

**Conclusions of the High-Level Roundtable on Eradication of Poverty**  
**By the Chair, Ms. Ana Maria Romero-Lozada**  
**Minister of Women and Social Development, Peru**

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**Root causes of poverty**

Participants agreed that the current level of global poverty cannot be tolerated and that coordinated global and national action is needed in the fight against poverty. Recognizing the root causes of poverty is necessary in planning policy and poverty strategies. The wide-ranging root causes of poverty can be categorized into three broad groups: unequal distribution of assets; insecurity and vulnerability; and social exclusion and powerlessness. Besides identifying these root causes, it is also important to ask if these causes are indeed being appropriately addressed.

It was acknowledged that the persistence of high levels of inequality of income, assets and opportunities exacerbate poverty. High unemployment rates, lack of access to productive resources such as land, credit, market and information limits the productive capacity of the poor. Lack of access to basic services, such as education and health care, results in limited opportunities for the poor. Vulnerability and insecurity among the poor is made worse by weak social protection programmes. In addition, long-term civil conflict and the breakdown of the rule of law put the poor at more risk. The poor suffer from social exclusion and powerlessness and are thereby unable to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

The response to the root causes of poverty should be not just at the level of individuals directly affected by poverty but be a collective responsibility of civil society, governments and international organizations. Further, there is a need to establish a pace in dealing with poverty that is commensurate to the level of poverty. This involves translating goals and aspirations of poverty strategies into costs needed to achieve them. An important aspect is to value volunteerism and social mobilisation in poverty strategies.

Some of the good practices in tackling the root causes of poverty shared by Member States include the role of governments in the redistribution of assets such as land reform, and in asset building. Policies that provide opportunities for sustainable livelihood, partnership with the private sector and the promotion of pro-poor growth were promoted. Consultations with the poor in planning policies and giving the poor a voice allow for the wider participation of the poor in policy formulation.

**Comprehensive approach to poverty**

Most of the speakers underlined that since the Social Summit their Governments have given increased priority to poverty reduction through formulating and implementing national strategies for poverty eradication and establishing national goals and targets to reduce poverty. Special emphasis has been placed 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. It was emphasized that equity and equality dimensions need to be incorporated into national strategies and programmes to eradicate poverty. Furthermore, elements of national strategies should include empowering people living in poverty, especially women, improving access to productive assets, and ensuring gender equality perspective at all levels. It is well-documented that female-headed households are more likely to be poor.

It was also noted that low level of employment creation, especially among young people is a serious obstacle in reducing poverty. Creation of productive employment and generating adequate income need to be important elements of national poverty reduction strategies.

Several speakers highlighted the importance of better integration of economic and social policies, especially though the relationship between macroeconomic policies and social development goals, including poverty eradication.

### **International Environment**

It is important to recognize that poverty exists in both developed and developing countries. Poverty eradication is an ethical, social, political and economic imperative and the world needs to assume collective responsibility for eradicating poverty. In the past, this collective responsibility has only been felt in times of emergency, such as in the aftermath of the financial crises of the past 15 years or in the aftermath of some natural calamity. However it is necessary that the global commitment to address poverty be sustained over the long term. This commitment can take the form of relieving the debt burden of the poorest nations, innovative partnerships between regions and countries, and the sharing of information and best practices for poverty eradication. Consultation with the private sector may also be an integral part of the effective partnerships to alleviate poverty while stimulating more balanced growth across sectors. This international cooperation also creates an environment conducive to more efficient implementation of poverty reduction strategies on the ground.

Many states have instituted policies and laws that ensure government transparency and accountability. While these steps are welcome on the national level, these good practices should also be reinforced at the regional and international levels, through the United Nations system and the mechanism of regional bodies, to ensure durable democratic practices that increase the political and economic participation of all segments of society. Volunteerism has been an important resource for poverty eradication in many developing countries and can be successfully tapped by the demonstrated commitment of leaders at the local and national levels to the goal of poverty eradication and social development.

### **The following recommendations emerged from the discussion:**

- There should be collective responsibility for poverty eradication both at the national and global level;

- The comprehensive approach to poverty eradication as agreed to in Copenhagen should form the basis of the approach to address the Millennium Development Goal to halve poverty by 2015;
- Economic development is necessary but often not sufficient for poverty eradication, and social policy should be integrated into macroeconomic policies;
- Strategies and policies for the eradication of poverty should take into account the gender dimension of poverty, particularly the feminization of poverty, and the fact that households headed by women tend to be significantly poorer than other households;
- Many countries still face debilitating debt burdens and more effort should be made to address this issue, particularly through debt cancellation, in order to allow countries to redirect their scarce resources to social expenditures;
- Increased international and bilateral cooperation should be expanded, including the transfer of technology and the sharing of experiences and best practices for poverty eradication;
- The promotion of good governance and the rule of law is often an essential pre-condition for successfully combating poverty.