

67th Session of the General Assembly

Informal Summary of the General Debate of the Second Committee by the Chair of the Committee

8 - 10 October 2012

During the Second Committee's General Debate, delegations expressed their views on a range of issues pertaining to the Committee's work, including: (1) follow up to the Rio+20 Conference and setting the post-2015 development agenda; (2) international economic governance; (3) financing for development; (4) the United Nations development system; (5) climate change; (6) countries in special situations (i.e. the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States); and (7) new proposals and initiatives.

At the opening session, statements were made by the Chairperson of the Second Committee, H.E. Mr. George Wilfred Talbot and Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. A keynote address was given by Mr. James Robinson, David Florence Professor of Government at Harvard University.

Opening the meeting, the Chair of the Second Committee, H.E. Mr. George Wilfred Talbot, underlined the role of the Second Committee as a platform for deliberations on global economic and development issues. He observed that the global development landscape was affected by the prevailing growth prospects, global crises, the stalled Doha-Round of trade negotiations, the need for the establishment of an effective international financial sector regulatory framework, and other critical matters. He also highlighted the necessity for concerted international action to address the global food security challenge. He stressed that the Second Committee must show leadership in coherent and coordinated approaches to these challenges and in the structural changes required to address them. While putting emphasis on the need to balance all three pillars of sustainable development, the Chair reiterated the importance of fulfilling international commitments regarding financial resources for development and the need to unlock domestic resources. He mentioned the achievement of the MDGs and resilient growth to be high priorities for the session, as well as preparations for the Third Conference on SIDS and the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR). The Chair noted also that the elaboration of sustainable development goals (SDGs) must be consistent and coordinated with the definition of a post-2015 development agenda and, in that regard, called also for the leadership of the Second Committee.

Under-Secretary General Mr. Wu Hongbo emphasized the low growth prospects for the world economy and related issues, such as insufficient increases in employment, the fragility of the financial sector, the expansion of public debt, social inequality and environmental degradation as major challenges confronting the world. He stated that the focus on sustainable development must prevail over a mere focus on economic growth. He also emphasized the need to reshape the development work of the UN in order to make the vision articulated in Rio a reality, noting that the Second Committee should be the platform to coordinate balanced action in support of SIDS. He emphasized the importance of the realization of the MDGs, the need for adequate preparation of the post-2015 development agenda and efforts to strengthen global economic governance. Mr. Wu highlighted the criticality of the QCPR deliberations, stating that an important test for building "the future we want" will be measured in the extent to which cooperation is strengthened, both within the UN system and among all development partners.

Mr. James Robinson, David Florence Professor at Harvard University, delivered the keynote address, based on the book he co-authored, *Why Nations Fail*. He argued that countries that have had historically extractive institutions have developed more slowly than countries with inclusive institutions and an effective central government. The questions from delegations focused on how best to develop an institutional framework for development, along with several questions on the role of the central government versus decentralized systems. Prof. Robinson emphasized that, due to unique country histories, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to institutional development.

General Debate

(1) Follow up to the Rio+20 Conference and setting the post-2015 development agenda

Member States underscored the importance of establishing sustainable development goals (SDGs) noting that the work being done in preparation of the SDGs should be integrated into the post-2015 development agenda. A number of Member States underlined that the SDGs and post-2015 processes should be conducted in an inclusive and transparent way and cautioned against the creation of two parallel development tracks.

Countries also emphasized the need to keep global attention and efforts focused on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), even while preparing for the post-2015 framework. Some stated that the poverty and sustainable development agendas should be addressed together since there are synergies between interventions to address poverty and sustainability.

There were also many calls by Member States for the post 2015-development agenda to include specific themes, such as: poverty eradication; safeguards against another global economic and financial crisis; economic empowerment; job creation for women and young people; democratic and accountable governance; human rights; climate change; risk reduction to natural disasters; migration; green economy; agricultural technology; soil degradation and desertification; entrepreneurship training; sustainable energy and energy efficiency; food security; and social protection floors.

(2) International economic governance

Member States highlighted the general sense of uncertainty faced by the international community as a result of the current global economic and financial situation and the resultant need to reform global economic governance. A number of Member States noted that the United Nations is well positioned to address international economic governance. Many called for an ambitious reform process of the Bretton Woods Institutions that would include enhanced participation and voting power for developing countries. Some countries also highlighted the importance of the G20 in economic governance. It was expressed that global economic governance needed to be rethought and that the international community should propose practical steps to build institutional structures catered to the economic realities of the day. Several Member States urged the international community to address excessive financial speculation in global markets by instituting a stronger regulatory regime.

(3) Financing for development

Many Member States expressed their concerns about the decline in ODA levels and called for developed countries to fulfil their commitments to development cooperation. Some also urged the international community to mobilize significant additional financial resources for

development. Others stated their preference for a “beyond-aid” approach that emphasized shared responsibilities within the international community and the role of non-ODA sources in development cooperation, including investment, trade and remittances. Several Member States noted that South-South cooperation should be a complement to, and not substitute for, North-South cooperation.

Some countries highlighted the need for mobilization strategies to finance the transition to sustainable development in developing countries. There was also a view that foreign debt relief and patent and technology transfer should be expanded to increase the capacity of developing countries for sustainable development. Many Member States also noted that efforts on financing for development are crucial for industrial transformation, particularly in LDCs and in Africa. International and regional cooperation should be enhanced, and further exploration of innovative sources of financing is needed to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

(4) The United Nations development system

The importance of the “Delivering as One” process and of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) was highlighted. Specifically, a number of Member States stated that the relationship between “core” and “non-core” funding needed to be better defined. Some stated that the UN development system should be more efficient operationally, which would require UN institutions that could ensure implementation and results. Likewise, the QCPR should aim to meet the needs of developing countries based on the principle of national ownership, providing clear guidance and a new policy framework for the UN development system to implement the post-2015 development agenda.

Many Member States emphasized the urgent need to strengthen the UN, in general, and the General Assembly and ECOSOC, in particular, for better political and economic governance. Several stressed the need to avoid duplication of work between the GA and ECOSOC; the necessity of achieving an ambitious reform of the international multilateral system; and the need for the UN to promote joint programmes between agencies to avoid overlapping activities. Equally, predictability of funding was seen as necessary to ensuring the efficiency of UN activities.

(5) Climate change

Member States noted that climate change was a serious threat to their development prospects and survival and therefore called on the international community to address this challenge. A number of countries emphasized the importance of renewing post-Kyoto global commitments to the reduction of carbon emissions at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It was stressed that the United Nations should continue to play its central role in addressing climate change, adhering to the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities.

The importance of following up on and implementing decisions derived from UN conferences pertaining to climate change was also emphasised. Some delegations urged stronger international support to developing countries faced with natural disasters and stressed the importance of technology transfer, capacity building and addressing economic impacts. The challenge that climate change posed to food security was also highlighted, and the international community was called on to address this threat.

(6) Countries in special situations (LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS)

Many delegations called for enhanced international efforts to assist SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs. It was proposed that issues concerning countries in special situations be included in the post 2015 development agenda. Several countries stressed that LDCs have been affected the most by the recent global crises and by climate change and are facing major challenges in ensuring adequate financing for their development. Those delegations called on the international community to better support the development efforts of LDCs, their transition to graduation and beyond.

Several interventions noted the need for a review of the classification of many SIDS as middle-income countries, taking into account their high vulnerability and the multidimensional nature of development. The decision to convene the Third Conference for Sustainable Development of SIDS in 2014 was welcomed. The Secretary-General's recent recommendation for the international community to provide financial, technological and capacity-building assistance to enable LLDCs to address the challenges caused by climate change adaptation and mitigation was hailed by many speakers, who also welcomed recent efforts by the international community to enhance the capacities of LLDCs to meet basic health and sanitary needs. Some stressed the importance of holding a comprehensive 10-year review conference of the Almaty Programme in 2014.

(7) Sample of new proposals and initiatives mentioned

- **Algeria** (G77) called for strengthening the human, financial and technical resources of the UN Office on South-South Cooperation.
- **Bahamas** (CARICOM), called for a reassessment of the classification of many SIDS as middle-income countries.
- **Chile** (CELAC) called for the elimination of all trade barriers, especially agricultural subsidies.
- **Indonesia, Lao PDR, Cameroon, India and Egypt** emphasized the importance of renewing post-Kyoto global commitments to the reduction of carbon emissions at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to be held in Doha later this year.
- **Nauru and Maldives** called on the United Nations General Assembly to designate 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States.
- **Lao People's Democratic Republic** called upon the international community to provide the necessary support for holding a 10-year review of the Almaty Programme in 2014, and to actively contribute to the preparatory process and conference itself, as called for in GA Resolution 66/214.
- **Japan** plans to host the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2015.
- **Japan** announced a contribution of US \$10 million to the UN Trust Fund for Human Security, and will hold the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development in 2013.

- **Kazakhstan** informed that the country will host the International Anti-Crisis Conference in Astana in May 2013, as a follow-up to major gatherings in the economic and financial fields.
- **Ecuador** proposed a tax to provide funding for the Green Climate Fund and suggested the establishment of a high-level panel on the economic and financial crisis.
- **Kenya** proposed to have discussions on the 10 year framework on sustainable consumption and production conducted within UNEP.
- **Bolivia** proposed the introduction of a Financial Transaction Tax of 0.5%.
- **Ghana** called for the declaration of a “decade of sustainable energy for all” to raise the profile of energy issues in the global development agenda and to attract the required investment.

In closing the meeting, the Chair of the Second Committee, H.E. Mr. George Wilfred Talbot, noted some of the challenges that the international community is facing including poverty, health gaps, energy crisis, conflict situations, and low agricultural productivity. The Ambassador also highlighted some common themes that emerged in the General Debate including the: shared sense of uncertainty derived from the crises; need to reform global economic governance; importance of addressing climate change; high expectations for the Doha round; challenges of food security; follow up to Rio+20; discussion of the post 2015 development agenda; Sustainable Development Goals and their relationship to the Millennium Development Goals; situation of countries with special needs; importance of the QCPR; importance of South-South cooperation; and the need to discuss the working methods of the committee.

Mr. Talbot identified three important messages from the General Debate. The first was that the poverty and sustainable development agendas should be addressed together. The second was that the world was in need of major breakthroughs on crucial themes including climate, trade, financing for development, and operational activities. For this, out of box thinking would be needed, he noted. The third was that global economic governance needed to be rethought and that practical steps were necessary to link the current institutional structures with the challenges and economic realities of the day. The Ambassador invited delegations to discuss innovative ways to respond to the challenges that the international community faced.

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