



GROUP OF FIFTEEN The Summit Level Group of Developing Countries

Press Release

G-15 with South Centre holds Consultation with Geneva based International Organisations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

The Group of Fifteen (G-15)¹ with South Centre held a consultation on *'Post-2015 Development Agenda through the Perspectives of Geneva based International Organisations'* at the UN Geneva on 30 April 2015. The half day meeting was aimed at having an interactive consultation between developing countries and Geneva based International Organisations on the Post 2015 Development Agenda, focusing on the 'social pillar', in the key areas of Poverty & Inequality, Migration, Labour, Food Security, Health, and Education.

Ambassador Amr Ahmed Ramadan, Egypt's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, on behalf of the G-15, chaired the event. Mr. Vicente Paolo B YU III, Head of Administration and Coordinator Global Governance for Development Programme, South Centre, moderated the panel sessions. Speakers representing several Geneva based organizations / offices i.e. UNDP, IOM, ILO, South Centre, WHO, UNESCO(IBE) and FAO participated in the discussion as resource persons. Ambassadors and delegates from the Missions based in Geneva, including delegates from the Missions of G-15 member countries, participated in the event. This event took place as a follow-up to an initiative launched on 24 November 2014, on the theme *'The state of play of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and potential opportunities for the Global South'*, pursuant to the mandate given by the G-15 Foreign Ministers in New York, which underscored the importance for G-15 to play a prominent role in shaping the Post-2015 Development Agenda through South-South coordination.

In his opening remarks Ambassador Ramadan said the event marked the first of the series of three symposiums on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and that this series would enable the countries of the Global South to garner the perspectives of Geneva based International Organizations on their

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.

respective roles in the negotiations and implementation of the Development Agenda. He further mentioned that the Symposiums would also provide an opportunity for the developing countries to better understand the challenges and opportunities presented through the Development Agenda, taking into consideration the high level of ambition reflected in the current proposals compared to the MDGs, and the low level of commitment towards provisions of means of implementation and with limited attention to the limitations of the local capacities in particular of developing countries, giving example of the challenge of eradicating extreme poverty in 15 years while creating at least 600 million new jobs in the same period (40 million jobs a year till 2030). He said he was certain that the discussions would make a significant and realistic contribution and set the pace and empower countries to boldly go to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) in July 2015 and finally when the meetings are held in New York to finalize the Development Agenda.

Mr Vicente Paolo B Yu III detailed the state of play of the Development Agenda with regard to the multilateral negotiations and as to how they relate to the Post-2015 Development Agenda. He also explained how the UN System Post -2015 processes, the Rio+20 and the UNFCCC on mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology transfer, capacity building and legal architecture all feed into various processes leading to the discussions to be held in New York in September 2015.

Mr Neil Buhne, Director of **UNDP** office in Geneva, opening the discussion and speaking on *inequality, poverty and SDGs*, explained that in addressing poverty, it is important to reduce relative poverty, promote equality of opportunities, build resilience of the poor and introduce fair and equitable laws. He pointed out that in fact, this is what the 17 SDG goals are all about. He outlined three broad steps to promote human development: ,mainstreaming budget allocations as part of UN development assistance framework; acceleration by targeting the resources identified in the mainstreaming process; and ensuring best practices and policies.

Speaking on *migration related issues*, IOM Senior Migration Policy Advisor Lars Johan Lönnback stated that there has been an evolution of migration since the MDGs were adopted in year 2000. He also presented some recommendations by the IOM (i.e: keep SDG target 10.7 as suggested by OWG related to improving the quality of human mobility through “well-managed migration policies”); include displacement among issues related to peaceful and inclusive societies and Disaster Risk Reduction; Address trafficking in a comprehensive manner and action by FfD 3 on the targets suggested by the Open Ended Working Group on SDG negotiations (OEWG) relating to remittance.

Speaking on *labour related issues*, ILO Senior Programme and Operations Officer Casper Edmonds outlined SDG Goal 8 that reflects full and productive employment and decent work. He also appreciated the strategic engagement by at least eleven G-15 countries who took part in the OEWG and also highlighted the G-15 statement at the 102nd International Labour Conference where it called for re-doubling global efforts to ensure the objective of full and productive employment and decent work for all, which is fully reflected in the discussion of the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

Speaking on the agriculture sector and the *food security* in relation to trade and the SDGs, Ms Aileen Kwa, Coordinator, Trade and Development Programme, **South Centre**, in her presentation mentioned that mainly Goal 2 of the SDGs set targets to end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions including ‘dumping’ in world agricultural markets, while Goal 10 and 17 are targeted at implementing special & differential treatment for developing countries in the context of WTO and promoting a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system. However, in order to achieve these targets, she stressed on the need of sound national policies that must also be complemented by a conducive international environment. She said “the two are inextricably linked and must work together otherwise the goals cannot be attained”. In this context she further stressed the need to change the WTO trade rules in the area of agriculture.

Dr Reyad Al Ahmad informed on the **WHO**’s intrinsic linkages between *health* and other dimensions of the sustainable development agenda, the universality, inclusiveness, and the wide scope of the post-2015 sustainable development (SD) framework. He noted that it is the development agenda that puts the human being on the road to dignity by transforming lives, ending poverty, and protecting the planet as outlined by the UN Secretary General in his synthesis report submitted to the 68th UNGA in 2014. Dr Ahmad said that reviewing legal and regulatory frameworks and making laws and regulations more effective in relation to the governance of sustainable development and its capacity development needs is of prime importance.

Speaking at the event, Mr Massimo Amadio, from the **UNESCO** International Bureau of Education (UNESCO-IBE, Geneva), focused on the SDG 4 which specifically refers to *education* and stressed on "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Mr Amadio recalled that education is not only an end in itself, but it is also a key means to attain the global sustainable development agenda and most of its goals. He summarized the main initiatives and activities organized by UNESCO since 2011, which included broad-based technical and policy consultations conducted through the existing ‘Education for All’

(EFA) coordination mechanisms at the national, sub-regional, regional and global levels. These consultations culminated in the Agreement adopted at the 2014 Global EFA Meeting in Muscat (Oman), which contains the above-mentioned overarching goal as well as seven global targets and three Means Of Implementation (MOI). The Agreement was then transmitted to the OEWG on the SDGs and it was also distributed to all UNESCO Member States for their consideration and as a way to facilitate their preparations for the main consultations on the post-2015 education agenda, leading up to the World Education Forum (Incheon, Rep. of Korea, May 2015) and the UN Summit (New York, September 2015). Finally, after having reminded that the UN Secretary-General suggested that the goals and targets should be "framed in a language that is specific, measurable and achievable", Mr Amadio observed that some of the targets and means of implementation related to SDG 4 can still be improved and refined, and hopefully this will be done in the forthcoming months."

FAO Director, Ms Xiangjun Yao stressed that the target of reducing extreme *poverty* by half by the end of 2015 has been met, but progress has been uneven, with 805 million in hunger in the world. New priorities have emerged since year 2000 such as governance, environmental sustainability and addressing price volatility. The proposed SDGs well reflect FAO's holistic approach to food security, nutrition and sustainable natural resource use. She also mentioned that today, natural resources are deteriorating, the world's ecosystems are stressed and biological diversity is being lost at an alarming rate, and climate change poses an added threat to global food production. A key challenge, especially for developing countries, is to develop indicators that can be measured in a cost-effective and practical manner by countries. It is also critical to build a renewed global partnership to tackle the post-2015 agenda. This calls for fulfilment of development assistance commitment; enhancing North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation; and fostering partnerships between actors across a broad range of areas.

The roundup by South Centre, IOM, UNDP, WHO, IBE (UNESCO), FAO and ILO of the overall issues compelled participants to engage on outstanding questions. The Q&A sessions helped clarify the inter-linkages between each of the areas discussed and also stressed on the need to have a holistic and balanced approach in formulating the Development Agenda. Participants who asked questions expressed their appreciation for the presentations that largely identified the landscape of the international debates and negotiations under the 'social pillar' of the Development Agenda in a very comprehensive manner.

The Secretariat of Group Fifteen:

Geneva

04 May 2015