way co-responsible **because we don't hold our corporations accountable** for damage done in developing countries through pollution, resource grabs, sales of weapons .. and we even encourage this with trade agreements.

**These trade agreements** seem to have given more power to companies than to sovereign states. For example, recently a Latin American country wanted to pass legislation to warn about smoking and restrict tobacco, entirely in accordance with the WHO tobacco convention, still, a tobacco company from the US threatened to sue it for millions of dollars. A court case the country might lose.

The SDGs post2015 agenda **needs to go beyond the realm of the MDGs, and measure the drivers of poverty, inequality and unsustainable development.**

**We need to have ways to measure e.g. how the WTO** agreements have a positive or negative impact on poverty eradication and sustainable development.

**We need transparency, the worldwide application of access to information, also** when trade and investor agreements are being negotiated. It is incredible that the TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) between the EU and the US is negotiated behind closed doors, where even parliamentarians do not receive any information, let alone civil society.

**For many targets we already have the tools to measure and implement them.** We have the **Aarhus convention for example**, on access to information, justice and public participation. We should **not re-invent the wheel**, but we should build on the existing international and regional agreements and use their existing monitoring and compliance mechanisms.

**For other targets we need to develop new indicators and ways for gathering data.**

For example, **on the target to end all violence against women and girls**, we do not have a comprehensive system as yet. We have a model based on the security council resolution 1325 resolution about women in conflict situations, but it lacks violence against women at home, at the workplace, in public spaces. There we will need to invest in creating comprehensive indicators and monitoring mechanisms. **And we believe that civil society are important partners** in gathering this data, which in many countries is often seen as a taboo to talk about. **We need this information also for the planning of actions.**

**What do we need to invest to have vigilant civil society**, who function like watch-dogs and help us ensure good governance? And do we need to improve our legislation for this?

**And which sources of funding exist for these measures?** How do we take measures to increase the public budget so as to make these investments, **e.g. through a Financial Transaction Tax.**

We need to measure how development banks contribute, or obstruct, sustainable development and poverty eradication, including EBRD, but also now the BRICS bank.

So setting indicators and measuring **how much and in what way “Means of Implementation” are being allocated** to implement the Post2015 **will be an important part** of the monitoring and accountability framework.

**Not just how much ODA** is being allocated – of course, that as well – but **also what other measures** have been taken to **increase the policy space** of countries to fulfil the agenda and their **existing obligations under international agreements**, incl. human rights agreements.

Therefore **the resolution adopted last week at the UN on debt restructuring**, which should lead to a legally binding framework to help countries to finally move out of their debt trap, is very welcome. Even though several countries from this region voted against the resolution, I hope they can be convinced that such an agreement is needed to finally do away with the business model of “vulture funds”.

Without debt restructuring developing countries will never develop, if half their public budget goes to debt repayment. For example, we know that Social Protection Floors are the fastest way to eliminate poverty, but when you tell a country, “hey, you **only** need 1-4% of your GDP for the social protection floor”, that might seem little, but when that country already pays almost half its state budget to debt repayment, than these 1-4% of GDP are unavailable.

**The good thing is that the OWG on SDGs concluded that we cannot only have thematic goals** as we had for the MDGs, but that we need to have targets, and monitor these, for governance and MOI. It therefore would like to recall this proposed structure presented in the **UN**

**Task-team report on Post2015** last year, where governance targets are the framework around the thematic goals (“enablers” see picture).



Source: UN Task Team Post2015 report to Secr. General 2012

In conclusion, countries **should commit to the SDGs as they were agreed** on in July, and build a combined **accountability mechanisms based on existing international and regional human rights, social and environmental agreements**, and new **additions to fill the gaps**.

**Public participation from civil society**, including from women and marginalized groups, in the **design, implementation, and monitoring** of international and national plans to implement the SDGs / Post 2015 agenda, should be one of the priorities.

Thank you