



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

3 June, 2014

Excellency,

I have the honour to transmit herewith a Summary of the key messages that emerged from the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly under the theme “Achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda”, which was convened on 23 May, 2014.

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

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "John W. Ashe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John W. Ashe

To All Permanent Representatives  
and Permanent Observers  
to the United Nations

**High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly**  
**“Achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda”**  
**23 May 2014, Trusteeship Council Chamber**

**Summary of Discussions**

In the context of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017), the President of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, H. E. Mr. John Ashe, hosted a High-level meeting under the theme **“Achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda”**. The event consisted of a plenary meeting of the General Assembly, followed by a high-level panel discussion aimed at exploring practical strategies for strengthening the focus on full employment and decent work within the post-2015 development agenda. On behalf of the President, the event was opened by **Vice-President, H.E. Mr. Michel Tommo Monthe of Cameroon**, and the closing remarks were delivered by **Vice-President H.E. Mr. Román Oyarzun Marchesi of Spain**, and **Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon**.

During the plenary discussion Member States focused their interventions on six key themes: the primacy of employment and decent work in the drive to eradicate poverty; achieving inclusive, equitable and sustainable economic growth; ensuring quality education, training and skill development; the significance of social protection; the importance of labour rights and other elements of participatory societies; and the necessary foundation of good governance and inclusive, transparent, accountable and engaged political institutions. All agreed that poverty eradication should remain at the heart of a post-2015 development agenda and that global efforts should focus on ensuring more even progress in eradicating poverty to achieve shared prosperity.

*Achieving inclusive, equitable sustainable economic growth and decent work*

Member States agreed that inclusive, equitable and sustainable economic growth was a prerequisite for reducing poverty and the promotion of decent work for all provided the best formula for achieving progress. Pointing to lessons of the global financial and economic crisis, they noted that development efforts needed to be refocused to emphasise balanced, inclusive, job-rich growth. To achieve this end, Governments would need to develop coherent and cross-cutting policies that clearly linked macroeconomic strategies with social development and environmental sustainability.

The importance of country context was emphasised, along with the need for well-tailored policy mixes and national ownership of policy design. However, solidarity with least developed countries and other challenging country contexts was also stressed. While mobilisation of domestic resources was deemed important to policy success, Member States called for strengthened international support to contexts where domestic resources were simply insufficient.

The importance of the private sector in attaining growth was emphasized. Businesses have the ability to assemble people, capital and innovation towards the creation of productive jobs and the profitable production of goods and services. They are uniquely positioned to harness necessary resources and collaborate with Governments and civil society in surmounting barriers to economic, social, environmental and human development. Policies would therefore, have to balance the need for business incentives with ensuring social protection and social inclusion.

Further to balancing growth at the global level, equal emphasis was placed on reducing country-level inequalities. The importance of addressing particularly the plights of chronically disadvantaged social groups such as women, youth and ethnic minorities was emphasized.

### *Employment and decent work in the drive to eradicate poverty*

Employment was presented as an integral driver of social development and economic growth. Drawing on their various national experiences, Member States highlighted the challenges to poverty eradication posed by high rates of unemployment and underemployment, large informal sectors and working poverty. Particular attention was given to the burden of informality and vulnerable employment borne by developing country populations.

Support to small and medium enterprises was highlighted as an important factor in ensuring full-employment and decent work. It was noted that support to micro and medium enterprises through access to credit, market access, business services and opportunities for capacity-building was integral to promoting entrepreneurship and business innovation. Particular note was given to the role of micro and medium enterprises in supporting rural and agricultural development.

In sum, Member States highlighted their efforts to ensure that jobs are decent, including secure, safe and fairly paid, and noted that this emphasis must find its way into any future development goals and targets.

### *Quality education, training and skill development*

Member States emphasised the need to invest in quality education for all, at all levels. Particular emphasis was given to early childhood education and the growing realization that the first 1,000 days of life set the foundation for life-long learning. It was noted that education systems needed to be revitalised to focus on promoting creativity and innovation and to ensure relevant links between acquired skills and labour market needs.

### *Social protection*

Member States highlighted the clear links between sustainable employment and social protection. In providing various national examples, they showcased that national social protection floors can effectively reduce poverty, vulnerability and inequality. ILO Recommendation 202 was highlighted as an effective road map to building comprehensive social protection floors and ensuring effective investment in human resources.

### *Supporting labour rights and participatory societies*

Member States encouraged the implementation of international labour standards as championed by the International Labour Organization. Particular emphasis was placed on eliminating exploitative labour practices, including child labour and forced labour, and supporting collective action in support of workers' rights.

### *Ensuring good governance*

Transparent and accountable political institutions were noted as a necessary foundation for ensuring effective policy formulation and implementation. Collaboration at national, regional and international levels was also noted as important in achieving an effective environment for implementation.

The need for strong country-level partnerships was noted, with particular emphasis on Governments, the private sector, trade unions and civil society cooperation in the design and implementation of social and economic policy. Member States called for stronger coordination among key partners, including United Nations agencies and leading international and regional organizations. The need for international rule-setting was also stressed, particularly in the areas of finance, trade and immigration. These international rules would promote fair access to markets of capital, goods and labour.

## **High-level panel discussion on the theme “Achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda”**

The high-level panel on “Achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda” combined experts and practitioners in the fields of development research, social policy development and labour regulation. The distinguished panel included H.E. **Ms. Marjon V. Kamara**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Liberia (Moderator); **Hon. Errol McLeod**, Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, Trinidad and Tobago; **Dr. Sebastián Etchemendy**, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, Argentina; **Mr. Aeneas Chapinga Chuma**, Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Africa, International Labour Organization (ILO); and **Mr. Andrew Shepherd**, Director, Chronic Poverty Advisory Network, Overseas Development Institute (ODI). Two expert discussants also provided meaningful insights: **Ms. Louise Kantrow**, Permanent Representative to the UN, International Chamber of Commerce; and **Ms. Fay Lyle**, Senior Worker Rights Specialist, Solidarity Centre.

The panel discussion reiterated many salient points of the plenary discussion in underscoring that the eradication of extreme poverty remains a central development priority, but efforts should extend beyond that of simply lifting people over the poverty line. The Decent Work Agenda, encompassing job growth, rights at work, social protection and the promotion of social dialogue, remains one of the best routes out of poverty. Emphasis was placed on the need to prevent impoverishment by giving greater policy attention to its various causes. Panellists highlighted the need for policies aimed at preventing risks and helping vulnerable households to manage economic shocks and other unforeseen crises.

Panellists suggested that the inadequate attention to the MDG targets for full employment and decent work was to the detriment of equality and efforts to end poverty, as insecure, low-paid, unhealthy and unsafe work will continue to perpetuate poverty. The discussion touted innovation and experimentation as integral to improving and expanding decent work policies among low-income and developing countries, and proposed that the post-2015 framework can create incentives in this regard.

Agreeing with the morning’s discussions, panellists surmised that the eradication of poverty should remain central to the post-2015 development agenda, but suggested that the goals and targets should focus on the multi-dimensions of poverty. They called for a new policy approach to addressing poverty eradication, focusing on tackling chronic poverty, and moving beyond GDP indicators. To accomplish this, the post-2015 goals would need to monitor the extent to which progress benefits the poorest segments of society by including the share of the bottom 5-20% of the population in relevant indicators.

A call was made for the post-2015 agenda to strongly emphasize full and productive employment and decent work for all, social protection and gender equality, with corresponding targets to ensure that these issues are properly addressed. It was noted that the agenda should also give attention to inclusive access to productive assets such as land, which are essential for poverty eradication.

The importance of strong and effective partnerships was also reiterated. Emphasis was placed on the need for private businesses, government, trade unions and other sectors of civil society to work together in the development and implementation of coherent, integrated policies and programmes. To this end, good governance and effective leadership at all levels were deemed critical.