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North-South divide in talks on post-2015 development agenda

Negotiations to draw up a blueprint for global development in the next 15 years have commenced at the United Nations. The talks have however been marked by significant differences, largely between developed and developing countries, over the elements to be incorporated in this post-2015 development agenda and how they are to be addressed.

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**THIRD WORLD
Economics**

Trends & Analysis

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Post-2015 declaration – one step forward, two steps back?

Divisions between developed and developing countries are threatening to complicate UN talks to craft a global development agenda for the next 15 years. Faultlines have opened up even over issues that had been agreed to in a previous round of negotiations on a set of Sustainable Development Goals for the international community.

by *Ranja Sengupta and Mirza Alas*

NEW DELHI: As the discussion on the declaration of the post-2015 development agenda gets underway, differences between developing and developed countries that are likely to loom over the rest of the post-2015 negotiations have become clearer.

The political declaration is to set the framework for the post-2015 development agenda and spell out the broader common principles, commitments and objectives that the agenda is founded on.

A first discussion took place at the UN headquarters in New York on 16-20 February on an elements paper circulated earlier by the co-chairs of the post-2015 process, Ambassadors David Donoghue (Ireland) and Macharia Kamau (Kenya). After the elements discussion, an outline of the draft declaration was considered by member states.

At the UN Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that convened in 2013-14, intense negotiations resulted, among others, in the chapeau to the Goals. The chapeau was based on considerable discussions during the one-and-a-half-year tenure of the OWG, and is part of the OWG's report on SDGs that has been agreed to by the full UN General Assembly as the basis of the post-2015 declaration.

However, it is clear that the post-2015 talks are going back to the drawing board for the declaration, as significant and agreed elements of the OWG report, including the agreed chapeau, are being challenged.

For example, the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) and of universality but with differentiation were both contested by several developed countries. On the other hand, new configurations, including the six elements of the synthesis report of the UN Secretary-General on the post-2015 agenda, not agreed to as such by member states, are now put on the table by

developed countries.

Means of implementation (MOI) and a global partnership for development led by governments were hardly mentioned by the developed countries, while multistakeholder partnerships with a downplaying of the roles and responsibility of governments, especially those in developed countries, were a recurrent theme. The key role of the private sector, challenged repeatedly by most civil society organizations, continues to be echoed again and again.

Brazil notably cautioned against abstract references to "enabling environment" and "multistakeholder partnerships", and stressed that "undue emphasis on partnerships minimizes the primary responsibility of states, while overplaying the role of the private sector."

The emphasis from developed countries, following the elements paper that was debated by member states, seemed to be on having a simple and communicable declaration. In contrast, developing countries, represented by the Group of 77 and China and groupings of the least developed countries (LDCs), the small island developing states (SIDS) and the African Group, repeatedly demanded that the SDG document be respected and that the key principles already recognized must underpin the declaration. CBDR is one such principle that was most mentioned. Adhering to the agreed principles set in the Rio processes is necessary, according to many developing countries.

While most developing countries showed a willingness to discuss the six elements suggested by the Secretary-General (SG)'s synthesis report, they reiterated that the SDGs should be the basis of the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda, as agreed in the General Assembly last year.

Most of the developing countries, the LDCs and SIDS wanted poverty eradication to be recognized as the pri-

mary objective of the agenda and reiterated the importance of means of implementation and the global partnership for development.

Several developing countries mentioned human rights including the right to development. Many statements, while recognizing the need for a simple and communicable declaration, cautioned against oversimplification of complex and multilayered concepts that must underpin the declaration and strengthen the commitments that will help the global community deliver on this agenda.

The next version of the draft declaration is expected to come out before May and further discussions on the declaration will take place anytime before July.

The following is a report on the discussion on the elements paper at the February session; the discussion on the draft declaration is covered in the article that follows.

The elements paper

The elements paper was circulated earlier by the co-chairs to be a basis for discussion on the declaration. The paper is divided into several segments: a collective vision of the road to 2030; what must be done to get there; how this will be done; follow-up and review; commitment; and final call to action. It recognizes poverty, climate change, the degradation of the natural world, inequality within and between countries, vulnerability and exclusion, institutional failures, and economic/social/environmental shocks and challenges, including those undermining peaceful and just societies.

However, the paper has already been criticized for some big misses.

Roberto Bissio of Social Watch pointed out: "The most striking feature of the 'elements' paper is that a document that is supposed to preamble a new development agenda of the UN does not include the word 'development'. The only mention of 'development' is when developing countries are being called to generate an 'enabling environment' (for the corporate sector) while the Global Partnership for Development is reduced to a mechanism to discipline developing countries to implement the required governance changes and to promote the partnerships with the private sector!"

It has also been pointed out by analysts that while the paper was framed (in part) by the six elements in the SG's syn-

thesis report, it fails to even once mention the SDGs, discussed and agreed in the OWG in July 2014 and agreed to by member states as the basis for the General Assembly negotiations in the post-2015 process.

(The synthesis report suggests six essential elements: dignity, people, prosperity, planet, justice and partnership. However, this reclassification of goals and objectives away from the SDGs had been criticized even after its release on 4 December 2014.)

Again there seems to be an attempt in the elements paper to reclassify the goals into three categories: those that are nationally defined; global targets to apply universally; and goals that "leave no one behind" but at the same time "balance and integrate the social, economic and environmental dimensions".

Bissio asks, "Who is going to rearrange the SDGs under these categories and for what purpose?"

Any attempt to reclassify could also lead to the danger of opening up the SDGs or to prioritizing some goals over others, a concern expressed by several civil society analysts.

In defining "How we will do this", the paper dissociates the global partnership for development from MOI when the former's role was to facilitate the latter.

Bissio argues that the elements paper reduces the global partnership for development to an "enabling environment" to be created by national governments in developing countries where "multistakeholder partnerships", obviously led by the private sector, can then flourish. This can exonerate the developed countries of responsibility towards helping developing countries to achieve the SDGs.

Values and principles

The Group of 77 and China (G77) thanked the co-facilitators for the elements paper and noted that the declaration must be contextualized around values and principles that continue to rally the international community, and address the current fundamental challenges confronting humanity, in particular poverty with its multidimensionality, to ensure equal opportunities for all.

Moreover, the declaration must also call for concrete steps to implement the post-2015 development agenda. The Group highlighted that the declaration must draw from agreed outcomes of pre-

vious summits and processes.

The G77 wanted a declaration for an ambitious, transformative and action-oriented sustainable development agenda that is "guided by the Rio principles, in particular the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities. In our view, there can be no renegotiation of this seminal principle for international cooperation on sustainable development. In this regard, the declaration must recognize the criticality of balancing the universality of the agenda with differentiation, to acknowledge the different responsibilities, capacities and circumstances among countries that continue to pose challenges for the realization of development aspirations by the developing countries".

The Group noted that through the declaration "our leaders could use the occasion to reaffirm the commitment of the international community to all human rights and strengthen our commitment to the right to development, including the right to acceptable standard of living".

Furthermore, the declaration should emphasize the importance of territorial integrity, sovereignty and policy space to allow member states to adapt the Sustainable Development Goals and targets to national development plans and strategies. Accordingly, the declaration should reaffirm that poverty eradication is the greatest global challenge and logically an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

The Group underscored the special challenges facing the most vulnerable countries in achieving sustainable development.

The G77 reiterated the view that "the success of the post-2015 development agenda will largely hinge on the Means of Implementation and continued development assistance to the developing countries.

"In this regard, the declaration should clearly state the need for the United Nations and developed countries to support developing countries in implementing the post-2015 development agenda through the much-needed Means of Implementation, including through mobilization of additional resources, increasing market access, facilitating technology transfer on concessional and preferential terms and strengthening capacity-building.

"Technology facilitation and capacity building will be crucial for the achievement of the sustainable develop-

ment goals. Delivery on the means of implementation will require broad and deep cooperation and therefore the declaration must call for the revitalization and strengthening of the global partnership for sustainable development."

The Group maintained that the declaration should emphasize the need for fundamental changes in the way societies produce and consume, which are indispensable for achieving global sustainable development.

"Our longstanding view as the Group of 77 and China has been that all countries should take action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries," the statement stressed.

Most vulnerable

Benin, on behalf of the LDCs, said that the group wants a declaration that is "concise, visionary, ambitious, actionable and communicable and simple, which is action-oriented and understandable by all".

Benin said that the collective vision for 2030 is poverty eradication and tackling multidimensional challenges of climate change and environmental degradation, iterative economic and social crises and widening inequalities.

Benin also said that "in our universal approach to the challenges, we take into account the specificities and realities of each country, in particular that we pay due attention to the situation of the most vulnerable countries, namely the LDCs, because most of them were unable to achieve the MDGs [Millennium Development Goals]."

"As regards our group, being at the bottom of the ladder of the development scale, and standing to gain from the higher awareness of common humanity with the highest possible ambition ... the declaration should emphasize the principle of 'leaving no one behind'."

The LDCs called for a reaffirmation of the basic principles of the UN and the Rio Declaration, in particular Principle 6, which specifies that "the special situation and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed and those most environmentally vulnerable, shall be given special priority, while addressing the interests and needs of all countries."

The statement also highlighted Principle 7 about CBDR "which is the basis for the principle of preferential and dif-

ferential treatment of LDCs which should guide the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda".

The group wanted a reaffirmation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (which was adopted by the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries held in Istanbul in 2011). The group further wanted a substantive increase in LDCs' share in official development assistance (ODA) and strengthening of their voice and representation in institutions of global governance.

The LDCs reiterated their support to the SDGs and targets adopted by the General Assembly and wanted a clear reference to the SDGs as the backbone of the agenda, while recognizing the nature of the elements in the SG's synthesis report on which it was ready to discuss more.

African position

Mozambique, on behalf of the African Group, expressed its concern with the way MOI was reflected in the paper. MOI should include trade, finance, technology transfer and global partnership. Also, it is important to incorporate the outcomes of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (to be held in Addis Ababa in July) in the post-2015 development agenda. Moreover, the declaration should reaffirm the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities as stated in the "Future We Want" document, said the Group.

The Common African Position outlined Africa's development priorities grouped into six pillars, namely structural economic transformation and inclusive growth; science, technology and innovation; people-centred development; environmental sustainability, natural resources management and disaster risk management; peace and security; and finance and partnerships.

Mozambique highlighted that poverty eradication and sustainable development will not be achieved as long as questions of peace and security are not properly dealt with.

According to the African Group, the declaration should incorporate the specific needs of different groups of countries, namely African countries, LDCs, SIDS, landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and middle-income countries.

It also reiterated the carry-over of the unfinished business of the MDGs in the new global development agenda, under-

scored poverty eradication as the central objective of the post-2015 agenda and called on development partners who are yet to honour their commitments to developing countries to deliver on the agenda.

Belize, on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), acknowledged the useful elements that had been provided and noted the challenges ahead.

Referring to the question posed by the co-chairs on "what challenges we will need to overcome to make this vision a reality", CARICOM said "the easy answer ... is means of implementation and a renewed global partnership. These are indisputably critical to support sustainable development. Presently, we are revisiting the policy framework for financing for development that will be an essential component of the post-2015 development agenda".

CARICOM stressed that apart from financing, structural and inherent causes that affect LDCs or SIDS also need to be addressed. It asked for an agenda that can differentiate global responses for these particular cases and the globally agreed outcomes of the international conferences on the countries in special situations to form and be incorporated in the declaration as an integral part of the whole post-2015 development agenda.

Belize said that SIDS are inherently vulnerable to external crises and shocks that have persistently constrained their development. Moreover, climate change, the volatility of the global economy and their own limited fiscal space due to high debt burdens further exacerbate these inherent vulnerabilities. Their sustainable development will therefore depend on building economic, environmental and social resilience.

"At the global level this will necessitate global trade reforms including enhanced financial and technical assistance, the extension of trade preferences, more flexible rules of origin and other forms of special and differential treatment; it will require global financial system reforms to improve the flow of finance to the Caribbean and to reduce volatility; as well as mechanisms for international collaboration on technology and capacity building; new approaches to measuring development progress; a more democratic and coherent international development cooperation system; and improved institutions including strengthened data and monitoring sys-

tems for evidence-based decision making, accountability and transparency.”

The Maldives, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), emphasised that the declaration should be concise, visionary and ambitious to make the message meaningful and impactful. It however expressed difficulty in using the term “simple” and reiterated the need for the declaration to stress the complexity of the ambitious agenda.

The Maldives underlined that the 17 Sustainable Development Goals should provide the basis for the agenda. Further, the declaration should articulate the political commitment to achieve these goals within a 15-year period.

It welcomed the recognition of the needs of countries in special situations and noted the need to build resilience, including to environmental shocks and degradation, and build the productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems.

AOSIS pointed out the need to mobilize and deliver adequate, sufficient and predictable MOI. It stressed that the global partnership can only be realized through an inclusive dialogue anchored in national ownership and empowered through partnerships based upon mutual collaborations and ownership, trust, alignment, harmonization, respect, accountability and transparency.

The UN system and the international community also need to support developing countries, in particular the SIDS, in strengthening their national institutions so that these institutions can become implementing agencies, it said.

Tonga spoke for the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS), emphasizing that the declaration should highlight that the SDG framework “sets out the universal ambitious agenda to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development while healing the health of our planet.”

The group supported the elements paper on the framework that is accountable, in particular, to the needs of countries in special situations. The declaration must affirm that SIDS such as the PSIDS remain a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities. It asked that the priorities of SIDS in the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) adopted in 2014 be incorporated into the post-2015 agenda.

The group also reiterated its support for the goal on climate change, and asked that all elements of the post-2015 de-

velopment agenda including the declaration integrate gender perspectives.

Egypt said that the declaration “should be concise, ambitious, recognize that poverty eradication is the overarching objective and is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development; build on the principles expressed in the outcome document of Rio+20 [the UN Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012] particularly the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities”.

It also said that the report of the OWG on SDGs “will be the main basis for integrating sustainable development goals in the agenda.”

Egypt suggested that the declaration should recognize “the importance of providing the necessary MOI for the implementation of the agenda, noting that achieving the transformative and ambitious agenda requires increasing ODA commitments to 1% of GNI [gross national income]”.

It specifically mentioned issues related to sustainable consumption and production, commitments on terrorism, and the rights of people living under occupation to self-determination.

Staying the course

Brazil provided a specific critique of the elements paper and suggested that “consensus will be easier if we stay the course and avoid changing language and concepts that are the building blocks of our road towards a successful and transformational outcome for the post-2015 development agenda”.

It said that the elements paper does not reflect the fundamental goals, established by heads of state and government in Rio, of poverty eradication, changing sustainable consumption and production patterns with developed countries taking the lead, and promoting the sustainable management of the natural resource base of economic and social development.

Brazil said that “as decided by the General Assembly, the Open Working Group report shall be the main basis for mainstreaming the SDGs into the post-2015 development agenda. Brazil insists that all documents for the September [2015] summit [which is scheduled to adopt the post-2015 development agenda] preserve the priorities, political balance, and conceptual formulations of Rio+20 and the OWG report”.

On the SG’s synthesis report, Brazil said that “the six elements ... are an interesting concept we could constructively try to work with, to the extent that they do not change or reinterpret the OWG agreed outcome”. In particular, Brazil suggested a smaller set of not six but four elements, such as “people”, “prosperity”, “planet” and “partnership”.

It suggested that there must be commitment to concluding the “unfinished business of the MDGs, carrying over for this purpose the sum total of ODA unmet by donors, in addition to new and additional resources”.

Brazil pointed out: “Developed countries, in particular, will need to reflect the universal nature of goals and more ambitious commitments in their national planning, engaging governmental actors and other relevant stakeholders beyond their international aid structures and official cooperation agencies. The political declaration should acknowledge that this transition is crucial to the success of the new agenda, and call for the support of civil society, parliamentarians, and the private sector in this regard.”

It highlighted the importance of civil society consultations and inputs into this process. It added that the “How we will do this” section “does not refer to international public cooperation, official development assistance or South-South cooperation. These are clear expressions of commitments at the intergovernmental level that cannot be replaced by abstract references to ‘enabling environment’ and ‘multistakeholder partnerships’. In fact, undue emphasis on partnerships minimizes the primary responsibility of states, while overplaying the role of the private sector. We have to do just the opposite.”

Brazil underscored how the SDGs represent a paradigm shift for the UN development system, mainstreaming the concept of sustainable development and making it universal and applicable to all, while taking into account the different capacities and responsibilities of countries, in accordance with the principle of CBDR. The political declaration also cannot shy away from a renewed commitment of leaders to promoting more legitimate and representative institutions of global governance, capable of responding better to the increased complexities of today’s interdependent world.

India said that “the very first prin-

ciple for the crafting of the declaration is the need to fully respect agreed principles and notions that have been endorsed by member states in recent years and months”.

India categorically stated that it saw no reason for the Rio+20 consensus outcome to be renegotiated. “Of the Rio principles, of particular importance is the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, which is rooted in a vision of our shared and common responsibilities, while calling for differentiation in action. Speaking as it does of equity in international relations, the principle of differentiation is not only not in contradiction to the notion of universality, but in fact complementary to it,” India pointed out.

India said the chapeau of the SDGs “contains important understandings and guidance—for example on the global and aspirational nature of the agenda, the holistic and indivisible nature of the SDGs and the need for respecting national circumstances. There is merit therefore in including it fully in the declaration.”

Rather than selective mention of today’s challenges in the elements paper, it said, “global consensus on the common challenges confronting the world is encapsulated in the SDGs themselves” and should be retained.

“The holistic and comprehensive canvas of the SDGs is the collective vision to which all of us now need to work on for the next 15 years. This must be a core message of the declaration,” according to India.

The six elements suggested in the SG’s synthesis report need more discussion, India argued, supporting Brazil’s proposal of four elements.

China said that “the declaration should be based mainly on the Rio+20 outcome document and the preambular paragraphs of the [OWG] Report of SDGs, [and] elaborate on the significance of the post-2015 development agenda”.

It added that “the declaration should reiterate the purpose and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, ‘Rio Principles’ and other important principles of international development cooperation, particularly those guiding principles such as respecting diversity of development models, ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’”. The agenda “should be flexible enough to take into consideration differences in national circumstances, capacities and stages of development while respecting their development policies and priorities”.

China further said that the six ele-

ments proposed by the synthesis report of the SG lack consensus among member states and deserve further discussion. The declaration should reflect the international consensus on development and avoid any deviation from the theme of development by inclusion of too many irrelevant issues.

It also added that the declaration should reflect the international community’s political will to create a fair, open and orderly international economic environment.

The declaration should enhance global partnership for development and its means of implementation, China underlined. “The international community should strengthen more fair and balanced global partnership for development, with intergovernmental North-South cooperation serving as the main channel. South-South cooperation and private sectors are complementary. Developed countries should honour their ODA commitments, and establish and improve mechanisms for technology transfer to support capacity building for developing countries,” China said.

Evolving dynamics

The European Union argued that the elements paper still singles out Rio Principle 7 on CBDR, which it said was designed in the context of global environmental degradation and as such cannot apply to the entire agenda. In addition, the world has changed dramatically over the last decades, including countries’ respective capabilities to address global challenges. The post-2015 development agenda needs to respond to these evolving dynamics in light of different national circumstances.

The EU reiterated the importance of building peaceful and inclusive societies, strengthening institutions, promoting the rule of law and good governance.

The EU also spoke of issues in which there are still difficulties. It noted that the new global partnership must mobilize all actors and resources at all levels. It must be clear that the agreement in Addis Ababa (on financing for development) would then be integrated into the September outcome and result in one single framework, it said.

The United Kingdom aligned itself with the EU statement and also noted that the declaration needs to explain, in a clear and simple way, what the post-2015 agenda is actually about. “In this regard, something like the Secretary-General’s six essential elements would be helpful to convey the key themes of our collective commitment and ambi-

tion, whilst preserving the balance of the OWG agenda, including our commitment to justice and peaceful societies.”

The UK mentioned human rights, and said that rule of law, peace and security, strong and accountable institutions, dignity, equality, empowerment and democratic governance are universal values to which all adhere. It stated its commitment to a new global partnership that harnesses the dynamism and expertise of all sustainable development actors, including the private sector and civil society.

The UK said that “whilst we fully recognize and respect that countries have differing national circumstances, we believe the principle of CBDR has a specific meaning in the context of environmental degradation and does not apply as a holistic principle to the post-2015 development agenda.”

Germany, echoing the EU position, noted that CBDR as set out in Rio Principle 7 in 1992 cannot apply as an overarching principle to a holistic agenda. Rio Principle 7 has a clear limitation to environmental degradation.

Germany also stressed on the need for an effective communication tool as suggested by the SG in his synthesis report.

On MOI, Germany said that a “new global partnership for sustainable development is not only about MOI but an overarching concept based on the guiding principles of universality, shared responsibility, mutual accountability, consideration of respective capabilities, and the adoption of a multistakeholder approach – principles valid for the entire agenda”.

Japan underlined that the paragraph on the principles and values should only refer to those that have a universal and overarching nature. It suggested the adoption of the six elements as suggested in the SG’s synthesis report. Cherry-picking part of them, reorganizing or reshuffling them would undermine the integral nature of SDGs and would lead to a reopening of the controversial issues, it said.

Japan welcomed paragraph 9 of the elements paper which strikes a good balance between the universality of the agenda and the differences in capacities to cope with the challenges according to country.

“Our life would have been much, much easier if CBDR meant this, which is not the case,” Japan said. It welcomed the reference to the multistakeholder global partnership in paragraphs 12 and 15. (SUNS7976) □

Wide gaps emerge over post-2015 declaration

The differences along North-South lines over the elements paper for the post-2015 process were mirrored in subsequent discussions at the February session on the declaration that would set the framework of the post-2015 development agenda.

by Ranja Sengupta

NEW DELHI: The United Nations negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda in New York saw member states inching towards a political declaration amidst considerable differences.

The declaration is to lay the broader framework on which the more specific elements of the agenda will rest in a separate outcome document. These will be adopted at a UN summit on 25-27 September titled "Delivering on and Implementing a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda".

The declaration was discussed at the second session of the post-2015 process on 16-20 February at the UN headquarters in New York. The first session in January (see following article) was a stocktaking one.

The co-facilitators of the negotiations, Ambassadors David Donoghue (Ireland) and Macharia Kamau (Kenya), tabled a "Discussion Document for Declaration" at around the midpoint of the February session. This document drew from responses to the elements paper circulated earlier by the co-facilitators and which had received a round of comments during the first part of the February session.

From the member states' views on the elements paper, major differences were evident between the developed and the developing countries on several aspects of what should be in the declaration, especially regarding the underlying principles. In particular, the reference to common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) was stressed by all developing countries but rejected by the developed countries.

Discussion document

The discussion document contains 15 paragraphs. It does seem to incorporate several of the suggestions offered by both the developed and developing countries, and is therefore a list of the suggestions, but does not by any means represent a consensus.

At the very beginning, the co-facili-

tators stated their view that "to be effective, this declaration should not exceed three pages".

The first paragraph declares that the agenda will have a bold and ambitious vision and include transformational goals and targets. The second paragraph talks about the link and "unfinished business" of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This issue had been raised by several member states in the first phase of the discussion.

While this paragraph does provide a link with the MDGs, it still falls short of the 'asks'. Many member states had asked for continuity and integration between the MDGs and the post-2015 agenda, taking forward and building on commitments made under the MDGs including MDG 8 (global partnership for development).

Paragraph 3 identifies the "major global challenges to sustainable development, such as poverty and exclusion, unemployment, climate change, conflict and humanitarian crises".

Paragraph 4 mentions the underlying values of the UN. Paragraph 5 is specifically about the importance of building peaceful and inclusive societies, strengthening governance and institutions, and promoting the rule of law.

This had been a major point of contention during the discussions in the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on Goal 16 related to this issue. Finally, the OWG formulated Goal 16 along the lines of "access to justice" to meet the concerns of all member states. (The negotiated SDG 16 reads: "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.") However, this particular listing of issues was brought up by several developed countries again during the February discussion on the declaration.

The discussion document goes on to say that "poverty eradication is the greatest global challenge facing our world",

that "no one will be left behind", and that "no target will be considered met unless it is met for all economic and social groupings" (paragraph 7). There is a specific mention of gender equality and women's empowerment as critical for sustainable development. While the objective of poverty eradication as the primary goal has been agreed to by almost all, the standard set by the last could raise some concerns among poorer member states.

The document in paragraph 8 also acknowledges that the needs of countries in special situations – least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), African countries – and of countries facing special challenges (conflict-affected countries and middle-income countries) have to be addressed.

During the first part of the session, the Group of 77 and China, LDCs, SIDS, PSIDS and the African Group had all called strongly for a specific recognition of countries in special situations and specific commitments for addressing their needs.

Paragraph 9 says that the agenda must be universal and applicable to all countries, but "at the same time we take into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development". It goes on to say that "national ownership is critical". This universality principle but with differentiation taking into account national-level situations was a major ask from the developing countries.

The document specifically mentions the need for action to combat climate change, widest possible international co-operation and the urgency of a universal climate agreement. This issue had also been raised by several member states. (In the ongoing negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, CBDR, which is an underlying principle of the Convention, is also contested by developed countries.)

Under paragraph 11, there is the mention of SDGs and targets as the basis of the new agenda, and mention of "the six essential elements in the Secretary-General's synthesis report, wholly or in part, important as a means of characterizing outcomes of global efforts."

The recognition that the SDGs form the basis of the post-2015 negotiations, as agreed in the General Assembly, had been strongly called for by the G77 and separately raised by many developing countries.

It is important to note that the ele-

ments paper actually had no clear mention of the SDGs at all. The six elements discussed in the SG's synthesis report had been advanced as the key framework in the elements paper, and several developing countries had wanted further discussions on it. Brazil, for example, had suggested using four of these elements rather than six, i.e., "people", "prosperity", "planet" and "partnership".

Paragraph 12 of the discussion document says that "implementation will require an ambitious and effective global partnership which will deliver in full on global goals". While there is mention of an "ambitious and effective" global partnership, there is no mention of this having to be led by governments, let alone of the greater responsibility of developed-country governments.

Multistakeholder partnership is of course highlighted, and the paragraph talks of "active engagement needed from governments as well as civil society, the private sector and the UN system".

The responsibility of governments in this global partnership for development is again placed on par with all other partners including the private sector, a concern repeatedly voiced by many civil society organizations and some government delegations.

Paragraph 12 also says "[we] welcome the agreement reached in Addis Ababa on Means of Implementation", referring to the upcoming Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) in July. This seems quite in contrast to what several developing countries have been articulating during both the January and February sessions. They clearly articulated that while the FfD process may have important bearing on the post-2015 process, means of implementation (MOI) in the post-2015 agenda is in addition to and independent of the FfD outcome.

(It is worth noting that the MOI components of the SDG document, i.e., Goal 17 as well as the goal-specific components of MOI for Goals 1-16, have been intensely discussed and agreed to as part of the OWG-SDG process, and are included in the OWG's final report that was adopted by the General Assembly in 2014 as the basis for the current post-2015 negotiations.)

Paragraph 14 of the discussion document delves into the principles underpinning the declaration. It says that the "agenda is guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Grounded also in the (UN Declaration on Human Rights) and other

human rights commitments, including the right to development. Inspired by the Rio Declaration (including, inter alia, the principle of CBDR) and by the Millennium Declaration. Based also on Rio+20 Outcome Document, and on proposal of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. Informed by SG's Synthesis Report".

It is curious that the principles underlying the declaration come at the end rather than the beginning of the document, as this should be the major foundation of the declaration as well as the post-2015 development agenda itself. The principles find themselves in the penultimate paragraph in spite of specific requests from certain member states that this part be moved up to the first section.

It is also interesting that CBDR finds a cursory mention within brackets considering this was the most consistent ask across the developing countries. The dilution of the principles perhaps is a clear indication of the battles that are to come over the declaration.

The 15th and last paragraph ends with a "final call to action which could recall the foundation of the UN 70 years ago and draw parallels with the scale of the challenge faced today and the response now decided on by world leaders. Emphasis on significance of new agenda for ordinary people around the world".

There is also a mention of the "vital contributions to be made by governments, parliaments, private sector, civil society etc" again, as in paragraph 12, putting at par the role of governments and other actors.

At the end, there is a clear mention of the timeline for ending poverty and the last sentence says "we commit to achieving the goal of ending poverty within fifteen years and of preserving our planet for today's young people and future generations".

It is to be noted that this discussion document does not provide final language and is just another step in the move towards reaching an agreed declaration.

Member states' responses

Initial comments were made by member states on the discussion document. Given the limited time to respond, many country groupings did not give inputs, due presumably to lack of time for coordination.

The Group of 77 and China at the

very outset suggested that the length of the declaration should be determined later according to the content (responding to the co-facilitators' preference for no more than three pages).

The Group wanted a discussion document that "reflects a balance of the SDGs as contained in the OWG-SDGs Report" and in which "the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs and lessons learnt should also be addressed".

It also pointed out that "we need to adhere to the agreed conceptual frameworks such as the OWG on SDGs Report to ensure integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development".

The Group said that "paragraphs addressing the imperative of poverty eradication must be front-loaded as this imperative is the overarching goal of the post-2015 development agenda". It found the list of challenges to be non-exhaustive and wanted future opportunities to ensure inclusion of challenges afflicting developing countries.

The G77 also noted that "the declaration makes no mention of important agreed concepts and principles such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, self-determination, cultural diversity, equality, social inclusion and sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns".

Instead of "common fundamental values", it called for adherence to the agreed formulation, namely, "purposes and principles of the UN Charter".

The Group pointed out two major lacunae with respect to policy space and CBDR. "Most importantly, the Group notes that there is no reflection of 'policy space' in the declaration to ensure national ownership and alignment with national development plans and programmes." On CBDR, the statement said, "while the notion of differentiation is acknowledged in the document, the Group would have preferred to see clear reference to the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR). The Group reiterates its view that the seminal principle of CBDR cannot be renegotiated".

The statement also suggested that any reference to the rule of law should be qualified with "national and international levels."

Reiterating the importance of the SDGs and the OWG process, the G77 said "the OWG on SDGs will serve as the main basis for the integration of the SDGs into the post-2015 development agenda while other inputs will also be considered. The Group reiterates its view

that the use of other inputs should in no way tamper with the substance and political balance of the OWG on SDGs Report”.

The statement also highlighted the comprehensive nature of MOI required for the agenda. “While we recognize that mention of the means of implementation was made in the discussion document we wish to emphasize that the means of implementation in the form of financial assistance, technology transfer and development, and capacity building remain of critical importance to the Group of 77 and China,” it pointed out.

Brazil said that “the discussion document needs to reflect an appropriate balance in regards to the SDGs that were negotiated in the Open Working Group, and to provide a vision for the future. Issues that are really transformative, such as promoting equality and changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns, should not be downplayed, as they currently are, while Goal 16 is being selectively overemphasized. In fact, it is the only goal out of 17 to deserve a single paragraph in your short and concise document. We can appreciate brevity. However, let’s not be brief at the expense of positions that are supported by many, if not a majority of member states”.

On paragraph 3, Brazil said that it misses the interlinkage between the three pillars of sustainable development.

On paragraph 4, it said that “the concept of shared responsibility contradicts CBDR. It does not take into account the idea of differentiation. If responsibility for sustainable development were now to be shared, we would be providing countries who most exploited resources and other countries in the past (colonialism and war) a clean slate, and basically relieving them of their commitments and obligations in terms of development assistance and special and differential treatment for developing countries ... Simultaneously, we would be making poor developing countries equally responsible, alongside rich developed ones, for achieving sustainable development, no matter how different or asymmetric their respective capacities to do so.”

Brazil added that “we cannot speak of shared responsibility in a context in which power, resources and representation continue to be unevenly distributed, particularly between developed and developing countries.”

It also stressed that “[SDG] Goal 16 is inadequately mentioned in isolation in paragraph 5, causing grave distortion in

our understanding of the SDG set.”

Agreeing with the idea in paragraph 7 of prioritizing the most vulnerable, Brazil disagreed with the suggestions of “no target will be considered met unless it is met for all economic and social groupings” and “leave none behind”, arguing that the latter in particular does not address issues of inequity. It is better to adhere to agreed language on “poverty eradication and combating inequality” which implies “no one is left behind and no one receives a blank cheque”.

Brazil asked that paragraph 10 refer to the conclusion of the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations “in a manner that delivers on its development mandate, fundamentally linked to the elimination of trade-distorting agricultural subsidies”. “We also need to mention the importance of reforming institutions of global governance and international financial institutions,” it added.

On paragraph 12, “the importance of technology facilitation for the achievement of the new agenda should be highlighted”.

On paragraph 14, Brazil was emphatic that “the SG’s synthesis report should be recognized as a valuable input. However, it is different in nature from agreed outcomes of intergovernmental processes, and therefore should not be mentioned alongside them on an equal footing.”

Disturbing the balance

India, in its comments, said that “generally, while we are happy that the discussion draft does capture many of the issues, it does so in a manner that is selective and somehow disturbs the balance of the SDGs”.

It also cautioned against oversimplification of the declaration. “Communicability cannot be at the cost of substance,” it stressed.

India said that “the chapeau of the SDGs is of considerable importance, but this has somehow been relegated to the background of our discussion. The chapeau in itself contains a political balance and in addition some important understandings and guidance, which cannot be separated from the SDGs themselves. The chapeau should therefore be integrated into the declaration.”

India added that “we feel it extremely important that the Rio principles, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, must be explicitly and unequivocally

reaffirmed in an early part of the declaration ... We do not agree with those who feel that this principle applies to a bygone era and nor too with their claim that it is somehow inconsistent with the notion of universality.” Refuting the claim of inconsistency of CBDR with universality, India said, “Universality is dear to us too, because it means that for the first time, developed countries would also be held to account for their actions.”

Like the G77 and Brazil, India also expressed its dissatisfaction with the listing of today’s challenges, adding that “while the ideal of no target to be considered met unless it is met for all economic and social groupings is an important one, this should not be at the cost of recognizing progress. We need to ensure that all progress will nevertheless be duly measured and accounted for.”

India also pointed to the “jarring” lack of a strong reference to technology, “which holds the golden key to the problem of sustainability”.

“In paragraph 12, we should talk [of] not only strengthening the UN but also reforming it, including its primary organs,” it said. “Paragraph 15 should recall the linkage between the Bretton Woods institutions, the WTO and the United Nations and the failure of the institutional framework created 70 years ago evident in absence of reform of global governance institutions.”

India argued that “the six elements proposed by the SG cannot be considered a basis for framing without adequate discussion. There is a lot of disagreement on the number and nature of elements required. We clearly need to also agree on whether we need such elements or that they would provide value-addition to the declaration.”

On the reference to the FfD Conference outcome, India categorically stated that “the reference to Addis Ababa is factually incorrect. While it would certainly complement and support the post-2015 development agenda, we would not at this stage like to prejudge the nature and outcome of this fundamentally important conference.”

Egypt, in its statement, supported the G77 position on the number of pages, suggesting that the declaration should focus on quality rather than quantity. On paragraph 1, it said, when a bold vision and transformative goals are addressed, MOI also needs to be addressed.

On paragraph 2 on the MDGs, Egypt pointed to the “need to include the lessons learnt and the gap in implementing MDG 8 which is the MOI.”

It suggested that paragraph 3 be replaced with paragraph 7, "which recognizes poverty eradication as the greatest challenge to sustainable development", to which other threats as well as inequalities within and between countries could be added.

On paragraph 4, Egypt suggested replacement of the term "common fundamental values" with reference to the principles of the UN Charter.

On paragraph 5, Egypt cautioned against an overemphasis on Goal 16. While it could be included, it must be at both "national and international levels". Egypt also suggested the addition of language "recognizing the rights of people under occupation to self-determination and the increasing threats of terrorism to achieving sustainable development."

On paragraph 10, it suggested the addition of a fair trading system and systemic issues related to reform of international economic and financial institutions, along with climate change.

On paragraph 11, Egypt reiterated that the OWG report should be the main basis for integrating sustainable development into the post-2015 development agenda.

On paragraph 12, Egypt said it was very clear that "the agreement in Addis Ababa does not deal with MOI in post-2015. FfD and post-2015 are two processes with interlinkages, but this stops here; FfD is a follow-up to Monterrey [where the first FfD Conference was held in 2002] and deals with issues that are larger in scope and different in tenor than the post-2015."

On paragraph 14, Egypt said that the post-2015 agenda should stem directly from Rio+20 and also that "CBDR is an agreed principle that we request [be] moved to the forefront of the document".

Bangladesh, in its statement, said that "people" should be at the heart of the agenda, and that "the agenda and the declaration has to be a 'compact' among all actors, all states – to lead our peoples towards a life of prosperity, well-being and dignity. And the compact should aim at mobilizing our individual and collective actions for sustainable development."

Bangladesh suggested a cogent and brief narrative at the beginning of the declaration and wanted mention of "some of the elements that have transformative potential during the next 15 years and beyond ... for instance, population dynamics and mobility; connectivity of movement of goods, services, en-

ergy, finance, investment, people, ideas, culture; deepening regional economic integration; ICT [information and communication technology] for development."

On "shared responsibility", Bangladesh said that while "sharing" is absolutely desired, it has to be in terms of "shared commitment" and "shared responsibility" for "shared prosperity". Paragraphs 3 and 7 should be viewed together and references to addressing "poverty-exclusion-inequality" within and among countries should be added.

Bangladesh went on to add that "paragraphs 9, 12, 13 of the text relate to 'implementation' issues. We would however need further clarity on the 'elements' and their 'interlinkages' over the coming weeks – on enabling environment, institutions, (national) policy space, national ownership, mainstreaming across national processes, partnerships. This is crucial to ensure balance at global and national levels, with required transparency."

The statement also suggested that "'mutual accountability' would need to be de-configured and at the national level, and also judged [with regard to] their applicability in the context of diverse levels of development of countries."

Finally, Bangladesh added that "it should be useful to revert to the chapeau of the OWG report and have a concise form of it ... That chapeau was wrapped up with most of the elements in a balanced manner, capturing both substance and underlying political underpinning rather cautiously."

Contrasting views

The statements of the developed countries were expectedly in almost total contrast to those of the developing countries.

The European Union applauded the "brevity" of the discussion document and the inclusion of "building peaceful and inclusive societies, strengthening institutions, promoting the rule of law and good governance." It also agreed strongly with "recalling the fundamental values, including solidarity and shared responsibility."

The EU also found positive the inclusion of the six essential elements put forward by the SG in his synthesis report, which "could be used to facilitate communication of the agenda and galvanize collective action."

The EU mentioned areas where it had "difficulties". First, in the context of the new global partnership, there is a need to promote enabling policy frameworks and policy coherence for sustainable development. The EU then said that the new global partnership must mobilize all actors and resources at all levels. It also argued that the "agreement in Addis Ababa should then be integrated into the September outcome and result in one single framework."

The EU also had difficulty with the paper singling out Rio Principle 7 on CBDR, which it said was designed in the context of global environmental degradation and as such cannot apply to the entire agenda.

The United Kingdom also agreed with the length of the document and said that "all the key ideas are in there, and to name-check them – finishing the job of the MDGs, eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development, achieving gender equality, combating climate change, delivering shared prosperity, strengthening governance/institutions, rule of law and build peaceful societies and leaving no one behind."

But the UK wanted the declaration to be braver and upfront, possibly in the first paragraph, with a framing concept that could be something like the six essential elements of the SG's synthesis report perhaps framed as actions or outcomes. It wanted a stronger articulation of the principle of universality and also supported the strong reference to climate change in the text.

In reviewing member states' responses, it is clear that the differences over the declaration, and in fact probably over the entire agenda itself, are as wide as ever. The differences over CBDR, MOI, global partnership and global systemic issues, which had been somewhat settled in the OWG report, are again back on the table in this tough battle.

In fact, even the sanctity of the SDGs themselves as the basis for the post-2015 agenda is being challenged, and new formulations and frameworks that have not even been discussed by member states or that were actually rejected are being persistently advanced.

In spite of all the talk of an ambitious and transformational agenda, the post-2015 framework will remain weak and meaningless unless member states show strong political resolve to deliver on this agenda, including on the implementation issues. (SUNS7978) □

South perspectives on post-2015 development agenda

Earlier, in January, the UN talks on the post-2015 development agenda had seen developing countries outline in broad terms their vision of a roadmap towards sustainable development.

by *Bhumika Muchhala*

NEW YORK: The United Nations General Assembly negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda kicked off with member states putting forward the broad contours of what they envision for the next 15 years of international development cooperation.

At the first of a series of meetings at the UN headquarters in New York, the Group of 77 and China asserted that the post-2015 development agenda must be framed by guiding principles and international law, including Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Rio Principles on Environment and Development.

In particular, the Group stressed, there must be recognition that the international community's pursuit of sustainable development must be based on common but differentiated responsibilities, and that poverty eradication is the ultimate imperative for sustainable development.

At the 19-21 January meeting, the G77 emphasized that developing countries should be supported by an enabling international environment as well as a genuine global partnership for development to enable them to meet their sustainable development goals.

The discussion at the meeting encompassed the following topics on the post-2015 development agenda: foundations of the agenda, the declaration, integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), means of implementation (MOI), and follow-up and review mechanisms.

Developing countries, in particular Brazil and India, stressed that the negotiated report of the Open Working Group on SDGs shall serve as the main basis for integrating the SDGs into the post-2015 development agenda. They said it would be imprudent to reopen or renegotiate the comprehensive and balanced package of the SDGs, either directly or indirectly.

In terms of MOI, developing countries highlighted that financial resources should be mobilized not on the basis of

a shrunken version of the SDG agenda, but rather for each and every specific goal and target that the General Assembly has agreed to in the 17 goals and 169 targets.

Equally crucial, however, is the discussion of international systemic issues in the fields of trade, financial architecture and capacity-building, making the international environment more supportive of sustainable development and safeguarding policy space for the overarching goals of poverty eradication, combating inequality and promoting inclusive sustainable development where it is most needed.

Foundations of the post-2015 development agenda

The Group of 77 and China, comprising 133 developing countries and represented by South Africa for the current year of 2015, delivered a statement that sought to establish the broad contours of the post-2015 development agenda.

According to the G77, an ambition to negotiate and reach agreement on a transformative development paradigm which is people-centred, aspires for universal human development while respecting human dignity and protecting the planet, is the imperative for a development agenda for the next 15 years.

The Group stressed that the guiding principles in this process must be based on those enumerated in Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, be consistent with international law, and fully respect all Rio Principles, in particular the recognition that the international community's pursuit of sustainable development must be based on common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR).

Poverty eradication is the ultimate imperative for sustainable development and should be pursued as such in line with the Rio+20 outcome document and language on poverty eradication.

The G77 reiterated its position that

developing countries should be supported by an enabling international environment, which includes a supportive and just international system where the rules are fair and pro-development, as well as a genuine global partnership for development to enable developing countries to meet their sustainable development aspirations.

The Group maintained that this can only be achieved through the provision of new and additional financing resources, technology transfers on concessional and preferential terms, capacity-building, pro-development trade policies and effective means of implementation for developing countries. Accordingly, the post-2015 development agenda will require a strengthened global partnership for development.

With regard to technology, the G77 said that the UN must establish a technology facilitation mechanism that promotes the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies, on the basis of the recommendations of the structured dialogues held during the 68th session of the General Assembly and on the basis of the latest resolution of Agenda 21 adopted in December 2014 (Resolution 69/214).

It is essential, the Group said, that implementation for such a technology facilitation mechanism commence with the aim of reaching a conclusion during the 69th session of the General Assembly, and that this outcome is also integrated into the post-2015 development agenda.

Brazil said that the post-2015 development agenda should be structured around four key elements. First, a declaration, where the international community would express a wide-ranging vision for a new development agenda anchored in its universality and transformative nature.

Second, a set of goals and targets containing the actions needed to translate that vision into reality. Third, a concrete foundation of the means of implementation for the new development agenda, which must encompass not only finance but also technology and capacity-building. The means of implementation need to be commensurate with the level of ambition set out in the Sustainable Development Goals. And fourth, a mechanism for follow-up and review of progress and implementation of the collective commitments in the post-2015 development agenda.

India stressed that the touchstone for the post-2015 development agenda should be an agenda for growth and development, in that the focus should be on sustained and inclusive economic growth in all countries, particularly developing countries. Growth is needed to create jobs, generate resources, sustain poverty reduction and achieve social development. Without inclusive economic growth, gains in other developmental indicators are not possible.

India added that this emphasis on inclusive and sustained economic growth is borne out of its experience with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well.

India also emphasized that the post-2015 development agenda must be founded on a universality of issues and differentiation in action, and this balance is represented by the guiding principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Universality demands an agenda which is equally relevant as well as applicable to both developed and developing countries.

However, this time the developed countries will also be called to account for their specific actions and commitments. Universality also reflects the developmental diversity in the world, in that a universal agenda can and indeed must be a differentiated one.

The post-2015 development agenda must also adhere to the test of multilateralism, which is essentially the framework for international cooperation. It should therefore go beyond merely identifying global problems and providing policy prescriptions, and aim at genuine collaboration through common but differentiated responsibilities, to solve global problems.

Multilateralism also means that there must be a shift from the MDG model of addressing the symptoms of underdevelopment to a new post-2015, post-MDG model which addresses the drivers of development and growth.

India asserted that UN member states must keep their sights on the centrality of the political, economic, moral and ethical imperative of ending poverty, which must be the overarching objective of the post-2015 development agenda. The needs and concerns of 1.3 billion men, women and children deprived of a life of dignity across the world must be the topmost priority. To do this, development must be sustainable across all three dimensions – economic, social and environmental.

Integrating SDGs and targets into the post-2015 development agenda

The G77 affirmed that in line with Resolution 68/309, the report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals shall serve as the main basis for integrating the SDGs into the post-2015 development agenda, while the outcomes of processes such as the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing and the process to develop options for a UN technology facilitation mechanism should be considered as inputs into the process to formulate the post-2015 agenda.

The SDGs constitute a collective effort and political compromise that cannot be revised behind closed doors by a handful of selected specialists, the Group stressed. The 17 goals and 169 targets were crafted in a transparent and democratic manner, based on technical inputs from the UN system, national agencies and civil society organizations. At this point, so-called “technical reasons” for redrafting targets would only serve to reopen the discussions, threatening a delicate political compromise.

The G77 clearly stated that it does not support such an attempt. According to the G77, it is also important to recognize that while communicability of the agenda is important, form must always follow substance. In this case, the comprehensive and integrated agenda for sustainable development contained in the proposal of the OWG must not be compromised in the name of repackaging.

The Group maintained that the retention of the means of implementation for each and every Sustainable Development Goal, as contained in the OWG report, as well as the strengthening of the global partnership for development, are essential requirements. Without them, both the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda would be hollow with no possibilities for implementation.

India said that the integrated and comprehensive agenda of the SDGs displays a remarkable level of ambition. Never before has the international community articulated an action-oriented agenda across such a wide spectrum. Will the ambition and substance of the SDGs be matched with an equally ambitious template of action in the means of implementation? Will the UN General Assembly create the conditions necessary to enhance international cooperation

for development, or will the UN slip back into well-rehearsed policy shibboleths, particularly when it comes to means of implementation, finance, technology and so on?

Supporting the G77, India emphasized that it would be imprudent to reopen or renegotiate the comprehensive and balanced package of the SDGs, either directly or indirectly. The SDGs have already been agreed upon by member states through an open and transparent process in which all member states participated and which gave full opportunity for other stakeholders, not to mention the UN system, to enrich the discussion with their inputs.

While the idea of repackaging the SDGs along six pillars as suggested in the Secretary-General’s synthesis report is an interesting one, member states need to be cautious as to whether such a move will segment the integrated agenda of the SDGs, with its interlinkages and synergies, into distinct silos. Such a segmentation would undercut collective ambition to holistically integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Brazil said that the 17 goals and 169 targets of the SDGs are underpinned by political legitimacy and technical cohesion. They also reflect the universal nature of the new development agenda on the basis of the principle of CBDR. Therefore, the UN General Assembly should treat the SDGs as the main basis for the post-2015 development agenda by adopting the SDGs final text of 19 July 2014 upfront.

Brazil said that the focus from now on, as mentioned by India and several others, should be on how to integrate the SDG framework into the post-2015 agenda without reopening negotiations on substantive issues or artificial ones, such as the number of goals.

It also raised a strong note of caution on the question of the so-called technical proofing of the SDGs. The criteria of a technical assessment, or “proofing”, should be clearly agreed to by member states beforehand.

Brazil said that it cannot accept any exercise that would lower the level of ambition or reduce the thematic scope of the existing framework of goals.

Means of implementation

Brazil made an extensive intervention on the specific topic of means of implementation, saying that the post-2015 development agenda needs to en-

sure the MOI for the full set of SDG goals and targets if it is to be groundbreaking from business-as-usual. In other words, to do more, more is needed.

Resources should be mobilized not on the basis of a shrunken version of the SDG agenda, but rather for each and every specific goal and target that the General Assembly has painstakingly agreed to as a balanced outcome of the OWG. This is precisely why there is a standalone goal on MOI (Goal 17) alongside goal-specific MOI targets.

In the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) in Addis Ababa (in July 2015), the UN General Assembly will need to update the Monterrey and Doha frameworks for FfD in light of the consensus text of the SDGs. This process should start with all member states reaffirming official development assistance (ODA) and other internationally agreed commitments. ODA should continue to flow to countries most in need, said Brazil.

Equally crucial, it stressed, is the discussion of international systemic issues in the fields of trade, financial architecture and capacity-building, making the international environment more supportive of sustainable development and safeguarding policy space for the overarching goals of poverty eradication, combating inequality and promoting inclusive sustainable development where it is most needed.

International public financial resources should be mobilized, the international financial institutions should be engaged with in support of the common agenda and in agreement of policy options more favourable to the goals and targets, according to Brazil.

Private resources will be key and private partners need to work with states, not against states. Therefore, implementing partnerships with the private sector needs to be conditioned upon their commitment to engaging with the post-2015 development agenda in the most transparent and accountable manner.

Brazil further said that member states need to collectively acknowledge that technology will be indispensable. It is both a means and a driver of transformation relevant to practically all goals and targets, including for achieving more sustainable patterns of consumption and production. In this regard, the Secretary-General's synthesis report contains use-

ful recommendations on technology, particularly the establishment of a technology facilitation mechanism for clean and environmentally sound technologies, alongside other ideas that would allow for a move from rhetoric to action.

It said that a technology bank for least developed countries, improved system-wide coordination at the UN on a technology facilitation mechanism, and an online global platform on technology for sustainable development are ideas that should be seriously considered. And importantly, intellectual property regimes should be consistent with and contribute to the SDGs, not the other way around.

Declaration of the post-2015 development agenda

The G77 stated that the declaration will set the tone, provide political content and outline the aspirations of the agenda as a whole. Such a declaration should be short and focused on development issues; draw from agreed outcomes from previous summits and processes such as the Millennium Declaration, the World Summit Outcome, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Rio+20 outcome and the OWG report; and be presented to member states as part of the zero draft to avoid fragmentation in the process of negotiations.

Brazil said that the declaration is a political statement that should approach the needs and challenges of the present while providing a shared vision for the future of the UN and its development agenda. No artificial thematic limits should be imposed on the scope of the declaration at the risk of compromising the level of ambition of the new agenda. A reduced number of core principles could be mentioned in the political declaration, allowing for heads of state and government to convey a short but powerful vision at the adoption of the post-2015 agenda.

Brazil said that guiding principles that should be considered include: equality, sustainability, universality (but also differentiation as expressed in the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities), and more democratic and representative governance through enhanced multilateral cooperation.

Brazil asserted that the new sustainable development agenda has already set in motion a paradigm shift within the

UN development pillar; a shift that should resonate to the other areas of the UN, making it more responsive to the changing global realities.

Follow-up and review

The G77 maintained that the debate on the follow-up and review of the post-2015 development agenda should embody indicators to measure the implementation of the agenda.

In this context, the development of global "indicative" indicators by the UN should be done in an open and transparent manner with the UN Statistical Commission, which is a member-state body. Such an undertaking should seek to recognize that there are national and regional specificities, peculiarities and different capacities. Therefore, the outcome should not impose unworkable and unrealistic figures on developing countries.

The G77 stressed that there should be no indicators at the national level. National governments should implement the post-2015 agenda according to their national circumstances, capability and development stages on a voluntary basis.

The Group elaborated that the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) will "conduct regular reviews, starting in 2016, on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the post-2015 development agenda", as stated in paragraph 8 of Resolution 67/290.

Through this mandate, the HLPF will conduct reviews of the post-2015 agenda on an annual basis, under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In addition, follow-up and review should focus on strengthening the monitoring of means of implementation on an international level, such as reviewing the implementation of the commitment on ODA, technology transfer and capacity-building and developing indicators of means of implementation.

Accordingly, for follow-up and review of the implementation, UN agencies should report to the HLPF on the progress made towards the achievement of the SDGs as well as on the commitments on means of implementation.

(continued on page 15)

South needs policy space to meet post-2015 agenda

In light of a less favourable external economic environment, developing countries require flexibility in trade, industrial and financial policymaking in order to meet the goals of the post-2015 development agenda, says a UN body.

by Kanaga Raja

GENEVA: Developing countries need sufficient policy space in particular in the areas of trade, finance and industrial development if they are to meet the goals of the post-2015 development agenda, according to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

In its latest Policy Brief (No. 31, February 2015), UNCTAD said that buoyant demand at the global level and effective industrial policy at the national level have been key ingredients of successful development in recent decades.

With the risk of "secular stagnation" in developed countries limiting the export opportunities for developing countries for a protracted period of time, developing countries will need to find new growth drivers, UNCTAD said in the brief.

"Industrial policy will have an important role to play, but a more inclusive multilateral approach is needed to obtain the desired changes in policy, particularly in light of the ambitious and transformative post-2015 agenda envisioned by the proposed sustainable development goals."

Unfavourable turn

According to UNCTAD, between the early 1960s and the late 1980s, successful catch-up economies in East Asia could count on buoyant export markets. These economies also enjoyed significant flexibility in terms of pursuing the trade and industrial policies that they deemed most suitable to achieving the structural transformation and technological upgrading needed to support higher levels of productivity.

From the start of the millennium, said UNCTAD, some developing countries succeeded not only in achieving further industrialization and expanding their exports, but even increased the pace of this expansion.

"The fact that multilateral trade agreements maintained some flexibilities

for all World Trade Organization members and incorporated some special and differential treatment for least developed countries, has played a role."

But more importantly, the increase in the proportion of exports, and especially that of manufactured exports, in the composition of developing countries' aggregate demand strongly benefited from rapid global demand growth and expanding imports, particularly by developed countries.

UNCTAD recalled that the effectiveness of flexibilities built into multilateral trade agreements and strong external demand for underpinning a successful development strategy appear to have weakened since the financial crisis.

"The past few years have seen a proliferation of regional trade agreements and international investment agreements that include a wide range of rules and restrictions that go beyond the provisions of multilateral agreements," it noted.

Some developing-country policymakers may have agreed to these in the belief that accepting stricter policy and regulatory commitments is necessary to attract foreign direct investment and secure participation in global value chains.

However, stressed the UNCTAD paper, while these commitments may provide short-term trade and employment benefits, in the longer run they run the risk of trapping producers into commodity enclaves or low-value niches of manufacturing.

Furthermore, it said that the cost of some international investment agreements in terms of sovereignty loss can also be high. In some cases, these agreements allow ad hoc arbitration tribunals to assume important lawmaking functions usually allocated to states, but without the institutional balances and legitimacy associated with state judicial functions.

"In addition to the lack of transparency and coherence often observed in the

operations of some tribunals, this set-up follows a model developed for resolving disputes between private commercial actors, and thus these tribunals may have no reason to consider the broader interests of a host country and its development strategy."

Buoyant import demand, particularly in the new millennium, has depended on rising levels of debt in many advanced economies, leading to unbalanced balance sheets in their private sectors and subsequently in their public ones. "The slow recovery of advanced countries from the financial crisis has accordingly reduced developing countries' export prospects."

Moreover, statistical evidence points to a considerable weakening of the import elasticity of demand in these countries since 2012, said UNCTAD. This weakening has strongly contributed to the continued slowdown in the pace of developing countries' total exports, given that over the period 2012-13, developing-country exports were pushed ahead mainly by trade with other developing countries.

"This unfavourable turn in the external economic environment poses a risk not only to sustained economic growth in developing countries, but more generally to attainment of the goals of an ambitious development agenda with structural transformation at its centre."

Flexible policy approach

UNCTAD underscored that a very different policy mix needs to be applied.

Given that global demand is unlikely to return to a rapid and sustained growth path anytime soon – unless there is a significant shift in the policy mix of advanced countries – a less constraining external economic environment is required in other dimensions.

To achieve this, said UNCTAD, "it is important that developing countries have enough policy space, in particular in the areas of trade, finance, and industrial development, and that they have the fiscal revenues to match their ambition."

In this context, the UNCTAD paper outlined four elements of a more ambitious and flexible policy approach that will be required to spur growth and attain the goals of a post-2015 development agenda.

First, with the developmental effects of export-led growth strategies based on

demand from the North running out of steam, a greater role will need to be given to domestic and regional demand.

"In addition to redistributive measures, employment creation and rising wages to help bolster the growth of domestic consumption, many countries need to raise their levels of domestic investment, including in the public sector."

Second, said UNCTAD, the effectiveness of rebalancing developing countries' growth strategies would be strengthened by industrial policies.

It noted that a number of developing countries, including the largest ones, have already adopted new industrial policy initiatives, in some cases responding to a failure to achieve the economic transformation promised by structural adjustment programmes, in others as an effort to replicate the success of the East Asian economies.

"But that success was very strongly export oriented, and any new initiatives will need to be matched by appropriate macroeconomic and financial policies aimed at adjusting developing countries' productive capacity and competitiveness so as to respond to rising domestic and regional demand without excessive pressure on prices or the trade balance."

Developed countries are also again acknowledging the role of industrial policy in boosting productivity growth, encouraging innovation and creating decent jobs. For example, the approach of the United States to industrial policy combines an "entrepreneurial state" with a "coordinating state" to skilfully use sector-specific measures to support the manufacturing sector.

Third, said UNCTAD, in commodity-dependent economies, converting natural resource rents into sustained growth and industrialization will require a high level of investment and a virtuous link between trade and capital accumulation.

The sharp increase in commodity prices that started around 2002-03 has raised fears of premature de-industrialization in some middle-income developing countries. "An industrial policy that supports the private sector in identifying and expanding activities in promising manufacturing sectors could greatly facilitate such diversification efforts."

Moreover, UNCTAD added, in many developing countries, increasing the generation of public revenues from natural resources will be essential for the financing of such efforts.

Fourth, integrating into international production networks should not be seen as the only element in a country's

industrialization strategy.

Doing so may provide opportunities for countries at an early stage of structural transformation to accelerate industrial development in some sectors. However, UNCTAD cautioned that the evidence that integration into these networks spurs sustained industrialization is at best ambiguous.

"Structural transformation episodes, even if initially successful, are often linked only to 'thin' industrialization that offers few opportunities for economic and social upgrading."

It underlined that developing countries that have achieved some degree of industrial development will still need to maintain policy flexibilities if their further participation in international production networks is to deepen and widen the firm and cross-sectoral level linkages needed to promote economic and social upgrading.

Global trade governance

According to UNCTAD, effectively pursuing such more ambitious policies could be greatly supported by strength-

ened global trade governance that focuses on two elements.

First, reinforcing inclusive multilateral mechanisms would help maintain the public good character of multilateral rules and preclude competitive liberalization that may be ill-suited to developing countries' development prospects.

Second, refocusing trade negotiations on multilateral agreements would imply reconsidering the developmental character of the growing number of regional trade agreements and international investment agreements and could help make further headway in the ongoing Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations.

According to UNCTAD, developing countries will also need to leverage the greater economic and political power they have achieved over the past two decades.

"In particular, a more robust South-South integration architecture (already emerging at the regional level and with the New Development Bank established by the BRICS countries) could help buttress a more ambitious post-2015 agenda," it said. (SUNS7973) □

(continued from page 13)

Brazil said that UN regional commissions already have a mandate to hold regional meetings in preparation for the HLPF. UN member states should enhance their capacity to play this role.

It also highlighted that accountability and monitoring should take place primarily at the national level. Additional resources should be directed to the strengthening of national institutions in developing countries to that effect, including their capacity to collect data and produce statistical analysis.

Synergies between various UN tracks

The G77 stated that stronger synergies between the post-2015 development agenda and the Third International Conference on Financing for Development are welcome and crucial in order to ensure that member states are in a position to influence both processes in an effective manner.

In this logic, the outcomes of the FfD conference, scheduled to take place in July, must feed into the post-2015 development agenda as a key input of the means of implementation.

Process of the post-2015 development agenda

The G77 reiterated its position that the process to formulate the post-2015 development agenda must be intergovernmental in nature and conducted in an open, transparent and inclusive manner, in line with the outcome document of the 2013 Special Event on the MDGs.

The Group also reiterated that intergovernmental negotiations must respect the rules of procedure and established practices of the General Assembly and ECOSOC and should take place in line with the agreed modalities resolution and decisions.

The G77 also emphasized that the inclusive consultations by the co-facilitators with all relevant stakeholders including major political groups must not impinge on the time allocated for the intergovernmental process of negotiations.

Similarly, going forward, the co-facilitators must reconsider the number of panel discussions that are organized in each session in order to allow member states adequate time to engage among themselves and to optimize on the limited time available for negotiations. (SUNS7971) □

IMF: Weaker unions = Higher CEO pay

IMF research showing how the decline of trade unions contributes to inequality is not reflected in the Fund's policies on the ground.

by Sarah Anderson

As labour unions have declined in most countries around the world, CEO paycheques have ballooned. And that's not just a coincidence, according to new research from the International Monetary Fund.

In the latest issue of the IMF's *Finance & Development* journal, researchers Florence Jaumotte and Carolina Osorio Buitron give a preview of their forthcoming study on the links between unionization rates and inequality. Their article – entitled, I kid you not, "Power from the People" – notes that "weaker unions can reduce workers' influence on corporate decisions that benefit top earners, such as the size and structure of top executive compensation."

Jaumotte and Osorio Buitron also dare to point out that "top earners' com-

pen-sation may be larger than what is justified by their contribution to the economy's output."

You may, of course, have reached that conclusion without the benefit of IMF research. But for the IMF, this rates as pretty populist stuff – and a welcome contribution to the inequality debate.

A few other welcome nuggets from the new IMF research:

- Higher inequality goes hand in glove with lower and less sustainable medium-term growth.
- Income concentration at the top "can reduce a population's welfare if it allows top earners to manipulate the economic and political system in their favour."
- Unionization and minimum wages help equalize the distribution of

wages.

Unfortunately, the policies the IMF is pushing all around the world reflect hardly any of these IMF research findings, and the gap between what the IMF research says and what IMF officials are demanding from nations like Greece doesn't seem to be shrinking.

"Recent IMF loan conditions in countries such as Greece, Portugal and Romania," as Peter Bakvis, the Washington director of the International Trade Union Confederation, points out, "have led to sharp declines in collective bargaining coverage and trade union power in those countries."

The ITUC, the main global umbrella body for labour unions, has documented these anti-union policies in several reports.

We can only hope that the Jaumotte-Osorio Buitron research will help open more eyes – from Wisconsin to Greece – to the positive role labour unions can play in creating healthy economies. □

Sarah Anderson directs the Global Economy Project at the Washington-based Institute for Policy Studies. This article is reproduced from Inequality.org under a Creative Commons licence.

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