

Informal Notes of the Breakfast Dialogue on the Follow-up to Rio+20 and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, 13 September 2012 (Topic: SDGs)

Organized by the Bahá'í International Community and International Movement ATD Fourth World

A diverse group of stakeholders¹ convened at this second of a series of informal meetings to discuss on the topic of Sustainable Development Goals. The following are a few highlights of the comments made during this discussion:

- It is important to differentiate between Brazil's role as facilitator in the formation of the SDG working group (WG) and not that of chairing the WG.
- There is a procedural aspect (twin processes of UN-led post-2015 and intergovernmental SDG WG) that should be taken into account. Reference was made to A/67/257 paragraph 69 that suggests a way to converge the two.
- There is a false dichotomy of Rio+20/SDGs being considered the 'green agenda' vs. the MDGs being the 'poverty agenda.' Yet, there is no actual conceptual opposition – reference was made to paragraph 2 of Rio+20 outcome document that situates “eradicating poverty” as “an indispensable requirement for sustainable development”.
- MDGs concerned themselves with the relationship between the materially rich and poor countries. SDGs are meant to be universal in nature should apply to all countries.
- It is important to take a holistic approach (instead of a fragmented one) both in conceptualizing the issues and in creating solutions to address them.
- A growing number of voices are saying the world is at a dangerous precipice and the key is empowerment through a 'people-centered approach'.
- It is important to draw a clear distinction between input and analysis generation vs. decision-making portions of the processes.
- People living in extreme poverty will be most affected by decisions. Hence, it is important to view them not as victims but as actors and should be part of the consultation and decision making process.
- The President of the General Assembly encouraged civil society to speak with a common voice in order to have greater impact. Yet, the role of civil society is to bring a diversity of perspectives to the table and this diversity should be embraced. Resources for CSO engagement in post-2015 processes are scarce and may lead to competition and a 'might makes right' environment.
- Not all CSOs emphasized human rights enough at Rio+20 and must do so more in post-2015 processes.
- Post-2015 agenda must address the economic and social costs of violence, the inter-linkages between violence, gender and poverty.
- It is a multi-polar world and it is critical to move away from the North-South dichotomy to better reflect global realities. (Though the realities of the concentration of wealth in the North hasn't really changed.)
- Among the key SDG issues are: integration, universality (taking into account specificities), flexibility and inclusiveness.
- The post-2015 agenda should bring back a broader approach to development and reverse the 'narrowing of the development discourse' that was propelled by the MDG framework, and in so doing, not reversing the gains made on MDGs and help to finish the unfinished business.

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

- How do we give the SDGs a global, visionary character? The agenda we define post-2015 needs to be applicable to all. What is the overarching concept that will engage all countries?
- How is a truly comprehensive agenda going to take into consideration trade, property rights, financing, etc.?
These dimensions have tremendous impact on all countries.
- How can development and security be approached together?
- What modalities could be proposed for CSO-SDG Working Group interactions? A suggestion was to incorporate an augmented Major Group mechanism from Rio+20.

The following upcoming related activities were shared:

- The Nigerian Mission is hosting an MDG side event on September 27th 10am, Millennium UN Plaza Hotel.
- International Movement ATD Fourth World is conducting a participatory research study directly engaging people experiencing extreme poverty.
- Commemoration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, October 17th 1.15pm, ECOSOC Chamber.
- The next breakfast dialogues are currently planned for week of October 8th on Inequalities and week of October 29th on Human Rights.

¹ The following Permanent Missions were represented: Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Guatemala, Guyana, India, Nigeria, Singapore, Switzerland and United Kingdom. The following UN agencies were present: UN DESA, UNDP, UNICEF, UN OHCHR and UN Women. These civil society organizations were present: The Bahá'í International Community, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Global Policy Forum Europe, International Disability Association, International Movement ATD Fourth World, Stakeholder Forum and UN Foundation.