



## **GROUP OF FIFTEEN**

### **The Summit Level Group of Developing Countries**

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**Opening remarks by H.E. Ravinatha Aryasinha**  
**Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka and Chair of the Personal**  
**Representatives of the G-15**  
**at the second session of the Briefing and Interactive Discussion**  
**with the South Centre on Post-2015 Development Agenda**  
Geneva, 24 November 2014

- On behalf of the Group of Fifteen, as well as on my behalf, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the South Centre, particularly to Dr. Khor, Mr. Yu, Dr. Williams and Dr. Montes. We thank you for arranging this important meeting on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. We are delighted to be here and look forward to receiving a briefing on the state of play of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and potential opportunities for the Global South, including G-15's, on influencing the process.
- This session sees the confluence of two key current objectives of the G-15. The recent meeting of the Foreign Ministers in New York in September provided the Group with a renewed mandate and underscored the importance for G-15 ensuring “value-addition” and taking a prominent role in shaping the international development agenda through South-South coordination during the Post-2015 period. The meeting also emphasized the need for reinvigorating and strengthening the G-15 liaison with Geneva-based institutions. In this process the G-15 is particularly happy to be collaborating with the South Centre, which remains a premier institution that serves the Developing World and supports “*developing countries to combine their efforts and expertise to promote their common interests*”..
- Both South Centre and G-15 share the same commitment of promoting South-South solidarity, and dealing with South-South and North-South Cooperation. Hence, given our shared interests, we hope today's interaction will be mutually rewarding, and more importantly we wish our collaboration will carry onto other common areas of interests, in order to advance our mutual goals.
- In July 2013, well ahead of many of the processes that sought to chart the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) got into stride, addressing a preliminary briefing held by the South Centre at the request of the G-15, positing it as a continuity of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), I highlighted the need for developing countries to engage more actively and collectively in framing the post-2015 Development Agenda, to prevent it from being “imposed” on them as a *fait accompli*. I called for "enhanced cooperation, engagement and solidarity among nations of the Global South towards gaining effective bargaining power and leverage."
- Today we meet 16 months later at a important juncture, having in hand the conclusion of the Open Working Group which has identified 17 SDGs with 169 targets, and as we await the UN Secretary General's Synthesis report next month and the substantive Inter-Governmental consultations which will commence in the new year in order to agree on an outcome document which is to be adopted at Summit level in September 2015.

- The present briefing provides us an opportunity to assess three things;
  - a) to evaluate the extent to which the MDGs have served its purpose, and as to what extent these achievements will be carried forward in transitioning to the new SDGs?
  - b) to what degree the outcome of the Open Working Group has delivered on the expectations of the Global South?
  - c) to identify, as to what continues to be the vulnerabilities in the forthcoming inter-governmental negotiations, in meeting the Global South's interests, especially in strengthening the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnerships for sustainable development?
  
- Each of our countries represented here have their own perspective as to how far we have been able to come in achieving the MDG targets. In Sri Lanka, despite 30 years of conflict, the country has achieved remarkable strides to keep pace with achieving the MDGs. In certain goals such as universal primary education and health indicators we have been able to be in line with the targets, while on the poverty eradication we were able to reduce absolute poverty in Sri Lanka to 6.7% in 2013 from 15.2% in 2007, surpassing the MDG mid-term target. The free education and health system that prevails in the country was a key catalyst in achieving these impressive records, and we have now made it a priority to incorporate technological advancements and access to information technology in our development agenda, with equal access to all.
  
- Having been actively involved in the negotiations in New York of the Open Working Group, Sri Lanka as well as members of the G-15 gathered here today, believe that it is of utmost importance that the Global South remains united and engaged in the debate. We believe all countries must adhere to the criteria agreed upon in Rio+20, namely that the SDGs must be "*global in nature and universally applicable to all countries while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities.*" In practice, this means that SDGs must be based on the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibility'. The goals should be common but the responsibilities need to be different and must reflect national realities. In other words, SDGs should be in line with what the Global South is trying to achieve and should not place additional restrictions or burdens on developing countries. True development goals also require a genuine global partnership and call for developed countries to honor their international commitments especially those related to financial resources, technology transfer and capacity.
  
- During an interaction Geneva based diplomats had with Ms. Amina Mohammed, Special Advisor on Post-2015 Development last week, some developed countries echoed many concerns regarding the universal applicability of the SDGs as they inquired about the means of implementation, especially with regards to LDCs and developing countries. As we move closer to the publication of the UN Secretary General's synthesis report on the Post 2015 Development Agenda, the Global South must continue to reflect on how development is done, and not just what is done. The emphasis on the “how” versus “what” is particularly important in terms of the

implementation of the new goals. Without articulating this aspect, committing and achieving the SDGs could remain empty rhetoric of 17 unattainable goals.

- In the run up to the adoption of the SDGs at the Summit in New York in September 2015, the South will have the chance to review the future of 'financing for development' when the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) takes place in Addis Ababa in July 2015, by influencing a package of proposals on financial, trade and global governance measures that will take concrete decisions for the future of development and guarantee ways to implement the SDGs.
- An opportunity for similar re-calibration will also be afforded to us through the climate change negotiations scheduled to take place in the UNFCCC context during the 20<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties, expected to take place in December 2014 in Peru, as well as the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties and the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties (Paris, November 2015) serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.
- Through continuing this conversation we initiated last year, the G-15 hopes to serve as a catalyst and bridge, connecting experts in New York, and the expertise of the South Centre based in Geneva. During this discussion we must consider various options on the way forward and prepare possible actionable recommendations to improve the Post 2015 Development Agenda process, which we could share with our capitals, as well as with like-minded countries who will be negotiating the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

I thank you.