

## **Chair's Summary of the High-level Roundtable Discussions 11 February 2005**

1. Three High-Level Roundtables were convened on 10 February 2005, each addressing one of the core issues of Copenhagen. The first, on eradication of poverty, was chaired by H.E. Ms. Ana Maria Romero-Lozada, Minister of Women and Social Development, Peru and moderated by Professor Kaushik Basu of Cornell University. The second, on promoting full employment, was chaired by H.E. Mr. Aart-Jan de Geus, Minister for Social Affairs and Employment, the Netherlands and moderated by Mr. Allan Larsson, Member of the High Level Panel, Youth Employment Network. The third, on fostering social integration, was chaired by H.E. Mr. Samiollah Lauthan, Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, Senior Citizen's Welfare and Reform Institution, Mauritius and moderated by Mr. Augusto Varas of the Ford Foundation, Chile. The following is a brief summary of these three roundtables, including some proposals that emerged from the discussions.

### **Roundtable on Eradication of Poverty: summary of discussion**

2. Participants at the high-level roundtable on poverty eradication focused on three broad themes: the root causes of poverty; the comprehensive approach to poverty; and the international environment.

3. Consensus emerged that coordinated global and national action is needed in the fight against poverty, and that to formulate effective poverty eradication strategies, the root causes of poverty had to be recognized and understood. Among the wide-ranging root causes of poverty are: unequal distribution of assets; insecurity and vulnerability; and social exclusion and powerlessness.

4. The persistence of inequalities in income, assets and opportunities exacerbate poverty and high unemployment rates and lack of access to productive resources such as land, credit, market and information further limit the productive capacity of the poor. Lack of access to basic services, such as education and health care, limit the opportunities available to the poor, while social exclusion and lack of voice prevent poor people from fully participating in decisions that affect their lives. The vulnerability and insecurity of poor people is magnified by weak social protection, and exacerbated by long-term civil conflict and breakdown of the rule of law. Moreover, the HIV/AIDS pandemic confounds national efforts to eradicate poverty by depleting the labour force and diverting valuable resources away from economic and social development.

5. Responding to the root causes of poverty requires the collective efforts of governments, international organizations, civil society and other partners, with volunteerism and social mobilization serving as powerful partners in the fight against poverty. Participants shared their good practices, ranging from land reform, to policies to promote sustainable livelihood and partnership with the private sector.

6. Poverty reduction has received increased attention nationally and governments have established goals and targets accordingly, with special emphasis on promoting agriculture and sustainable rural development; improving access to education and health, social protection and

other social services; targeting the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; and promoting employment opportunities. Considerations of equity and equality need to be incorporated into all of these national strategies. Furthermore, empowering the poor, especially women as they constitute the bulk of the poor, improving access to productive assets, reducing social exclusion and vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups, and ensuring gender equality perspective at all levels should be at the centre of a comprehensive approach to poverty.

7. Participants stressed the essential role of creating productive employment, especially for young people, and generating adequate income in the effort to reduce poverty, and recommended that employment constitute a key element of national poverty reduction strategies. In addition, the importance of better integration and strengthening the relationship between macroeconomic policies and social development goals was underscored.

8. At the international level, participants recognized that poverty exists in both developed and developing countries, and poverty eradication is an ethical, social, political and economic imperative that should be collectively addressed by the international community. The global commitment to eradicating poverty should be on a sustained basis, and not just in response to financial emergencies or national calamities. This commitment can take the form of debt relief, innovative partnerships between regions and countries, including the consultations with the private sector, and the sharing of information and best practices for poverty eradication.

9. Many Member States have instituted policies and laws that ensure government transparency and accountability. Participants agreed that while these steps are welcome at the national level, these good practices should also be reinforced at the regional and international levels, through the United Nations system and regional mechanisms, to ensure durable democratic practices that increase the political and economic participation of all segments of society.

10. Some proposals were made by participants, including the following:

Create collective responsibility for poverty eradication both at the national and global levels; ensure that the comprehensive approach to poverty eradication as agreed to in Copenhagen form the basis of the approach to address the Millennium Development Goal to halve poverty by 2015; integrate social and macroeconomic policies, as while economic growth is necessary, it is not sufficient for poverty eradication; take into account the gender dimension of poverty, particularly the feminization of poverty, when formulating strategies and policies for the eradication of poverty; intensify effort to address the debilitating debt burden, particularly through debt cancellation, in order to allow countries to redirect their scarce resources to social expenditures; expand international and bilateral cooperation, including the transfer of technology and the sharing of experiences and good practices for poverty eradication; promote good governance and the rule of law in order to successfully combat poverty.

### **Roundtable on Promoting Full Employment: summary of discussion**

11. Participants in the high-level round table on employment addressed three areas of concern: the economic potential of the world's growing labour force and how it can be viewed as

a positive force; employment as the key to development and poverty reduction; and initiatives at the global and national levels that can make a difference in promoting full employment.

12. Rather than viewing the increase in the world's growing labour force as a problem, participants focused on the strong potential that a dynamic work force can present for economic growth and poverty reduction. Particular attention thus should be paid to generating employment for young people, women, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities so as to encourage their potential and counter poverty, social exclusion and discrimination. Collecting statistics to better identify the most vulnerable groups would aid in this endeavour. The importance of strengthening the link between education and employment so that people become more "trainable and employable", particularly for jobs in new and emerging sectors, was also mentioned. Transferring technology and know-how among countries could assist in this effort. Furthermore, calls were made to expand social protection programmes, primarily for those in less stable employment situations.

13. The need to make employment the cornerstone of development was stressed by many participants, who also pointed out that the centrality of employment to poverty reduction has been lacking from international policy discussions, with the exception of the inclusion of youth employment in the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Promoting full and productive employment is a prerequisite for better and more equally distributed income, growth and development, and expanding access to quality jobs is essential for achieving peace, stability and social cohesion. To this end, macroeconomic policies should incorporate employment creation as a key objective. Some participants further noted that the application of macroeconomic policies without measuring their social impacts has led to increased poverty and unemployment, even to the risk of social disintegration of many societies. With regard to financing employment initiatives, participants discussed, at the international level, re-examining ODA so that it is directed at employment promotion, and at the national level, rectifying the imbalance between taxation levels for labour and capital.

14. Participants emphasized the importance of advancing global initiatives that strengthen policy coherence both nationally and internationally, especially with regard to the UN system and the Bretton Woods institutions. On the international level, it was suggested that high level inter-ministerial coordinating committees be established to implement strategic plans and actions on employment creation. It was further stated that globalization and international trade are closely linked to the employment situation in developing countries, with protectionist trade policies potentially leading to job losses, particularly in agriculture, and the actions of multinational corporations possibly compromising local labour standards. One delegation mentioned that, in some cases, significant progress in terms of employment creation had been made despite the imposition of punitive and discriminatory policies. Participants also raised the issue of unsustainable external debt faced by many developing countries, and how debt servicing obligations undermine their ability to finance investment in human capital and infrastructure, thereby affecting economic growth and employment generation. The challenges posed by international migration were also raised; especially the need to develop a skills certification procedure to facilitate the employment of workers as they cross international borders.

15. Finally, attention was called to developing national employment plans that support the

promotion of full and productive employment, with special attention given to the informal economy as it comprises the majority share of the labour force in many developing countries. The important role of the state, in both creating and expanding employment opportunities, was also highlighted.

16. Some proposals were made by participants, including the following:

Strengthen the link between education and employment so that people become more “trainable and employable”, particularly for jobs in new and emerging sectors; transfer technology and know-how from country to country as a means for generating employment and fostering education and skills development; build upon the Youth Employment Strategy contained in the MDGs as a first step in strengthening and broadening the focus towards well coordinated employment-oriented development strategies; promote the development of quality jobs through respect for fundamental principles and rights at work under conditions of equity, equality, security and dignity; create national employment plans which respect fundamental principles and rights at work, promote active labour markets and pay special attention to vulnerable groups; intensify efforts to “formalize” the informal economy, including initiatives to extend regulations and labour protections to informal workers, provide credit to small and micro enterprises to build up their businesses, and resolve property rights so that informal entrepreneurs can translate their assets into capital.

#### **Roundtable on Fostering Social Integration: summary of discussion**

17. The high-level roundtable on social integration recognized that although globalization can yield advantages and encourage social development, the differing pace across countries has led to greater social exclusion. Achieving a “society for all” means all members of society should enjoy full and equal participation. Investing in social cohesion and social development was noted to be good and productive investment and not simply a cost.

18. Participants noted that 10 years after Copenhagen, progress in implementing its commitments has been disappointing. The social integration component of social development appears to have lost ground and has not been fully integrated into the general discourse outside social development circles. The principle of solidarity among peoples, societies and nations has eroded. Focus on a people-centered approach, with equal opportunities for all, must be regained and policies must address social and economic conditions of all people, particularly those in developing countries.

19. It was agreed that it is essential to overcome the apparent rift between efforts to achieve the goals of the MDGs and the broader Copenhagen commitments. The concept of social integration developed at Copenhagen should be mainstreamed into efforts to achieve the MDGs.

20. Participants discussed the need to eradicate poverty noting that an integrated approach must be pursued to promote employment and reduce inequality. Employment, especially access to decent work, is vital for fostering social integration. It empowers individuals and fosters social inclusion. Education is also vital in providing people with the skills to participate in society, engage in productive employment and thus reduces prejudice. The education of girls is

particularly important as it yields the highest return on investment in developing countries. Investment in health is also vital for social integration. Similarly, public health policy can directly influence social development, combat poverty, and reduce social exclusion. It was noted that gender mainstreaming should be aggressively pursued, and that women should be protected from discrimination, violence and disease.

21. In many countries, groups with special needs are marginalized in the political process. Persons with disabilities, among others, require special focus. Their integration requires legal instruments to protect them from discrimination and ensure their rights and equal opportunities in society. Similar protections are required for immigrants, refugees and displaced persons. The needs of ageing populations were emphasized, particularly with regard to pensions. If changes are not made in current systems for financing pensions and long-term care, future generations of older persons may be left without adequate social protection. Despite facing tremendous pressures and undergoing significant changes, the family is essential for facilitating social inclusion.

22. Participants emphasized the role of civil society in promoting a people-centered approach. Since they work directly with local people, civil society groups are often able to ensure that those who need support have access to it. The role of the private sector was also noted. However, governments, civil society and the private sector all need mechanisms, networks and institutions through which to build consensus and improve collaboration.

23. Some proposals were made by participants, including the following:

Ensure security, social justice, equal access to goods and services and equal treatment for all people; improve public administration, including democratic governance and the rule of law, and stable and transparent institutions that guarantee and respect human rights and freedoms, and allow for broad-based participation; improve Government coordination of ministries and departments, and promote decentralization of authority to local governments, with allocation of sufficient resources; integrate economic and social goals and policies, rather than focus on economic goals alone which may lead to greater social disparities, polarization and exclusion. ensure partnership and coordination with all stakeholders within the context of a Government-created regulatory framework for cooperation; recognize the role of the family and home environment for integrating and supporting vulnerable members and provide families with requisite resources, skills and knowledge; provide resources for continued investment in the social sectors, including increased development assistance, with particular attention to ensuring free and universal access to quality education that are amenable to attendance and participation of girls; encourage the private sector to make investments in social sectors and provide civil society organizations with support to carry out programmes; recognize the importance of volunteerism as a mechanism to develop social capital, support social integration and overcome social exclusion; foster improved international cooperation, including strengthening the Commission for Social Development which remains the main place for all countries to come together to identify and share examples of good practices and policy approaches.