



GROUP OF FIFTEEN The Summit Level Group of Developing Countries

Press Release

G-15- South Centre holds Joint Consultation on Post-2015 Development Agenda

A joint consultation organized by the South Centre and the Group of Fifteen (G-15)¹ on 'The state of play of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and potential opportunities for the Global South', was held at the South Centre in Geneva on 24 November 2014. The event took place in pursuance of the mandate given by the G-15 Foreign Ministers in New York on the sidelines of the UNGA on 26 September 2014, which underscored the importance for G-15 to play a prominent role in shaping the international Development Agenda through South-South coordination during the Post-2015 period.

Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha, Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva and Chairman of the Personal Representatives of G-15, co-chaired the event, along with Dr. Martin Khor, Executive Director of the South Centre. Dr. Mariama Williams, Senior Programme Officer, Global Governance for Development Programme; Dr. Montes Manuel, Senior Advisor, Finance and Development; and Mr. Vicente Paolo B. Yu III, Head of Administration and Coordinator, Global Governance for Development Programme delivered presentations on the topic. Ambassador Amr Ahmed Ramadan, Permanent Representative of Egypt to the UN in Geneva and delegates from other G-15 countries participated in the discussion.

Initiating the discussion Ambassador Aryasinha said both the South Centre and G-15 share a commitment to South-South solidarity and in promoting South-South and North-South cooperation. He recalled that during a preliminary briefing at the South Centre in July 2013, well ahead of many of the processes that sought to chart the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), he had 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*. Sixteen months later, he said this need was even more pronounced as countries moved into its final lap. He said the Global South must continue to reflect on 'how' development is done, not just 'what' is done in implementing the SDGs. He noted that G-15 believes all countries must adhere to the criteria agreed upon in Rio+20, namely that the operationalization of the SDGs must be based on the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibility', and should not place additional restrictions or burdens on Developing countries. He also stressed that true development requires a genuine global partnership and called on Developed countries to honour their international commitments, especially those related to financial resources, technology transfer and capacity. Ambassador Aryasinha said the consultation would help both parties to consider various options on the way forward and to prepare possible actionable recommendations to improve the Post-2015 Development Agenda process, which could be shared with G-15 capitals, as well as with like-minded countries who will be negotiating the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Dr. Khor detailed the state of play of the Development Agenda at the New York level. He said although there was much focus on New York, the 'real development agenda' was being negotiated in Geneva - within UNCTAD, WTO, WHO, ILO, WIPO and other institutions, given that the agreements they negotiate are legally

¹ Established as a Summit Level group of developing countries in 1989, following the conclusion of the Ninth Non-Aligned Summit gathering in Belgrade, the G-15 comprises 17 developing countries from Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean (Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Venezuela and Zimbabwe). The aims and objectives of the Group are to harness the latent potential of the member states for mutually beneficial cooperation, besides serving as a forum for the conduct of regular consultations in pursuance of their common agenda.

enforced. Dr. Khor said South-South cooperation is becoming even more important today, and called on the G-15 to “reclaim its initial central role” by providing a non-UN platform where South-South dialogue can expand. He recalled that the G-15 was historically created as a counter Group to the G-7 to protest the unilateral decisions taken by developed countries and imposed on the rest of the globe. He said as the Development Agenda is being negotiated, the G-15 should play a leading role. However, Dr. Khor stressed that North-South cooperation must continue, as Western countries bore a postcolonial responsibility to developing countries.

During the discussion, the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets were discussed and it was noted that some countries have reached remarkable strides to keep pace with achieving the goals of the MDGs. It was emphasized that developing countries should maintain the momentum in pursuit of these goals, even as they approach a new phase of the Developing Agenda. Dr. Williams observed that the significant progress attained was however being jeopardized as a result of the debt crisis and the after effects of the financial crisis, as well as adaptation to climate change. Concern was raised with regards to the possibility that the 17 identified Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) determined in July 2014, following year-long negotiations in the Open Working Group, was sought to be re-opened for negotiation by the Developed countries. It was felt that re-opening the SDGs text may risk weakening elements in it that were in favour of many developing countries.

The briefing also highlighted the challenges of global carbon emissions and noted that the current industrialization model of developing countries is unfit to ensure the required transition to a low carbon development model imposed by the current SDGs. Climate negotiations which are expected to take place in December 2014 in Peru and in November 2015 in Paris, will attempt to address challenges concerning the national contribution to such goals. However, Dr. Khor stressed that SDGs are much more than a set of goals; they are addressing fundamental challenges for the developing world. He further added that ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ must apply to carbon emissions, as developed countries account for much of the environmental degradation that has taken place in the planet, and hence insisted that North-South cooperation must be sustained in the development process.

It was noted that migration, though an important element of development, is currently not discussed at high level. Mr. Yu expressed that developed countries have declined to address the issue of migration so as to not engage on the issue of visas or quotas. The International Labour Organization (ILO) was continuing to request the infusion of many “decent work” ideas into the targets and goals of the Post-2015 Development Agenda through the UN task team. The issue of remittances was also addressed and it was noted that one of the goals is to reduce the cost of remittances to 3%, and eliminate remittances corridors which represent more than 5%, by 2030. Observing that remittances received in developing countries are presently higher than ODA, G-15 delegates strongly opposed the suggestions by developed countries to include these figures when re-defining Aid.

As the world prepared for the Financing for Development (FfD) Conference, delegates also expressed concern about the newly introduced idea of “global partnership” - a term recently coined to include unaccountable entities such as the private sector and civil society that represent their independent interests. It was noted that the UN is a multilateral organization, whose initial mission is to provide a venue for cooperation and collaboration to accountable state actors that bear responsibilities to the governments they represent. The level of legitimacy of non-state entities in this context was questioned.

An 'outcome document' on the discussion is to be produced jointly by the South Centre and the G-15, in order to inform country delegations and the public of the issues of concern and contribute to the on-going debate.

The Secretariat of Group Fifteen:

Geneva, 11 December 2014