

**Informal Notes of the Breakfast Dialogue on the Follow-up to Rio+20  
and the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

***Measuring progress in the UN sustainable development agenda***

12 December 2012

Organized by the Baha'i International Community and International Movement ATD Fourth World

A diverse group of stakeholders<sup>1</sup> convened to informally discuss key issues on the topic of measuring progress. The following are highlights of the comments made during this discussion:

- What gets measured gets done. The measurement of progress towards goals helps to create the basis for greater accountability, generate empirical evidence, marshal resources and secure stakeholder buy-in.
- MDGs focused on goals that were readily measurable. Strength of the MDGs was their simplicity, targeting and consensus. Simplicity helped with communication but was overly reductionistic, often misallocating resources and misrepresenting priorities.
- Need to balance simplicity with comprehensiveness. Not every development issue can be included in the Post-2015 framework.
- While inequality was a concern expressed in many of the declarations of the 1990s, it wasn't politically acceptable and therefore was not represented in the MDGs.
- Rio+20 set out the criteria for the SDGs: they must be relevant to all countries, must be thematically balanced, must address freedom from want as well as freedom from fear.
- Elements of the Post-2015 development agenda must emerge through the voices of the people themselves—that will make the agenda more legitimate.
- Global goals must be universal but must be tailored to the national (or subnational) contexts and must take account of the different starting points in various countries. It is more helpful to look at the pace of progress than absolute measures when holding countries accountable. Sometimes, the 'off-track' countries are making the most progress.
- We need a transformative agenda that goes beyond the 'basic needs' approach and the 'cost, count, deliver' approach.
- The G8 Muskoka Initiative on 'Maternal, Newborn and Under-Five Child Health' (2010) and the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health (Convened by WHO) have generated insights on the role of measurement in helping to communicate goals and outcomes.
- Accountability applies to donors, partner governments, elected representatives, oversight mechanisms and those who design the development programs, as well as civil society. Yet, not everyone can be accountable for everything—who is accountable to whom? Civil society must be involved in the measurement of progress towards targets.
- International human rights framework must reflect the meaning of poverty as both the deprivation of civic and political rights as well as social and cultural rights.
- It would be a mistake to allow the Post-2015 agenda to be guided by the data that already exists. Our approach must shift from 'treasuring what we measure' to 'measuring what we treasure.' We have become seduced by the 'magic' of numbers. E.g. The HDI is not a proxy for human development.
- The MDGs came out of the Millennium Declaration. We need a broader discussion about the principles that should underlie Post-2015 development planning.
- Human development and economic development are not mutually exclusive. The private sector is being driven by a public relations focus rather than an understanding of their responsibilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Permanent Missions represented: Bhutan, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Madagascar, Mongolia, Peru, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, and United Kingdom. UN represented: Division for Social Policy and Development (DESA), Division for Sustainable Development (DESA), Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Millennium Campaign, Non-Governmental Liaison Service, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNFPA, UNICEF. Civil society organizations represented: Bahá'í International Community, CIVICUS, Franciscans International, Global Call to Action Against Poverty, Global Policy Forum, Good Shepherd International Justice Peace Office, International Movement ATD Fourth World, United Nations Foundation, Women's Environment and Development Organization, World Vision International, and YWCA.

The following questions raised by participants could serve to stimulate future discussions:

- Is it premature to talk about goals before we have addressed the broader issues of vision and goals?
- How can we ensure coherence between the Rio+20 processes and the post-2015 agenda?
- In terms of universal accountability, is there a process similar to the UPR that could be instituted vis a vis development goals?
- Should we have two sets of goals: those that are more readily measurable and those that are more difficult to measure?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of the private sector in the Post-2015 development agenda?