

**Introductory statement on the Report of the Secretary-General on
Human Resources Development
by
Mr. Jomo Kwame Sundaram,
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Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,

Human resources development (HRD) remains central to the efforts for lifting developing countries out of poverty and marginalization. This has been repeatedly recognized and emphasized. Most recently, the 2005 World Summit Outcome reiterated that human resources development is instrumental for achieving development and future prosperity. Success of these efforts, however, largely depends on the ability to equip individuals with the means to live decent and productive lives. And to expand their opportunities and choices and to bring them to the center of development.

This requires a fairly broad approach, as human resource development encompasses many dimensions, from nutrition, health, education, to housing, infrastructure, the delivery of public services, employment creation and participation in decision-making. The public policy approaches should address all these dimensions ranging from economic growth to all other sectors essential to satisfy basic human needs. Over the last two decades or so, the challenges of human development have become even more complex. This is largely due to rapid technological changes and economic innovation, the devastating spread of HIV/AIDS that kills society's most productive individuals, and increased competition in international markets, including labour markets and the pressures of migration.

It is not possible to cover the whole array of issues in a single report for which the scope has already been defined by the General Assembly. For this reason, the report of the Secretary-General that is in front of the Committee (A/60/318) focuses on some key

challenges of human resources development and makes a number of recommendations in those areas.

One major challenge of pursuing comprehensive policies for human resources development is to ensure sufficient investment in a wide range of sectors, including health, education and training, infrastructure, R&D, and employment creation. It has become apparent from the experience of many developing countries that social and economic investments are mutually reinforcing. Investment strategies involving both dimensions are more likely to trigger a virtuous cycle of sustainable economic growth and development, and are better able to stand international and economic shocks.

The implications in terms of short term resource commitments, however, are daunting for most developing countries, especially the poorest ones. These countries cannot generate the necessary resources to build the necessary infrastructure and human resource capacities. The problem of insufficient resources is becoming even more serious with the increasing demands posed by the spread of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, rapid technological changes that demand constant learning and training, and emigration of trained personnel. These are all factors that undermine national human resource development efforts. International support is crucial to enable developing countries to implement effective investment strategies focused on both economic growth and human development.

Chairperson,

Development of women is crucial for achieving the goal of human resource development. Several studies have demonstrated the important role of women in poverty eradication and sustainable development time and again. Women's well-being and access to productive means have a moral as well as an economic rationale. Despite the clear recognition of the important role that women can play in the development of countries, investment and development strategies and human resource development policies are not responsive to the specific needs of women. There is a need to ensure that the national

development strategies give special attention to the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the formulation of human resource development policies. This would certainly help in ensuring that women fully participate and contribute to the economic, social and political life.

Migration, especially migration of skilled labour or “brain drain”, presents another important challenge to human resources development efforts in developing countries. Growing competition in international labour markets has brought the issue of migration to the foreground. This report focuses on the phenomenon of the brain drain. Two factors drive this phenomenon and create strong incentives to migrate: opportunities or the lack thereof in the countries of origin, generally developing countries, and increasing international demand for skilled labour. In particular, the shortage of skilled labour in industrialized countries in key sectors of the economy, such as ICTs, health care and education, has triggered a significant outflow of professionals in those sectors from developing to developed countries and led to fierce competition among industrialized economies.

As a result, developing countries have become major providers of skilled labour, which has important implications for developing countries’ efforts to build their own human resources and for their future economic prospects. Although there are some positive effects from skilled labour migration such as the transfer of knowledge and technology through migrant networks and migrant remittances, which constitute a substantial financial flow to developing countries the overall short term impact on developing country economies is negative.

Ensuring more positive effects from skilled labour mobility for all countries involved requires cooperation and partnership among them to develop mutually beneficial approaches. The report suggests that a more equitable distribution of the benefits of skilled labour migration should aim at facilitating “brain circulation” and short term migration to reduce the losses for developing countries. This should be accompanied

by greater national and international efforts to strengthen labour markets and to increase economic opportunities in developing countries to reduce the incentives to emigrate.

In addition to these major challenges, the report addresses the role of knowledge, science and technology, including ICTs, in human resource development and the role of the public sector, and highlights the UN system's efforts to support the efforts of countries to develop their human resources.

As I mentioned earlier, this report covers only some aspects of this broad ranging subject. We hope that the Committee will be able to identify the areas that should be examined for the next report on this issue.

I thank you.