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## Item 4 of the provisional agenda

### EXECUTION OF THE PROGRAMME ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

#### SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BOARD OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

##### SUMMARY

The purpose of this document is to bring to the attention of UNESCO Member States information on recent developments related to the work of the United Nations Secretary-General's Scientific Advisory Board, which is hosted by UNESCO.

The information in the document may raise questions and feedback from Member States that would be of value in the ongoing hosting by UNESCO of this activity, which is of relevance to the United Nations Secretary-General, UNESCO and the United Nations system as whole.

1. The third meeting of the United Nations Secretary-General's Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) was held in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) on 25 and 26 May 2015, following the invitation by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak.
2. Discussions and deliberations at the meeting focused on assessing and furthering progress in relation to the tasks assigned to SAB by the United Nations Secretary-General at the Board's second meeting at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in December 2014: further advice on climate change in light of the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21); thoughts on Means of Implementation in the context of the post-2015 development agenda; provision of advice on the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR).
3. SAB generated advice on issues related to climate risks, on the assumption that climate change-induced risks to people and infrastructures were largely overlooked in the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Their deliberations in this regard will lead to the production of a policy brief, which will be presented at a dedicated side event during COP 21. Moreover, two SAB members provided key inputs into the International Science Conference on the theme "Our Common Future under Climate Change", which took place in Paris from 7 to 10 July 2015. Overall, SAB members continue to perform a role of scientific advocacy in relation to the need to reach a meaningful climate change agreement.

4. In relation to the post-2015 development agenda, SAB's reflections on science, technology and innovation as a critical means of implementation formed the subject of a distinct note. The Board also has generated advice on how to ensure that the voice of science is reflected in the HLPF at United Nations Headquarters, so as to strengthen further the science-policy interface. A number of options were identified to ensure that the Forum delivers against this expectation, including on requirements for a sound GSDR. This advice by SAB is also the object of a dedicated brief.

5. Issues related to the data revolution have been one of the foci of the work of SAB since the publication of the United Nations Secretary-General's report entitled "A World That Counts". In its advice, which also will be presented in the form of a separate brief, SAB pointed to a number of limitations that need to be overcome – namely inequality in the access to information and data – if the data revolution is to benefit all people on the planet and, above all, the marginalized and the poor.

6. Following the Secretary-General's request to identify the greatest challenges faced by people and the planet, the Board embarked on the "Delphi study", which led to the identification of a number of major challenges. The detailed results of the above-mentioned study will be finalized in the course of the fall 2015.

7. At the Malaysia session, SAB also initiated a new stream of work on the need to engage in a dialogue with indigenous and local knowledge, and to integrate such knowledge into sustainable development solutions.

8. The UNESCO Director-General hosted a High-Level Round-table Breakfast on the critical role of science, technology and innovation (STI) for the implementation of the future post-2015 sustainable development agenda on 9 July 2015 during the 2015 High-Level Segment of ECOSOC. In an effort to promote dialogues between governments, United Nations agencies, civil society, academia and members of SAB, the High-Level Round-table Breakfast focused on the role of STI and the science-policy-society interface in ensuring a successful transition from the MDGs to SDGs and in achieving the post-2015 development agenda for all.

9. Main points discussed at the High-Level Round-table Breakfast included:

- (a) progress made in recognizing the importance of STI as a driver for sustainable development, including in the context of financing for development;
- (b) levels and modalities of investment in STI and R&D in order to harness the full potential for STI to provide concrete solutions to the post-2015 development challenges;
- (c) SAB's advice on strengthening the science-policy interface in the context of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), which calls for "science to be an advisor and not just observer" in the deliberations of the HLPF;
- (d) needs related to designing roadmaps to address issues pertaining to data collection, privacy and use and to ensure that the data revolution leads to inclusive development with benefits for all people.

10. Preparations have started in relation to the hosting of the fourth meeting of SAB, which will take place in Saint Petersburg on 14 and 15 December 2015, at the kind invitation of the Russian Federation.

11. All information related to SAB's work and related deliverables can be accessed from the dedicated website ([www.unsgsab.org](http://www.unsgsab.org)). SAB will continue to benefit from the highest degree of attention from UNESCO and the United Nations media services, so that Member States, the general public and multiple stakeholders are informed, on a regular and timely basis, on the work of the Board.