

CSO - UN Partnership

Just as my paper did, however, I plan to digress slightly from the title of this talk to focus on slightly different elements.

And I will try to do so within the 10 minutes allotted - as such, you will please forgive the lack of nuance.

I have divided up this talk into four parts:

1. Responses to some of the things shared over these past few days
2. A few normative suggestions
3. The role of Civil Society
4. Policy proposals for the UN

Responses to what has been shared:

1. We have spent a lot of time talking about tax revenues. This is really important, yes - but I think we need to focus as much on how money is spent as we do on how money is raised. Some have discussed this - but 2.6% of global GDP goes to military spending. And over 15% goes to things like sporting events, alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and other forms of entertainment. We have a spending problem as much as we have a money raising problem.
1. We keep saying that there is no money and that things are expensive. This is an out and out fallacy, and we - of all people - cannot allow this fallacy to continue. Governments have low revenues. Why? Because they've decided to lower taxes. There is plenty of money and, on balance, we are talking about money MAKING proposals - if we include a temporal dimension (may be short term investment, but long term gain).

1. My last point here is on policy proposals generally. There is a tension in here: on the one hand, we know every country is idiosyncratic, and on the other we are asked to make sweeping policy proposals. This is an impossible task. What I think we have the ability to do here is extract lessons we can learn from those idiosyncratic examples. So, rather than saying "sequencing works" or "sequencing doesn't work" which are blanket statements, we can say "sequencing worked here because" or "sequencing did not work there because" and then extract lessons from that. I will get, later, to what I would recommend in terms of policy, by the way.

Normative suggestions

1. To be provocative, I want to highlight and build on something that Ms. Clarke said this morning: I want to offer that poverty is the sneeze, hunger is the cough - but relationships are the cold.
1. In that light, we have let our proxies become our realities. What we are working towards is lives well lived - and, an important component to that is no poverty, no hunger, etc. What happens when proxies become reality? Growth is equated with advancement (even though it may run counter to universal employment, or to environmental sustainability, etc.). Schools are equated with education (even though their quality may be poor and they may be promoting nationalistic ideologies or re-writing history). Etc. We need to be careful about this.
1. We have focused a lot on eradicating poverty, without focusing enough on limiting extreme wealth. Heaven forbid. But what if we were to talk about women's economic advancement without talking about how men dominate the economic fields? What if we expected marginalized

minorities to no longer be marginalized without engaging with those who are discriminating? In a world with enough resources for all, how can we focus so much of our energy on policies for those living in poverty without engaging those living with extreme material wealth.

1. I want to echo the words delivered by Anis Chowdhury who spoke about the value laden language we use. And if you remember only one thing from my presence here, I want it to be this: language matters. The poor implies that the people are poor, when they are as rich as any of us. They are just living in poverty. The wealthy, wealth creators, are creating wealth for whom? We need to be careful with this. And, most importantly, the UN itself is running a HUGE contradiction right now. I have said this before, and I will continue to say this as much as I can. The definition of development now has three pillars at the UN: economic, social and environmental. This means that unless a country has met all three of these pillars, it is not developed. Often, we are saying developed when we mean high income. This is important because developed implies there is no more to be done - but, to take my country as an example, we have tremendous social fragmentation and are consuming far more than our environmental share. The United States is not a developed country by the UN's definition, and we must learn to call a spade a spade.
1. Lastly, we have a cultural problem. We exalt the wealthy. We are individualistic. We exist where a culture of competition dominates our discourse. And yet, none of these things are beneficial economically, socially or environmentally. Policy matters, of course - you need good laws to reduce corruption. But culture is often more important. It is a culture that does not accept corruption that truly reduces it - otherwise, the enforces of those policies

will be corrupted themselves - as we have seen from the Panama papers, etc. We have made tremendous cultural advancements in the past century, and our policies have reflected those - we should not imagine that policy shapes culture! Women's right to vote was not policy and then cultural shift - it was cultural shift and then policy. This is why, as was mentioned by Prof. Mwabu, policy makers need a stronger aversion to poverty! I think we should have an Expert Group Meeting on this

Role of Civil Society

1. Presumably, this is what I am here to talk about. Civil society is important because how else will we hear from those who have actually lived in poverty and have success stories? The private sector leaders aren't usually made up of these individuals, nor is academia. If we had come here to talk about policies to advance women, but had no women we would be rightfully laughed at. If we came here to talk about people with disabilities, but had nobody living with disabilities, what legitimacy would we have? Same goes for indigenous people - and, in this case, I want to encourage us to try and hear from those who have actually been the beneficiaries or otherwise experienced these policies and programs - I am not saying it is easy, but I am saying it is necessary. And I would be the first to give up my seat at the table to ensure this happens.
1. At the UN, CS is increasingly recognized as a legitimate partner, with answers and policy proposals in addition to just being a watchdog and squeaky wheel. I have to express my gratitude again here to the UN for being invited. This normative reality must be continued and extended at all levels - and it requires trust, increasing capacity for CSOs, and a shift on the part of government officials.

1. The UN is having trouble in this new agenda articulating how CSOs will participate. I should not comment exactly on the means and strategies that are being taken - but I want to say that I think this is a healthy debate and I hope we can continue having it. I am happy to share some facts about this ongoing discussion, but my time is short ...

Recommendations for the UN/Member States (I use the term UN to refer to both here)

Lastly, my policy recommendations. I will try to keep these at the level of the UN because I think that it is not the place of the UN, or even of us here, to make suggestions for policies when we do not properly understand the idiosyncrasies of countries. Here goes:

1. My not-so-naive recipe for development is the following, and I think the UN should use its convening power to make this happen at as many levels as possible. It is quite simply the idea of ongoing participation, consultation, and knowledge generation. We must move beyond the prescription approach, and the program approach, to a consultation and learning approach. This can be done, and I recommend it be done.
1. The UN needs to make a stronger case for, as it was called earlier, enlightened self-interest, though I would say that global solidarity is also a good way to put this. The UN needs to make a case that it is the arbiter of global concerns. Make the case that it should be the location where a global tax regime should be housed (including financial transaction taxes, etc.). That it should be monitoring policies by country A that have deleterious effects on country B (subsidies, etc.). What I am talking about here is convincing Member States

that ceding a measure of state sovereignty will be in their interest.

1. The UN needs to be the exemplar of participation, consultation, and knowledge generation that I mentioned above. Had the UN listened before, it would have heard the cries for dignity louder than the cries for money, it would have heard that religion is predominantly a source of hope, dignity, social advancement of community and of empowerment rather than a source of discrimination and backwards thinking, and it would have heard that the endless calls for growth we hear are doing grave harm to our environment and deepening inequalities. Now, the answers are more difficult - but until we get the problem straight, we aren't going to get the solutions straight.

Thank you, again.