



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

24 April, 2014

Excellency,

Operative paragraph 25 of resolution 68/226 entitled "Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008–2017)" calls for the General Assembly "to convene at its sixty-eighth session a meeting of the General Assembly, at the highest appropriate political level, centred on the review process devoted to the theme relating to the issue of poverty eradication".

In this regard, I am pleased to inform that, in accordance with the aforementioned resolution, I will convene, on 23 May, a High-level Meeting of the General Assembly, the theme for which will be: "Achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the Post-2015 Development Agenda".

The High-level Meeting will consist of a morning plenary segment followed, in the afternoon, by one high-level, interactive, multi-stakeholder panel discussion, and a closing segment. The outcome will be a summary of the meeting that will subsequently be made available to Member States.

A Concept Note for this High-level Meeting is attached. A Programme and additional information will be made available in due course.

I extend an invitation to all Member States and Permanent Observers to be represented at the highest level possible, and I look forward to an active and forward-looking debate.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John W. Ashe".

John W. Ashe

To all Permanent Representatives
And Permanent Observers to the
United Nations

Draft Concept note

High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly “Achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda”

New York, 23 May 2014

Background

The General Assembly resolution 68/226 entitled "Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008–2017)" calls "to convene at its sixty-eighth session a meeting of the General Assembly, at the highest appropriate political level, centred on the review process devoted to the theme relating to the issue of poverty eradication".

Eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in particular for developing countries. This imperative is reflected in the Millennium Development Goal to halve global extreme poverty by 2015.

The Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008–2017) proclaimed in 2007 through resolution 62/205 aims to support the efforts to achieve this goal. The theme of the decade "Full employment and decent work for all" aims to provide an important framework for action to enhance coherence among the activities of the United Nations system to eradicate poverty, particularly through promoting full employment and decent work for all, and support of the integrated follow-up to the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals. In this respect, the UN system-wide Plan of action for the implementation of the Second Decade continues to play an important role in ensuring coherence among the United Nations entities.

In the Rio+20 outcome document "The Future we want" (resolution A/66/288*), Member States recognized that "poverty eradication, full and productive employment and decent work for all, and social integration and protection are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, and that enabling environments to promote these need to be created at all levels."

The outcome document of the special event to follow up efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (resolution 68/6), held in September 2013, underscored the central imperative of poverty eradication in the post-2015 development agenda and recognized the linkages between poverty eradication and promotion of sustainable development, and the need for a coherent approach that integrates in a balanced manner the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Poverty

The MDGs have been successful at reducing extreme poverty in the world. Poverty rates have been halved at the global level, and around 700 million fewer people lived in

conditions of extreme poverty in 2010 than in 1990.¹ The new World Bank estimates confirm that the MDG target on poverty has been achieved at the global level, five years before the target date.

Despite significant achievements regarding poverty reduction, poverty remains high and persistent in many parts of the world. Around 1.2 billion people are still living in extreme poverty, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The World Bank projects that, by 2015, about 970 million people will still be living in extreme poverty, and these two regions will each be home to around 40 per cent of the of the developing world population living in extreme poverty.²

The employment and social protection challenge

High unemployment and rising inequalities continue to remain among key challenges for many countries in eradicating poverty. These challenges are exasperated by the slow and uneven recovery of the global economy.

Employment and decent work are the key routes out of poverty as well as an important concern for sustainable development. The global crisis and the weakening of the global recovery have impacted the employment situation.

The recent ILO estimates indicated that nearly 202 million people were unemployed in 2013 around the world, an increase of 5 million compared to 2012. The global crisis has widened the jobs gap by 62 million people in 2013, including 32 million additional job seekers. If the current trends continue, the global unemployment may increase by 13 million people by 2018. Young people are affected disproportionately – some 74.5million were unemployed in 2013; almost 1 million more than in the year before. There are also nearly around 839 million working poor who are unable to lift themselves and their family above US\$2 poverty line. Only 25 per cent of the global population is covered by adequate social protection systems. Around 600 million more jobs are needed over the next fifteen years just to keep unemployment rates at their current level.³

Unemployment is expected to remain at elevated levels for many years, and thus the creation of decent work will continue to be a major challenge for almost all countries well yond 2015.

Little progress has been made in reducing inequality in its various dimensions. Global income inequality remains high, with eight per cent of the world's population earning half the world's income, leaving 92 per cent earning the other half. ⁴ Income inequality among and within countries remains high and within country inequality has been raising in major developed countries as well as many developing countries. Disparities in education, health and other dimensions of human development are large as do inequalities between rural and

¹ The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2013), *2013 Global Monitoring Report: Rural-Urban Dynamics and the Millennium Development Goals*, Washington D.C.

² United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013*.

³ *Global Employment Trends 2014: Risk of a jobless growth?* International Labour Office, Geneva: ILO, 2014

⁴ UNDP, *Humanity Divided: Confronting Inequality in Developing Countries*, 2014

urban areas and among social groups.⁵ The 2013 Human Development Report concludes that the average loss to human development worldwide due to inequality was 23 per cent.

Growing inequality undermines growth, progress towards poverty eradication and social cohesion. Inequality negatively affects the wellbeing of the society at large and makes it harder for people to break the cycle of poverty. The economic crisis and its aftermath have added the urgency to address inequality as a development challenge. Social protection floors that prevent people becoming trapped in poverty are critical. Social protection keeps about 150 million people around the world from falling into extreme poverty, and on average reduces poverty in the developing world by about 45 per cent.

Environmental threats are another serious risk to poverty reduction. Poor countries and communities are particularly vulnerable to climate change, degradation of ecosystems and natural disasters. Poor people experience the severe implications of a polluted environment and lack of clean water and sanitation, and this affects their health negatively. At the same time, poverty and inequality render it much more difficult to implement changes in consumption and production patterns that are need to ensure environmental sustainability.

Post- 2015 development agenda

Achieving sustainable development requires global actions. The need for transformative approaches that address poverty and employment and decent work are central for the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

Discussions currently undertaken in the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals reveal that the eradication of poverty should remain at the core of a transformative development agenda beyond 2015 and have also drawn the attention to the fact that since poverty is multidimensional, progress is linked to action in all other focus areas, including inter alia, employment and decent work for all.

Furthermore, the deliberations in the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, have also permitted Member States and other relevant actors to identify a number of critical factors that can catalyse international action for achieving the eradication of poverty, these include: eradicating absolute poverty; reducing relative poverty; providing social protection and social protection floors as relevant to reduce vulnerabilities of the poor, including children, youth, the unemployed, migrants, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and older persons; access to property and productive assets, including associated rights, finance and markets for all women and men; addressing inequalities at both national and international levels; pursuing sustained and inclusive economic growth; developing and using evidence-based, high quality, timely, disaggregated data and impartial, internationally established methods for evaluating progress; and appropriate means of implementation.

The General Assembly has therefore the opportunity to increase political commitment and contribute to the deliberations on the post 2015 development agenda by addressing how inclusive, job-rich growth and the expansion of social protection systems be key enablers to reducing poverty and inequality and fostering social cohesion.

⁵ United Nations, *Report on the World Social Situation 2013: Inequality Matters*, 2013.

Objective

The High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly aims to contribute to preparations for the elaboration of a post-2015 development agenda and the ongoing deliberations on the sustainable development goals with a particular focus on poverty eradication and employment and decent work for all. The general theme for the session will be: "Achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda".

Format and outcome

The High-Level Meeting will take place on Friday May 23rd , at the United Nations headquarters; its format will consist in a half-day plenary session of the Assembly followed in the afternoon by one high-level interactive, multi-stakeholder, panel discussion and a closing segment.

The outcome will be a summary of the meeting that will subsequently be made available to member States.

Guiding questions

To help participants focus their interventions, the following guiding questions are advanced for their consideration:

1-How has the experience of the Millennium Development Goals contributed to the coordination of the international support for the eradication of poverty and to that end, what are the lessons to draw for the post-2015 development agenda?

2-What transformative changes are needed to ensure the objective of poverty eradication is achieved?

3-What kind of transformative changes are needed to ensure that the objective of poverty eradication and full employment and decent work for all is achieved?

4-What policies have been effective in promoting decent work? How can the post-2015 development agenda promote:

- More inclusive, equitable and sustainable socio-economic approaches to eradicate poverty and inequality?
- Access to quality education, health care and extension of social protection floors?
- Access to full and productive employment and decent work for all?