



**Office of the Chief Executive**

**Executive Committee on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

**SDGs Coordination Unit**

**The Executive Committee on SDGs meeting minutes**

**Meeting #: 14**

**March 20, 2018**

<b>NO</b>	<b>Agenda</b>	<b>Duration</b>
1	Opening remarks by honorable Co-Chairs and adoption of the previous meeting minutes.	10 Minutes
2	UNESCO presentation on Goal-4 of the SDGs - Its importance, practices of other countries, role of UNESCO on implementation of the goal, etc.	15 Minutes
3	Report by MoF about its last week Workshop on Istanbul and Vienna Program of Actions	10 Minutes
4	Updates by MoEc on WGs activities and attainments on mapping and alignment of the SDGs and modifications of indicators based on Meta-data.	20 Minutes
5	(AOB)	10 Minutes

The 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee on SDGs organized at 1:00 Am, Tuesday, 20 March, 2018, at Sapidar Palace, Kabul, Afghanistan. It was Co-Chaired H.E Nasrullah Arsalayee, General Director of Council of Ministers of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Mr. Mohammad Ismael Rahimi, Deputy Minister of Economy and Mr. Jocelyn Mason, Country Director of UNDP in Afghanistan. The meeting was attended by officials from numerous governmental entities, representatives of International Organizations, Civil Society Institutions and private sector.

To inaugurate the meeting, Mr. Ismael Rahimi, deputy minister of economy, welcomed the participants. After brief introduction of the meeting agenda, he touched on the recent National Conference of NGOs held by MoEc in the Office of the President. On the matter, he also said:

“The main aim behind initiation of the workshop was to seek for decent coordination strategies for the activities of NGOs in Afghanistan. The conference debates have been divided into five major panels and three working groups. Several representatives from the Afghan CSOs, National Assembly and officials from governmental agencies participated the conference. As a result, the working groups managed to prepare a road map for the NGOs how to coordinate their activities with 2030 Agenda as well as MoEc and MoF. To follow the progress of decisions made in the conference, it was agreed to hold in due course a joint working session with attendance of NGOs. The first report of the conference is scheduled to be released at the end of the current week.”

Following the agenda, H.E Nasrullah Arsalayee, welcoming the attendees, wished a happy new solar year for the participants. Based on the talking points he received from the SDGs secretariat, he considered the past two weeks of WGs activities, very positive and said that lots have been done since the last meeting of the Committee. Giving a number of instances, H.E Arsalayee, touched on holding of WGs ordinary, technical and consultative meetings. He also updated that the “alignment table” are almost finalized by the WGs members. Nonetheless, Mr. Arsalayee also pointed to a number of challenges. According to his report, there are still some members are not eager to participate regularly in the meetings. In addition, it seems that SDGs the leadership of some governmental entities do not consider 2030 agenda very seriously. Giving serious reminder, he said that taking part in the WGs meetings are an obligation, not voluntary. At the end, he sincerely hoped for solving the mentioned problems in the future. Mr. Arsalayee also had some say about the role of CSOs and private sector in SDG implementation process. On the matter, he noted that their current involvement in the process is appreciated, but due to crucial role of these institutions, they need more efforts including regular attendance in the meetings.

Mr. Jocelyn Mason, also greeted the board and wished a happy new year for them hoped to have a productive year ahead. Explaining the reason for his absences in the last meeting of the Committee, Mr. Mason said that he had participated in an official meeting related to SDGs in Istanbul, Turkey. On the matter of NGOs conference, previously updated on by Mr. Rahimi, reported that NGOs spent around 850 million USD in Afghanistan which highlights their important role and contribution in developmental agendas of the country. Pointing on the matter, he reported that UNDP along with MoF work on the “Off budget” system with aim to further coordinate activities of NGOs in Afghanistan. Speaking on issues of data for SDGs, he made it sure that UNDP is ready to support MoEc and Central Statistics Agency in dealing with it.

With the end of introductory remarks, Mr. Rahimi asked for approval of the minutes of the last meeting which led to approval without notable comment or feedback. The meeting went ahead with a number of questions and remarks on the updates and information provided by the co-chair members.

On the topic of NGOs conference, Mrs. Humaira Saqeb, head of joint committee of Afghan CSOs complained that despite being representative of all Afghan CSOs, member of WGs as well as the Executive Committee, they were not invited in the conference. In response, Mr. Rahimi noted that MoEc had not been involved in selection process. There were to other restrictions too. First, the NGOs had been invited based on the amount of their expenditure and only 50 NGOs with the highest scale of spending had been invited in the conference. Second limitation with regards to the venue of the conference, as it took place in the office of the president.

In the next part of the meeting, Mr. Leon Gash, representative of UNESCO, made his presentation. He firstly thanked the committee for dedication of time. Specifically, he paid his tribute for the support of Mr. Nabi Soroush and Mr. Rahimi from MoEc helping he prepare the presentation. Going

to the main points of the presentation, he highlighted some points on the fourth goal of the 2030 Agenda, which is about quality education. The presentation focused on following major themes:

1. A brief description of the fourth Goal of the SDG;
2. Importance of goal 4 in the sustainable development goals;
3. Touching on 10 targets of the Goal 4;
4. Role of UNESCO in attainment of the Goal;
5. Successful experiences and cases in implementation of Goal 4;
6. Afghanistan Road Map for attainment of the Goal.

Elaborating the topics, Mr. Gash stated that quality education is at the heart of Goal 4. He then, went to rise some facts about the education status in Afghanistan. He said that it is so unfortunate that 3.3 million school age children in the country have no access to the school. He said that UNESCO seriously work with the Afghan government to attain the Goal 4. Mr. Gash updated that at the moment, the organization work with MoE to complete the strategy for girls' education. To boost efficiency of the agencies efforts on education in Afghanistan, he suggested to prepare a comprehensive Road Map for implementation of the Goal 4.

Appreciating the presentation, Mr. Rahimi noted that a road map for the goal 4 is very necessary and Afghanistan needs the support of UNESCO in this regard. He also highlighted that collection of necessary information to pave the way for implementation of the goal on education is in its final stage.

Mr. Mujibullah Suleimankhail, director of planning of MAIL, asked for more explanation of the nature of collaboration of UNESCO with MoE and other sectorial entities. To further describe his question, he reported that currently, there is a financial gap and MoF representative does not attend regularly to update the board on the financial aspect of the Agenda. Therefore, he asked about financial aspects of such collaboration.

Mrs. Spozhmai Wordak, Deputy Minister of Women Affairs, asked if UNESCO has a program or projects for the girls who get married before completion of their 12<sup>th</sup> grade, but cannot effort to go ahead with their education. And if there is any program included in attainment of goal 4.

Mr. Rahimullah Samander, CEO of Chamber of Commerce and Mining stated that the mining and industry sector have problem of skilled and professional employees and asked the UNESCO representative, if his agency has any training or program related to production, industry and mining topics.

Mr. Zia Haidari, Acting Deputy Minister of Energy and Water asked if the private sector who work on education, can contribute in attaining goal 4 of the SDG. Guessing the answer for his own question, he said that if the private entities can do so, does the UNESCO support them or have any supportive agenda?

To answer the questions Representative of the UNESCO said that the organization has working relation with MoE at the very high level. On the training program, he noted that professional trainings is the responsibility of MoE. Answer the question about the girls who cannot effort to continue their education after getting married, he marked it as important matter and promised to discuss it with MoE for finding solution for.

Mr. Rahimi thanked the UNESCO representative for his presentation. He noted on the financial aspect of SDG and accepted that the Afghan government has problem for finding financial resources for the SDGs, yet, promised to work with its partners to solve it.

Mrs. Humaira Saqeb asked UNESCO if they have any program to re-open those girls' schools that have been closed in unsecure areas. In response, Mr. Merwais Fayez, another representative from UNICEF said their partners are ready to work to provide education amenities for all. He also noted the UNICEF works with MoE to prepare a comprehensive national strategy for girls' education in the country. Related to the question on the closed schools, he notified that UNECEf through local councils already started working to re-open them.

Following the meeting agenda, representative of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFa) updated the participants about the ministry's recent workshop on Istanbul and Vienna Program of Actions.

Mr. Hassan Soroush, head of regional economic directorate of MoFa thanked the committee for giving him the time to report about their conference. Mr. Soroush reported that he had arranged a session with Mr. Rahimi deputy minister of economy with aim to jointly assess the nature of coordination between Istanbul and Vienna Program of Actions with that of SDGs. In the assessment session, they had invited member of working groups and agreed upon the following points and actions to be considered:

- To use the current mechanism of the Executive Committee on SDGs for coordinating efforts between the two above-mentioned Program of Actions with the SDG agenda. The agreement to be presented in the next meeting of the committee for final approval;
- The ways to involve the WGs in this efforts;
- The country report of Vienna Program of Actions be prepared by the committee and the lead by MoFa. The deadline for the action plan is end of the current year;
- MoFa to provide a questionnaire on Vienna Program of Actions and after consideration of sectorial entities, will share it with the co-chair members of the committee and WGs members within a maximum three weeks times;
- The report on Istanbul action plan will be provided by the committee at the end of 2019 or early 2020.

Rejoicing from the presentation, Mr. Rahimi decided not to postpone the debate on the agreements of the Workshop and asked the meeting member to raise their comments, suggestion or approval at the current meeting.

Mr. Claine Vanloveren, an officer from the governance department of UNDP in Afghanistan stated that the meeting over the two above-mentioned Plan of action and their coordination with the SDG indicate a clear message that SDG is very important not only for Afghanistan but for the world. He asked the Executive Committee to take responsibility of monitoring and coordination of the two Plan actions.

Adding to his pervious remarks, Mr. Hassan Soroush considered the Vienna Program of Actions financially an important imitative for Afghanistan. Because the country can seek and get financial resources for the SDG through the initiative.

Asking for more details on the responsibility of the Executive Committee about the above mentioned Program of Actions, H.E Arsalayee, asked about the relation of the Committee with MoFa and MoEc with regards to the Action plans and their relation with SDGs. He also asked about specific role the Committee on the matter. In response, Mr. Hassan Soroush noted that MoFa has the leading and facilitating duty of the Istanbul and Vienna Action Plans. But on technical aspect, in particular, preparation of reports and their relation with the SDGs, they need the help of the Committee. He also said the MoFa and MoEc jointly responsible to deliver the Plan's reports in the Vienna.

To further elucidate the role of each involving body, Mr. Arsalayee asked to make a document and make each party roles and responsibilities clear and present it in the next meeting of the committee. Because the document, as he stated, can prevent any possible middling or overlap of parties duties with one another.

Talking on the matter, Mr. Nabi Soroush, general director of policy and monitoring directorate of MoEc stated that there are notable similarities between the indicators of the Vienna and Istanbul action plans with those of SDGs. Therefore, it can easily be aligned with the SDGs. Going into detail, he said the data that are used for the SDGs can be used for the two Action plans as well. Therefore, it gives sense for the committee to play role in this regard.

Touching on the concern regarding overlap of tasks, Mr. Rahimi proposed that to prevent any possible overlapping between the Executive Committee on SDGs, MoFa and MoEc to prepare Terms of Reference for each party and put it on the table of the committee meeting for further discussion.

After discussions on the MoFa presentation, Mrs. Muzhgan Mustafawee, deputy minister of information and culture raised her concern with regards to overlapping and intersection of responsibilities of involving entities in the SDGs in general. She mentioned the ministry of information and culture case as an instance. She reported that the ministry is member of Open Governance initiative and is responsible to meet 6 indicators belongs to the initiative. At the same time, the ministry is member of the SDG's WGs and is responsible to meet 4 indicators on the same subjects. She said that the ministry does not know which program to work on. Worrying about financial aspect of the SDGs, Mrs. Mustafawee also express her concern about the absence of representatives from the MoF in the meeting of the Working Groups.

Mr. Qudratullah Musa Zadah, from MRRD, also raised his concern on financial sources of the SDGs. He said that the ministry is among the members to meet 16 indicators of the SDG; and is responsible party for one them. He stated that the ministry has technical capability to implement them, but there have problem with their budget. If they cannot find financial sources, it would be impossible to meet the indicators.

With regards to the concern of Mrs. Mustafawee, H.E Arsalayee directed the secretariat to make a contact with the secretariat of Open Governance and arrange a meeting with them to discuss about the ways to coordinate SDGS with their program. He also directed MoEc to present final version of nationalized indictors to the Coordination units of the Chief Executive office and get their views and feedbacks on the indicators.

Mr. Suleiman Khel, from MAIL talked about involving of local administrations in SDG and arranging awareness programs for the ministries about the Agenda. He noted through involving local administration enable the central government to utilize their sources for implementation of the

SDGs. On the matter, he reported the MAIL with the help of FAO plans to conduct awareness workshop on the targets and indicators belongs to the ministry for its directorates in six different zones of the country. He asked MoEc to help them in their plan and ask their directorates in the provinces to participate in their workshops.

Mr. Abdul Wali Madaqiq, deputy of policy from the National Environmental Protection Agency Reiterated to coordinate the governmental entities programs with those of UN country teams. He also suggested to draw a clear deadline for every action, otherwise, based on his statement, the time will be wasted without of meeting the tasks. He also asked from better arrangement the guests arrivals in the meeting of the Executive Committee. Based on his report, in a number of occasions the invitees have waited for a long time behind the door of Sapidar Palace.

At the end of the session, Mr. Jocelyn Mason, restated that UN Country teams in Afghanistan work with the Afghan government. At the present time they are working on a document to develop a procedures for make a better coordination between activities of NGOs and SDGs. He asked all the governmental entities to coordinate and align those programs and projects of NGOs that they fund, with the SDGs.

End of the meeting, Mr. Rahimi thanked all stakeholders of SDGs and the international partners for their efforts on SDGs during the last solar year and wished to have a fruitful year ahead.

#### **Summary of discussion and actions to be taken:**

1. The Secretariat and MoEc hold a meeting with the Secretariat of Open Governance initiative and discuss how to coordinate the Open Governance indicators with those of the SDGs. Result of the meeting to be presented in the upcoming meeting of the Executive Committee;
2. All members ought to attend in the WGs and Committee meetings. The list of absent members in today's meeting be listed and mentioned the minutes of the meeting. The Council of Ministers to send them a notice letter about their absence;

**Note: Absentees list of the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Committee:** MoCI, MoJ, MoPh, MoF, MoE, Office of the President, Kabul Municipality, National Entrepreneur Association and ACBAR;

3. The Secretariat and MoEc make sure to arrange the necessary coordination among UN country teams, NGOs and other entities involved in the SDG implementation;
4. The Secretariat make sure to share the UNESCO report of its commitment in implementation of the Goal 4 of the SDGs with other stakeholders. The Secretariat also share UNESCO's prioritized arrangements on education sector and the agency's mapping and costing assessments.
5. The Executive Committee agrees with MoFa suggestion with regard to the Istanbul and Vienna Program of Actions in principle. Yet, MoFa with support of MoEc to produce a Terms of Reference, through which explain responsibilities of each involving part (Committee, MoFa and MoEc) and present it in the next meeting of the Committee;

6. As works continues on the alignment process and cost estimation of the SDG, it is necessary for the MoF to be present in the meetings of the WGs. The Secretariat, through the Council of Ministers submit an Official letter to the ministry about the decision.
7. The Secretariat and MoEc conduct an awareness workshop for all Coordination Units of the Office of Chief Executive about the nationalized indicators and get their feedbacks and comments on the indicators;
8. In order to better arrange the arrival of guests for the Executive Committee meetings, the protocol team of the office of the Chief Executive and make sure to share list of the participants early enough. The Secretariat is responsible to follow it.
9. The next meeting will be held at the same place on April 3, 2018 at 10:00 am.

**Mustafa Mastoor,**  
Minister of Economy of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

**Nasrullah Arsalayee,**  
General Director of Council of Ministers of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

**Jocelyn Mason,**  
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