



GROUP OF FIFTEEN
The Summit Level Group of Developing Countries

Outcome Document

**Third Consultation with Geneva based International Organisations on the Post-2015
Development Agenda organised by the G-15 and the South Centre**

29 June 2015, Palais des Nations, Geneva

The Group of Fifteen and the South Centre continue to actively engage with International Organisations tasked with the negotiation and implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. **The final symposium of a series of three was held at the United Nations in Geneva on 29th June, 2015** and focused on the 'Environment Pillar' of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Two previous symposia addressed the social and economic pillars of the SDGs.

Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the UN in Geneva and the Chair of the Personal Representatives of the Group of Fifteen, chaired the meeting.

Amb. Aryasinha said that "the coming few months are of significant importance to all of us in determining the collective progress of humanity. Three crucial events are due to take place within the span of six months. The Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) is due to commence in two weeks' time in Addis Ababa. In September we expect world leaders to endorse the Post-2015 Development Agenda and towards the end of the Year, the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) are due to meet in Paris and hopefully would be able to agree upon a framework that would tackle the issue of climate change." He added that these three events are not mutually exclusive but complementary and relevant to the success of each other. While it is important that we do not mix these processes it would not be prudent to address the issues of FfD, Sustainable Development and Climate change in isolation. "It is in that context that we see the Development Agenda as an important policy framework that would guide humanity in the years and decades to come and formulate the

cornerstone of our development strategy that is not only economically sustainable, but socially just and environmentally viable.”

Ms. Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction delivering the Special Address of the symposium called for greater coherence among the various processes that are currently underway and for their substantive conclusions. “There are strong interdependencies between these processes and this offers a positive opportunity to create greater coherence at the national, regional and global levels” she said. The framework agreement reached at Sendai, Japan in March this year at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Post-2015 Development Agenda should all lead towards the achieving of the sustainable development goals. She highlighted three possible ways in which such cohesion could be achieved in the numerous processes. Firstly it has been recommended that the four processes make references to each other in order to incorporate a complete perspective, this would include cross referencing in the outcome documents. Secondly there should be cohesion in the targets and indicators agreed through these processes. There could be similar sources when determining the indicators in order to make review of implementation easier and minimise the reporting burden on countries. Thirdly there is a call for greater cohesion at the implementation stage.

Ms. Wahlström also gave an overview of the Sendai framework of action. “The Sendai framework is an ambitious agreement; it builds on countries experiences on how risks are generated and how they are handled.” She noted that two main themes that came up during the national and regional consultations leading to the Sendai framework were; 1. There has to be a greater policy of acceptance in the link between environmental disasters and climate change and 2. There needs to be proper implementation to what has been agreed with the understanding that disaster risk is an impediment to sustainable development. She also noted that during these consultations it was clear that many felt there are governance issues when handling disaster risk reduction. Both at the local and international levels there is a lack of clarity as to which agencies are responsible for this task. The need for universally accepted standards to measure disaster preparedness was also emphasized.

Ms. Wahlström noted that one of the major transformations that occurred due to the Sendai conference was “from managing disasters to managing the risks of disasters.” Therefore many countries have understood the risks and have invested in prevention and risk reduction. She also noted that the Sendai framework has agreed upon seven global targets which are similar to the SDGs and would augment the development process.

Mr. Steven Stone, Head of the Economics and Trade Branch of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in a thought provoking presentation first highlighted why the year 2015 is significant from the perspective of his organisation. He noted that 2015 is the hottest year since record keeping started. “It is a tipping point.” Carbon emissions have passed 400 parts per million (ppm) and if it reaches 450 ppm the effects of climate change may be irreversible. The second reason why 2015 is significant is that the mandate of the MDGs comes to an end. The MDGs were mostly a one way process from the global North to the global South. Thirdly there is a broad economic shift. With China’s GDP in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) has surpassed that of the United Nations. “The BRICs are becoming stronger and the OECD is becoming less relevant” he observed.

As to why we should care about Post-2015 and what it means Mr. Stone noted that unlike in the case of MDGs the Post-2015 Development Agenda is not a one way flow of resources, information or technology. “It matters to every country and we all have a stake in this process.” The second key change in the Post-2015 viewpoint is that no longer do we see the environment as a small set of protected areas but instead as a source of wealth and prosperity. “The environment is the fundamental source of human wellbeing and basis of economic growth.” He noted that the green economy that is emerging as an important element of sustainable development is about eradicating unsustainable patterns of consumption. Another important aspect that needs to be addressed in the Post-2015 context is to shift the way in which investment happens and money flows. “When you look at current investments it is not creating sustainability but reinforcing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. A question that should be asked is “how much financing can we afford not to do in sustainable development?” he said.

On what his organisation is doing with regard to sustainable development, Mr. Stone noted the UNEP Finance Initiative, a membership based organisation of the finance

industry which looks at how finance drives sustainability. It brings 'finance sector champions' who are looking at the governance of capital markets. UNEP is also involved in the environmental sciences where it puts out a periodic review called Global Environment Outlook (GEO). This report deals with the science of the state of the world environment, biodiversity loss, carbon emissions etc. In addition UNEP is also very much involved in setting up of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA). The second UNEA will be convened in May 2016. The UNEA of the UNEP represents the highest level of governance of international environmental affairs in the UN system.

Mr. Filipe Lucio, Director, Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) presented scientific evidence that suggests that the global climate is experiencing an unprecedented change. He noted that the last decade has recorded the highest global temperature as well as the lowest. In addition the highest level of precipitation per day has also been recorded within the last decade. The average global temperature has clearly risen throughout the last century and continues to increase.

Mr. Lucio noted that the main role of the WMO towards the SDGs is by providing scientific information, data and analysis. The WMO provides the scientific data on greenhouse gas emissions, indication of what is happening in the atmosphere and the oceans that are important in negotiations on climate change and policy making. Noting some of the tasks in which WMO is involved, Mr. Lucio highlighted their role in identifying vulnerable populations at risk from disasters, supporting sustainable food production, supporting sustainable production of energy and ensuring that issues such as desertification and climate change are addressed with appropriate science so that their remedial actions are effective. Overall the WMO is involved in providing capacity development for 192 countries that are members of the WMO, in particular on how to analyse risks and eventually provide means of addressing those risks.

In the context of the Sendai Framework, the WMO supports the Multi-Hazards Early Warning System. "We also support risk informed decision making which are science based." In this regard the WMO has identified 70 countries that do not have the appropriate scientific capacity to make informed decisions on climate change. These countries are being assisted to gain this knowledge. "Backed by scientific information

there has to be processes and mechanisms to use that information and incorporate it into the decision making “Mr. Lucio noted.

Ms. Alice Tipping, Senior Programme Officer of the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) briefed on the current status on the negotiations on FfD which is underway in New York. She particularly highlighted the synergies and overlap of the FfD, as per the current draft outcome document and the Sustainable Development Goals. “Even though these two processes are going ahead on parallel paths there are areas where they refer to each other.” However on the FfD draft which came out on 6th of May the relationships between its outcome and the SDG targets are not yet defined. The means of implementation of the FfD are also not clear. There is a proposal to integrate FfD in to the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Yet what this would entail is not clear. In addition another undecided factor is the review process for both FfD and the SDGs.

ICTSD has focused on the trade elements of both the SDGs and the FfD processes and noted that there is reasonable overlap between the two processes. The role of trade to achieve sustainable development is also addressed in both these processes. FfD repeats SDG target of promoting for the multilateral trading system and completing the Doha Round. It underlines the target under Goal 10 about implementation of sustainable development and trade in the WTO, adding a reference to the 2013 WTO Bali Ministerial decision on a monitoring mechanism for sustainable development provisions. This also adds the idea of accelerating the accession of developing countries, in particular LDCs, to the WTO. There are also calls for the transparent implementation of regional trade, investment agreements and for safeguards in investment treaties to ensure the goal of protecting and encouraging investment do not affect the ability of countries to pursue public policy objectives and their right to regulate is retained in areas critical for sustainable development.

There is also overlap in the FfD draft and the SDGs where there is a call for a transfer of technologies, especially green technologies that are needed for sustainable development. There are references in both these processes for subsidies for fisheries and sustainable energy use. There is a set of references to illegal extraction of environmental resources and illegal dumping of hazardous waste.

The fisheries sector is an illustration of trade and natural resources. Many developing countries earn more from the export of fish than any other agricultural commodities. Fisheries also make a contribution to food security. Globally 3 billion people get 20 % of their intake of animal protein through fish products. There is a clear economic and social side in the trade of fisheries. There is also a real environmental challenge. FAO estimates that 29 % of global fish stocks have depleted beyond sustainable levels and only 10 % has room for further expansion. It essentially underscores the necessity to ensure continuous income for developing countries and guaranteeing food security while at the same time addressing environmental concerns and sustainability. Ms. Tipping also highlighted the necessity to address these issues not only at the global level but at the national and local levels. "What would these mean for the domestic development priorities" is a question that needs to be taken into consideration, she said.

Mr. Vicente Paolo Yu, Head of Administration and Coordinator of the Global Governance for Development Programme of the South Centre gave a comprehensive briefing on the status of climate change negotiations. He noted that there are many differences that are emerging between developing and developed countries in these negotiations as at the FfD process. Since the Rio+20 Summit there is an effort to link the social, economic and environmental aspects of the SDGs. This was mostly due to the efforts of the G-77. "In the negotiations leading to Rio+20 developed countries attempted to limit the Summit mostly to environmental issues. But it was the G-77 that the three pillars of sustainable development need to be adequately reflected. As a result we have a more coherent and systemic means towards multilateral policy making," Mr. Yu observed.

On the conceptual question of whether the world has changed since 1992 when the Rio Summit was held Mr. Yu noted that it needs to be observed whether, 1. the physical realities have changed and 2. whether the underlined economic realities have also changed. With regard to the former they are self-evident in the increase in climate change, the increase in disasters, the spread of extreme weather etc.. However in terms of the economic realities and the economic fundamentals "I would argue that in some ways yes but in many ways no." At the height of the economic crisis affecting the US and Europe some of the emerging economies continued to grow. But what we often forget is that this growth was a result of the flexibilities that were built into these economies as a result of

the previous financial crisis in the late 1990s. The flexibility demonstrated by the developing countries in the late 2000s has now diminished. The World Bank has observed that there is increasing economic vulnerability in the developing economies, including the BRICs. Now the narrative has changed from a few years ago, and the rich nations are once again the drivers of economic growth while the developing countries have stumbled. This is evident when trade deficits are considered in developing countries.

Another economic reality is that out of the two billion people who are living below the poverty line (less than USD 2 per day) only 500 million live in Least Developed Countries. 1.2 billion or more live in middle income countries. “That is why while it may be true that some things have changed in the past two decades much more also remains the same. The economic fundamentals have remained the same since the 1990s when many of these structural changes started” he observed.

“We have to ensure that the narratives reflect historical realities. This is very relevant when we explore what needs to be done to address climate change in particular. When addressing issues such as climate financing, transfer of climate technologies and disaster preparedness we need to deal with the historical realities that have created the imbalances” Mr. Yu said. What have caused global warming are the emissions by the developed countries since the industrial revolution. At least 70% of the emissions up to now were carried out by developed countries. This is where the numerous issues of climate financing, green economy, technology transfer etc. comes in. This implies that while universality is important there should be a continuous recognition that the North-South division still matters when considering what kind of cooperation to agree upon. It is this concept that allows to lay an important foundation on the type of international cooperation required to find solutions. “It is not simply that we can say global problems exist. Therefore global solutions have to apply and we all have to have the same levels of commitments.” That simply allows avoiding the historical context of the current problems.

With regard to climate finance there are several studies that have indicated the money required. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in 2011 estimated that USD 1.1 trillion a year of additional investments would be required in order to shift to more sustainable way of economic development. When we juxtapose that with what is happening in the climate negotiations where developed countries have

targeted to raise 100 billion even though it is not clear how that is to be achieved, the FfD negotiations where the developed countries are refusing to provide additional ODA and where the implementation of the Development Agenda is being held hostage to the outcome of the FfD process the picture looks grim. In this context it is clear that the level of North- South cooperation is rapidly diminishing. That is a reality the global community needs to address. If not the outcomes of these processes currently underway may not match the physical realities that we need to address. “We cannot afford to do that.”

A lively interactive session followed the presentation by the panellists. Probing questions such as what would constitute success in the FfD process in Addis Ababa and the level to which International Organisations were engaged in the process of formulating the Post-2015 Development Agenda were extensively discussed.

The Secretariat of Group Fifteen:

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