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## **First round of talks ahead of UN sustainable development conference ends**



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Delegates from United Nations agencies, Member States and various civil society have concluded three days of deliberations on the draft outcome document of the UN conference on sustainable development, which will be held in the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro in June.

“It is encouraging that the zero draft is viewed as a starting point for negotiations,” said Sha Zukang, the Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), at the end of the discussions at UN Headquarters yesterday.

“We will need to keep up a brisk pace if we are to complete negotiations in a timely manner. We must present to the world leaders and, indeed, to the world's people, an outcome that will make a difference in our shared undertaking to achieve a sustainable future – a future we all want,” said Mr. Sha.

This informal round is the first of four more negotiating sessions to be held in March, April/May and June in the lead-up to Rio+20 on 20-22 June.

Mr. Sha said that governments must make the draft ambitious and action-oriented, as many of them had emphasized, and ensure accountability.

“We must not go home from Rio and forget our commitments the next day,” he said, adding that a mechanism to ensure genuine delivery of commitments must be spelt out in the outcome document. He called for “decisions that show the world we mean business, but not business as usual.”

The “zero draft” was condensed from more than 6,000 pages of submissions from Member States, international organizations and civil society groups in an open, transparent and inclusive process spanning months.

Based on the three days of comments and suggestions, Mr. Sha presented a short list of “must haves” for Rio+20.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), he said, could be one of the important contributions of Rio+20. At the very least, by 2015, SDGs should be defined with a clear timeframe and give clear direction to building green economies appropriate to national circumstances.

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