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## **Talks open on draft outcome document for UN sustainable development conference**



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The first round of informal discussions on the proposed outcome document of the United Nations conference on sustainable development that will be held in Brazil in June got under way in New York today with a senior UN official calling for an ambitious and yet practical conclusion.

“When world leaders gather in Rio in five months, we need to present them with an ambitious and yet practical outcome that equals the magnitude of today’s challenges,” said Sha Zukang, the Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), which will be held in Rio de Janeiro beginning 20 June.

“We need a robust outcome from Rio+20, with reinvigorated political commitments by all countries. We need strong decisions...strong in commitments and strong in actions,” he said.

The informal round of talks on the outcome document is the first in a series of negotiating sessions to be held in March, April, May and June in the run up to the conference.

Mr. Sha, who is the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, urged governments and civil society to focus on possible sustainable development goals, and on whether these would take into account specific national circumstances.

He also urged them to consider the “complementarity” between the proposed Sustainable Development Council and the Economic and Social Council; and how Rio+20 would drive the dissemination and transfer of state-of-the-art technologies on mutually agreed terms from developed to developing countries.

Eradicating poverty and building socially just and inclusive societies, while protecting the planet’s fragile eco-systems remain the defining challenges of the 21st century, Mr. Sha said.

The multiple crises of food, energy, climate, finance and employment shape the different facets of the challenges, he said, adding that they reminded humanity that problems are interconnected and must be tackled together.

The so-called “zero draft” of the outcome document was prepared from more than 6,000 pages of submissions from Member States, international organizations and civil society.

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