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From planning to policy: Half a century of the CDP

Daniel Gay[1]

ABSTRACT

The United Nations Committee for Development Policy (CDP) comprises 24 independent specialists from a variety of disciplines. It advises the UN Economic and Social Council on emerging economic, social and environmental issues relevant to sustainable development and international co-operation. The paper argues that since its launch in 1965 the CDP has at times struggled to make an impact, but that it has been most effective when it has been at its most creative and when it has broken with convention. It helped put into practice the target that developed countries should devote 0.7% of their gross national income to official development assistance. The Committee created the least developed countries category and continues to monitor and update membership of the group. Its members were prominent in the genesis of the human development approach and continue to conduct new work in the areas of governance, productive capacity and sustainable development.

JEL Codes: F02, N01, O1, O2, O15, O19

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1 Inter-Regional Adviser, CDP. Email: gayd@un.org. With thanks to Jose Antonio Alonso, Annette Becker, Matthias Bruckner, Namsuk Kim, Teresa Lenzi, Jose Antonio Ocampo and Roland Mollerus. The views in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Committee for Development Policy (CDP), its Secretariat, or the United Nations. This document should not be considered as the official position of the CDP, its Secretariat or the United Nations. All errors remain those of the author.

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New York, N.Y. 10017, USA
e-mail: undesa@un.org
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Acronyms

CDP	Committe for Development Policy
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECAFE	Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
ODA	Official Development Assistance
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
GNI	Gross National Income

Introduction

When Jan Tinbergen was appointed the first Chair of the Committee for Development Planning (CDP) in 1964, income per capita in the Congo was more than one-and-a-half times that of the Republic of Korea and Sudan was richer per head than Thailand. Decolonisation was still in progress, with many of the challenges and successes that those new nations would experience still unknowable. Even the notion of international development itself was undergoing a process of definition and clarification. It would be five years before Tinbergen, a Dutch national, would for his work in macroeconomics jointly win the inaugural Riksbank economics Prize in Memory of Alfred Nobel alongside Ragnar Frisch.

It was in this very different era that the Committee was created, with the original purpose, set out in General Assembly and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) recommendations, of evaluating and coordinating the various organs of the United Nations related to development planning and to generate ideas for their improvement.[2] The CDP was also mandated with transferring knowledge to developing countries, analysing major trends and studying questions about planning and programming. Members were, and still are, recommended by the Secretary-General on the basis of their individual expertise, with the aim of providing policy advice to ECOSOC on emerging cross-sectoral development issues. The CDP remains the only UN body to which development specialists are appointed in their personal capacities and are expected to contribute their own expertise rather than that of their own government.

Founded during the first "Development Decade" on the premise that "The importance of planning is now widely recognized, as is attested by the fact that it is used in countries with very different economic and social systems," (UN 1966: 3) the CDP was from its first meeting in 1966 preoccupied with how the international community could successfully support developing-country governments in their successful transition to higher economic growth and poverty reduction. A statist, programmatic attitude toward economic development was partly a product of the times: for instance A.N. Efimov, Director of the Economic Research Institute of the Soviet State Planning Committee, Gosplan, is listed as one of 18 founding members.

The emphasis on the importance of strategic planning was part of a broad and pragmatic view within the CDP that international coordination and government intervention were critical to development success, and that governments often got planning wrong. Planning was seen not as a top-down process of economic organisation performed solely by the state, but as how the various actors in the development process – firms, civil society and the state – should coordinate and approach development.

At the second session, held at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in 1967, development planning was articulated as an "instrument for the formulation and implementation of coherent development policies, expressed in both qualitative and quantitative terms" (UN 1967: 2). Emphasis was placed on the importance of state legitimation "… [T]he political will to develop and the ability to exercise substantial control over strategic activities in the economy are accordingly the inescapable conditions for the effective implementation of development plans." (UN 1967: 2-3)

A hallmark of the CDP from the start was its reluctance to promote a universal approach to planning and its desire to tailor analysis and recommendations to the regional and national context. The next two sessions were held at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and the then Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) (which became the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) after its name change in 1974). Efforts were made to provide advice specific to each of these regions.

2 ECOSOC resolution 1079 (XXXIX), 28 July 1965

The fifth session, held at ECAFE in May 1969, was held at a time when East Asian development policies and strategies were still under elaboration.[3] The CDP's report from that year comments approvingly on the increase in aid for the region and devotes considerable space to the recommendation that East Asian governments should revitalise the planning process and empower planning institutions, advice that fits well with the observation that: "From the 1950s to the mid-1970s, ECAFE promoted a dirigiste model of development, with the state as a central actor" (UN 2009b).

Notably the CDP report mentions "the failure of [Asian] exports to expand rapidly" and that "countries are unable to take the forward step of establishing producer goods and basic industries owing to the smallness of their domestic markets" (UN 1969: 32). The CDP was probably not alone in misdiagnosing what was about to become the most successful export-led boom in economic history, but this was clearly a major failure of forecasting.

In many ways, however, the Committee was ahead of its time, anticipating some of the strategies and policies that would be used to achieve higher economic growth and social advancement in the following decades. It was a renowned later CDP member, Alice Amsden, who was among the first to recognise that international coordination and strategic intervention by government were critical to the success of the East Asian tigers (Amsden 1989). Economic success in those countries was facilitated partly by the state as a strategic actor channelling private-sector development, alongside an associated early emphasis on health and education. Whilst the Committee probably did not much influence East Asian development policy, and some of the CDP's early analysis and recommendations were misplaced, it is likely that the tacit or explicit support – for state planning, health and education – of a prominent independent panel of UN experts, and their holding their third session at ESCAFE, was at least no hindrance to the efforts of national governments in this regard.

The CDP broke new ground in other ways, too. It is possible to identify an early strain of thinking in the CDP's work that might now be known as human development, even if couched differently. The 1974 CDP report, Industrialisation for New Development Needs stated that: "Industrialisation can and should be explicitly 'people-oriented.' Plainly, this does not mean that one pattern of development can be prescribed for all countries, regardless of their size, location, preferences or other characteristics, or that one brand of industrial strategy is appropriate for all development stages. But there are certain industrial choices that appear more consistent than others with priorities that seek early and substantial inroads on mass poverty and unemployment, that recognize the importance of agriculture, that aspire to a more equitable and humane way of life for whole populations, and that, to these ends, would pursue optimum economic efficiency" (cited in Jolly 1993: 58).

This early focus on what later came to be called human development is perhaps unsurprising given that Richard Jolly was from 1978-81 rapporteur of the CDP, after which he became Deputy Executive Director for Programmes at UNICEF until 1995, then Principal Coordinator of the Human Development Report for four years.

Jolly points to another instance of the CDP's breaking with convention: environmental challenges were addressed as early as 1974. "The richer countries are facing the adverse environmental repercussions brought about by a high level of development… But for the greater part, the environmental problems of developing countries are those that arise from lack of development… problems that arise from unhygienic

3 For example even Singapore, the regional exemplar, had a per capita income of only around $1,500 and made considerable use of international assistance. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) sent 744 technical assistants to the city-state from 1950 onwards and spent US$27 million on development aid. In 1960 a visiting UNDP team wrote a report which became the basis of early industrial policy entitled "A proposed industrialisation programme for the State of Singapore".

water supplies, bad housing, lack of sanitation, inadequate nutrition, sickness and disease and so on. These are but aspects of mass poverty and can only be remedied by the process of development itself" (quoted in Jolly 1993: 58).

As Jolly points out, however, insufficient attention was paid to the loss of biological diversity, pollution, deforestation and ozone depletion. Few agencies or individuals were then in a position to foresee the economic repercussions of environmental degradation, nor the emerging impact of climate change, issues which were only addressed later. Until the 2000s most of the CDP's annual themes remained concentrated on conventional economic and social development concerns except for a report on water in 1989 (see annex 1 for a list of themes). It was only in 2007 that the Committee turned its attention explicitly to climate change and sustainable development.

0.7%: "The most famous target ever set and never met"

Given that the CDP was formed during the first development decade, that planning was still in fashion and that the East Asian boom was a twinkle in the eye of planners – and that the Committee was launched amidst a theoretical and historical background in which even the notion of international development assistance was still being formulated – it was always likely that the Committee would become involved in efforts to define an aid target. No single agency can be credited with the notion that developed countries should contribute a fixed proportion of national income to aid, but the CDP helped put it into practice; again, a somewhat bold move.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) credits the World Council of Churches in 1958 as bringing to the international stage Arthur Lewis's suggestion that developed nations should contribute 1% of their Gross National Product in aid. Hans Singer joined the UN Department of Economic Affairs (a predecessor of DESA) as Special Adviser from 1955 to 1958, advancing the case at the UN. Singer and Tinbergen were influential in formulating and promoting the target, and the 0.7% figure can be found in the CDP's 1969 report, with the aim of funding the Second Development Decade from 1970-80. This goal was also specifically recommended in Partners in Development, the report of the Pearson Commission on International Development set up by Robert McNamara, US Secretary of Defence under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, World Bank President from 1968-81 and a CDP member from 1984-86.

According to the UN Intellectual History Project the 0.7% target was "arguably the most famous international statistical target ever set and never met" (UN 2009). Whilst some have argued that the target is an arbitrary lobbying tool (Clemens and Moss 2005) with little relevance to national needs, it was based on the best calculation of country requirements possible at the time (modern data and techniques would likely provide a better estimate). Tinbergen, whose Riksbank prize in memory of Alfred Nobel had been for his contribution to macroeconomic modelling,[4] estimated the capital inflows developing economies needed to achieve desirable growth rates, proposing a target for official flows of 0.75% (later modified to 0.7%) – both concessional and non-concessional – to be achieved by 1972 (UN 1970: 25). Some developed countries accepted this target, but not the date, at the second meeting of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in New Delhi in 1968 (Development Assistance Committee 2002).

It is not strictly accurate that the target was never met, although most OECD countries continue to fall short. Sweden and the Netherlands reached the target in 1975, followed by Norway and Denmark in 1976 and 1978 respectively. All four countries met

4 It is probably best forgotten that John Maynard Keynes called Tinbergen's econometric analysis of the determinants of investment "charlatanism" and a "mess of unintelligible scribblings" which produced "false precision" (cited in King 2002: 32-33).

the objective since although the Netherlands fell behind in 2016. Finland achieved it once, in 1991. Luxembourg attained the figure from 2000 onwards. The only other DAC countries to have met the target since it was established were the United Kingdom from 2013 onwards and Germany in 2016, mostly due to in-country spending on refugee resettlement. The weighted average of the 28 DAC members' official development assistance (ODA) by the early 2000s had not exceeded 0.4% of GNP (DAC 2002), remaining at 0.32% by 2016.

The CDP has continued its work on aid, most recently in a 2016 background note on the proposed new concept known as Total Official Support for Sustainable Development, part of a process aimed at modernizing concepts and updating reporting criteria for development finance. The CDP recommended that ECOSOC reiterate the call for donors to meet their ODA commitments and for ODA to be reported separately from other flows, calling for the different components of any new development financing framework to be registered separately under appropriate categories, such as climate financing, market-like instruments and ODA. These well-received recommendations were somewhat controversial among donor countries, originating in an implicit suspicion shared with non-government organisations that official donors may have been attempting to replace public spending commitments with private money.

The CDP further called for UN member states to be involved in all deliberations on any new framework under conditions of full transparency and inclusivity, facilitated through the UN Development Cooperation Forum. The CDP also emphasised that funds should support development objectives related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; that development assistance is cross-border and should therefore not include expenditure within the borders of donor countries; and that private financial flows should be counted separately from official development expenditure (UN 2016: 1). These recommendations followed reports that DAC donors were spending increasing sums in support of refugee resettlement inside their own borders.

Listing the least developed

One of the main achievements of the CDP has been its definition, monitoring and support for the least developed countries (LDCs). In 1964 at UNCTAD's founding conference the need was identified for special attention to 'the less developed among the developing countries'. Four years later a resolution was passed on the needs of the LDCs and the special features of these economies made the focus of work by two expert groups of the Committee. On 13 December 1969 the General Assembly affirmed for the first time "the need to alleviate the problems of the least developed among the developing countries with a view to enabling them to draw full benefits from the Second United Nations Development Decade." It was at the CDP in 1971 that 25 countries were identified and placed on the original list of what became LDCs, a decision that was endorsed by the General Assembly in December of the same year. The LDC category remains the only country grouping to achieve official recognition and legal significance, with a set of well-defined General Assembly and ECOSOC-endorsed criteria.

A list of international support measures for LDCs was drawn up, whose broad categories remain similar to this day -- technical cooperation, financial assistance and international trade and regional cooperation – although the range of international support for LDCs has since widened. The OECD and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade legal texts accorded special measures for LDCs, as does the World Trade Organisation, whilst several other international agencies later officially recognised the category.

Again, the CDP was somewhat ahead of its time, identifying the initial list of LDCs using cross-cutting and multi-dimensional criteria. There was an explicit desire not to base the category only on national income, which may, especially in LDCs, be inaccurately measured, and which has been criticised as an unreliable indicator of true development for many other reasons including its exclusion of distribution, the tenuous link with human welfare and its exclusion of the natural environment. The LDC list was defined according to a broader and more representative range of indicators, an early precursor of the move over recent decades toward a range of interlinked factors reflected in multidimensional indices, such as the Human Development Index, the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission and even the Sustainable Development Goals themselves.

The CDP considered LDCs to be defined by:

- The predominance of agriculture
- A low level of industrialisation, taken as a share of industry of less than 10% for most countries
- Difficulties in benefiting from trade concessions for manufactures or semi-manufactures due to weak productive capacity
- Low education and literacy
- Poor health
- Weak administrative and governmental organisation
- Weak economic infrastructure
- Smallness, by income or population
- And a vicious circle of low growth engendered by these eight characteristics

Due to the shortage of quality data a composite index was at the time considered impractical, so GDP per capita was used as a "rough and ready" indicator of productive capacity, and the share of manufacturing in GDP and adult literacy rate were used as indicators of development. Notably there was no consideration of economic or environmental vulnerability at this time. The original shortlist of LDCs used the figure of under $150 per capita, a share of manufacturing of under 10% and a literacy rate of 20% or less (UN 1971: 16). Three groups of less-developed countries were formulated, from which the LDC group was drawn: countries with a share of manufacturing in GDP of 10% or less and a literacy rate of 20% or less; countries with manufacturing of 10% or less and literacy ratio of more than 20% (which included only Lesotho and Uganda); and countries with share of manufacturing of more than 10% and literacy of 20% or less.

25 countries were identified on this basis. In Africa: Botswana, Burundi, Chad, Dahomey (later Benin), Ethiopia, Guinea, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Upper Volta (Burkina Faso). In East Asia and the Pacific: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Lao PDR, Maldives, Nepal, Sikkim (later part of India), Western Samoa (Samoa) and Yemen. Haiti was, and remains, the only LDC in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Over the next 13 years 25 countries were added, before Botswana became the first to graduate in 1994. Senegal, Timor-Leste and South Sudan were included on the list in the 2000s. At the time of writing only seven countries had graduated or been identified for graduation: Botswana (1994), Cabo Verde (2007), Maldives (2011), Samoa (2014), Equatorial Guinea (2017), Vanuatu (2020) and Angola (2021). The CDP will consider six additional countries for graduation in 2018 and a number of additional countries are expected to become eligible in the coming years.

One size doesn't fit all

An important feature of the CDP has been its diversity, by geography and background. By 2017, of the 199 members in the history of the Committee, 57 were Europeans, 52 from Asia, 42 from Africa, 36 from Latin America and the Caribbean, 11 from North America and one from Oceania. Geographical origin can have a decisive influence on perspective, and the multiplicity of voices from the global south has contributed to the relevance and practicality of the CDP's analysis and recommendations. Members also come from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds, including academia, government and non-government organisations. This diversity has helped avoid the kind of one-size-fits-all proposals that can arise from, for example, the exclusively formal modelling approach often favoured by academics from the global north. Gender balance, however, has only recently begun to improve with efforts aimed at enlisting more women from the 1990s onwards.

CDP members have had a wide variety of experience and views. Overlapping with the tenure of Tinbergen was János Kornai, CDP member from during 1972 to 1977, and best known for his critical analysis of the socialist system and post-socialist transition. Kornai is Professor of Economics Emeritus at Harvard, and Professor at the Central European University in Budapest.

Hernando de Soto was appointed in the same year as Robert McNamara but served until 1989, when he published the book for which he achieved prominence, The Other Path: The Invisible Revolution in the Third World. Known for his work on the importance of property rights for the poor, de Soto argues that market economies require adequate participation in an information framework that records property ownership and other economic knowledge.

Overlapping with de Soto by two years was Mahbub ul Haq, who served on the CDP from 1987-95, launching the UN Human Development Report in 1990 whilst serving as Special Adviser to the UNDP Administrator. Haq was Pakistani Minister of Finance, Planning and Commerce from 1982-88 following his tenure at the World Bank, which began in 1970, and during which he was director of the Policy Planning Department and chief economic adviser to McNamara.

In 1990 Ricardo Ffrench-Davis began his first term as a CDP member, also serving until 1995. A critic of the neoliberal policies pursued under Augusto Pinochet, at the Central Bank of Chile Ffrench-Davis was from 1964-70 Deputy Manager, and from 1990-92 Director of Research and Chief Economist. For the following 12 years he was Principal Regional Adviser at ECLAC. Ffrench-Davis is Professor of Economics at the University of Chile. In 2007 he returned to the CDP as chair for one term, serving another term as a member.

Klaus Schwab began a two-year vice-chairmanship of the CDP following his membership of the UN High-Level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development, the year after Ffrench-Davis's first term. Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, Schwab is among other things a former steering committee member of the Bilderberg Group.

Recent CDP members have included Frances Stewart and Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, both prominent advocates of the human development approach. Stewart, CDP Chair from 2010 to 2013, is Professor of Development Economics at the University of Oxford. In the final year of her CDP membership she, like CDP member Alice Amsden in 2002, won the Leontief prize for advancing the frontiers of economic thought. In 2009 Stewart won the UNDP Mahbub ul Haq award for her lifetime's achievements in promoting human development. One of the first authors of the UN Human Development Report, she was president of the Human Development and Capability Association from 2008 to 2010.

Fukuda-Parr, CDP Vice-Chair from 2013 onwards, is Professor of International Affairs at The New School in New York. From 1995 to 2004 she was lead author and director of the UNDP Human Development Report Office. Before this she worked at the World Bank and UNDP on agriculture, aid coordination in Africa, and capacity development. She was founding editor of the Journal of Human Development and Capabilities.

Continuing the Latin American developmentalist tradition represented by Ffrench-Davis and others, Jose Antonio Ocampo, CDP chair from 2013 onwards, is Professor of Professional Practice in International and Public Affairs at Columbia University. From 2003 to 2007 he served as UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs following his five-year tenure as Executive Secretary of UNECLAC. From 1989 to 1997 Ocampo was Colombian Minister of Finance, Chair of the Central Bank Board, Director of the National Planning Department, and Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

CDP members themselves are supported by a Secretariat based in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. At the launch of the CDP the Secretariat was known as the Centre for Development Planning, Projections and Policies, and later became simply the Committee for Development Policy Secretariat, a unit of the Development Policy and Analysis Division of DESA.[5]

The CDP's former in-house publication, the Journal of Development Planning, appears to have enjoyed its heyday in the 1980s, with a number of seminal papers from among others William Baumol, Rudiger Dornbusch, Mahbub ul Haq, Richard Jolly, Laurence Klein, Robert McNamara and Amartya Sen. The Journal invited contributions not only from academics but from government officials and practitioners, including a 1985 entry from Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe entitled 'The Role of the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern African states' acknowledging the failure of import substitution and arguing in favour of sub-regional economic cooperation (Mugabe 1985: 261).

The 1989 issue coincided with the launch of the first Human Development Report, with which a number of CDP members were associated. The issue featured articles by Sen, Sanjaya Lall, Giovanni Andrea Cornia (a CDP member from 2010 until the time of writing), Haq and Richard Jolly. The Journal ceased publication in 1994.

Changing times, changing names

The Committee remains to this day an important source of diverse, independent advice, free from the political or administrative imperatives that often characterise UN specialist institutions. But having been formed in another era, by the mid-1980s some members were expressing frustration. According to Shridath Ramphal, chair of the CDP when McNamara was a member: "For three years we reported to ECOSOC with growing urgency, and unfailing futility" (Ramphal 1995: 7). The report on the 26th session included a self-evaluation which found that although the CDP was well-placed to consider cross-cutting issues, it should strike a better balance between national and international policy and avoid duplicating work done elsewhere (UN 1990). Another finding was that the CDP should become more closely linked with ECOSOC, as well as conducting greater outreach, disseminating its reports to the wider public. "The Committee stressed that the part-time nature of the commitment of the members of the Committee to its work meant that the members could not be expected to prepare lengthy reports like those of a fully-fledged research body" (UN 1990: 45).

While members may have been of the view that their work was losing impact because of duplication, poor dissemination and their part-time membership, it is possible that the Committee was overlooked due to changes in the international agenda and because the Bretton Woods organisations had more influence than ECOSOC. The term Washington Consensus was formed in 1989 (Williamson 1990) and structural adjustment had been underway for years. By the mid-1990s it became clear that reform was needed in response to the emergence of new development priorities and a changing development landscape. Planning, even defined in the CDP's sense of coordination between national stakeholders, had fallen out of favour. In 1998 ECOSOC reviewed its subsidiary bodies and in this process decided to change the name of the CDP, swapping the word Planning for Policy. The acronym was retained but the mission modernised.

As the list of annual report themes shows (annex 1), the change in name did not amount to an abrupt change of direction or to a reorientation of work away from the developmentalist or human development

5 One former secretariat staff member is Ghana's Kwame Pianim, Associate Economic Affairs Officer at the time of the CDP's launch. After working for the Ghanaian government in the 1970s he was imprisoned for a decade by President Jerry Rawlings for alleged treason. Pianim's 1996 presidential bid failed when the Supreme Court upheld a law prohibiting those convicted of treason from holding public office, even if committed during periods of unconstitutional rule. Pianim's son married Elisabeth Murdoch and he has two grandchildren in common with Rupert Murdoch (Independent 1996).

themes that had characterised the work of the CDP hitherto. The new Committee for Development Policy also managed to maintain its focus on the developing countries rather than the developed-country priorities of the Bretton Woods institutions. In fact, after a series of broad reports devoted to the world economy and in 1997 the Asian crisis, the review appears to have enabled the CDP to refocus its efforts on issues specific to less developed nations. The first post-1998 theme was employment, followed by technology, then 'The Reappropriation of Development in Africa' (see annex 1). Arguably this facilitated a more interventionist approach, recognising the shortfalls of government planning but retaining a focus on strategic action and ownership by governments and other national stakeholders. Along these lines two major publications were produced, in 2012 and 2014 respectively: Alternative Development Strategies for the Post-2015 Era and Global Governance and Rules for the Post-2015 Era.

The 2012 publication, based on a constructive critique of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), argued that despite the successes of the MDGs, they were too narrow in scope and limited to social objectives rather than a broader economic, social and environmental agenda. The goals appear not to have been taken up by donors, were too fragmented and were addressed selectively, failing to consider the interconnectedness of sustainable development. The note argues further that the MDGs did not reflect the broader ethical vision set out in the original Millennium Declaration: "the MDGs may arguably have provided a convenient "cover" behind which macroeconomic policies continued to pursue the Washington Consensus agenda of liberalization and privatization, leading to widening gaps between the "winners" and "losers", without providing adequate protection for the losers. To an extent, the MDGs co-opted the language of human development" (UN 2012 :16).

Several principles are promoted for alternative development strategies with the aim of informing the debate on the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030. The note argues that environmental, social and economic policies need to be better integrated. Among the most noteworthy principles are those on macroeconomic policy, including the suggestion that developing countries attempt to mobilise domestic savings and minimise indebtedness; control portfolio flows and regulate their sectoral allocation; manage the exchange rate; use fiscal policy for redistribution and raise the tax-GDP ratio; adopt a countercyclical and accommodative monetary policy and better regulate banks. Any new global framework for development needs to be better coordinated at the international level, be based on lessons learned, and allow policy to be tailored to country context, promoting decent work and environmental sustainability.

The CDP's subsequent major publication, Global Governance and Rules for the Post-2015 Era, complemented the earlier note by focusing on inter-governmental cooperation, arguing that five main principles should govern reforms of global governance and rules: common but differentiated responsibilities; subsidiarity; inclusiveness, transparency and accountability; coherence; and responsible sovereignty. Among other things the note argues that ECOSOC should assume more responsibility for global governance reform, guiding the UN system in addressing international governance deficiencies including the environment, international monetary and financial architecture, capital and labour flows, trade rules and inequality.

Over time changes affected not only the CDP's name and themes, but also its main responsibility: identifying LDCs. A series of reviews of the LDC criteria began in the 1990s, as a result of the need to accommodate new and better data sources and to reflect changing perceptions of what constituted a least developed country. Since 2011, the CDP has defined LDCs as low income countries suffering from the most severe structural impediments to sustainable development. Over time, GDP per capita was replaced by gross national income (GNI) per capita; the literacy rate was complemented by indicators on health and nutrition (first in the form of an augmented physical quality of lige index and since

2002 a human assets index); and the share of manufacturing in GDP was first augmented with other indicators to form an economic diversification index and then, in 1999 by an economic vulnerability index, which over time was further refined to capture vulnerability not only to economic but also to environmental shocks and more focused on sustainability.

The basic structure of the LDC criteria has remained stable over time. In order to be added to the list, a country must pass thresholds for all three criteria. Since the 1990s, graduation procedures have been included in the LDC identification process. There is an intended asymmetry between inclusion and graduation, making graduation more difficult than inclusion, and avoiding frequent movements in and out of the LDC category. After two decades during which the group continued to grow, the category began to shrink from 2011 onwards as countries left.

International support to LDCs has also changed over time, although the CDP still believes that assistance is inadequate and fails to take the heterogeneity of LDCs into account. In particular, trade preferences became more meaningful with the adoption and improvement of duty-free quota free access to most developed countries (for example through the European Union's Everything But Arms initiative) and an increasing number of developing countries. Whereas the growing market share of LDCs such as Bangladesh and Cambodia in global garment markets are testament that such preferences can work, the fact that many LDCs still lack capacity to produce exports or remain simple commodity exporters shows that preferential market access alone is insufficient.

Virtue is bold

It is difficult to discuss the history of a UN committee without looking at the international context. In 1968, before the East Asian boom, the vantage point was very different. This was an era in which planning was the norm and decolonisation was not yet complete, and when the discipline of development was itself still young. It was also an age in which the UN had more influence over economic policy and development thinking. The national development policy activities of the World Bank and IMF would grow in prominence and become more interventionist. Many of the successes of the CDP therefore came in the early days – work on the 0.7% aid target, the LDC category and associated international support measures among them. In the 1980s, the decade of structural adjustment and the corresponding influence of the Bretton Woods organisations, CDP members found it difficult to make an impact aside from their work on human development.[7] The change in the CDP's name in the 1990s was more than cosmetic; it came after planning fell out of favour. Rather than undermining the ethos of the CDP or rendering it less relevant, it enabled the Committee to adopt a more flexible approach and to tackle particular issues in more depth. Globalisation, and the pressing importance of international issues such as climate change and equality, required a more strategic, context-sensitive approach with an international dimension.

It is also important to look at the CDP's record in the context of development progress more generally. The sixth session of the CDP reported: "It cannot be over-emphasised that what development implies for the developing countries is not simply an increase in productive capacity but major transformations in their social and economic structures" (UN 1970: 6). In 2016 and 2017 the major CDP output was also on lessons learned from graduated and graduating

6 The human assets index consists of four equally-weighted indicators: the under-five mortality rate; percentage of population undernourished; gross secondary school enrolment ratio; and adult literacy rate. The economic vulnerability index consists of population (1/16); remoteness (1/16); merchandise export concentration (1/16); share of agriculture, forestry and fishing in GDP (1/16); share of population in low elevated coastal zones (1/8); instability of exports of goods and services (1/4); victims of natural disasters (1/8); and instability of agricultural production (1/8).

7 This is not to imply that ECOSOC and Bretton Woods organisations were in competition.

countries in building productive capacity for structural transformation, showing how policy approaches advancing good development governance and implementing country-tailored industrial and sectoral policies, social policies and macroeconomic and financial policies can propel LDCs towards sustainable development.

It is a testament to how times have changed, and how they haven't, that nearly half a century later the theme of the CDP was so similar. In a sense the continuing relevance of the statement validates the original agenda of the CDP, in that the need for structural transformation was correctly diagnosed from the beginning. At the same time it is disappointing – and a shortcoming of the international system rather than only the CDP -- that so many countries still have not yet undergone structural transformation, not least the 48 still on the LDC list at the time of writing. Even by 2021, after the end of the fourth ten-year Programme of Action for LDCs, only 13 countries are likely to have graduated in total, including past graduates, and of those 13, few are likely to have undergone "major transformations in their social and economic structures".

A number of explanations underlie these shortcomings, mostly to do with the evolution of the world economy, including the reliance of the small, sometimes politically unstable resource-dependent economies on the export of primary commodities; the exclusion of many LDCs from international value chains; their lack of diversification; and their inability to compete with the emerging middle-income countries. The difficulty of catalysing change through the international system also played a role. Ramphal argues that the deficiencies of the CDP were largely due to ECOSOC's lack of influence. He is not the only commentator to propose an Economic Security Council along the lines of the Security Council. He suggests mandating the Council with the ability to oversee and assess economic affairs; to provide long-term policy frameworks; to secure consistency between the main multilateral institutions; and to build consensus among governments, the business community and civil society. Whilst these ideas are not new and may be unrealistic, they do speak to the importance of empowering ECOSOC.

Another, broader challenge concerns the difficulties with development advice more generally. As most multilateral and UN agencies have discovered, delivering the specialist recommendations of an expert body to national governments can often present practical and ethical difficulties. Policy proposals must be tailored specifically to country and regional needs and conveyed to national policymakers directly, but sensitively, and in practical form rather than only in international reports, which often do not filter through to the country level. A committee of development doyens can play a supporting and coordinating role, providing critical analysis, thinking afresh and providing examples of best practice. But ultimately country inhabitants are best placed to formulate national development advice, to adapt policy to circumstances and to put it into practice. The development community, including the CDP, needs to continue thinking innovatively about the role of the 'expert' and about how to effectively convey new thinking about development to governments. "There are 2.8 billion poverty experts, the poor themselves. Yet the development discourse about poverty has been dominated by the perspectives and expertise of those who are not poor—professionals, politicians and agency officials" (World Bank 2000: 2).

As Jolly (2005) says, the UN has often been ahead of the curve in development thinking and practice, framing issues, thinking originally, opposing orthodoxies and exploring alternatives. The latest example is the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030. Likewise the CDP itself has often had most success when it has been at its most radical, using its special position as a forum for experts in their personal capacity to develop new and alternative methods for framing issues and looking for new, multifaceted ways of doing development. This suggests that the future of the CDP lies in continuing to challenge conventions, investigating fresh approaches and trying to lead the way. As Shakespeare's Duke Vincentio says in Measure by Measure: "Virtue is bold, and goodness never fearful".[8]

8 Act 3 Scene 1.

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Annex: List of principal CDP themes, 1966-2017

Session	Year	Theme
1	1966	Implementation of Development Plans
2	1967	Session Development planning
3	1968	Development planning
4&5	1969	Guidelines and proposals for the 2nd UN Development Decade
6	1970	Guidelines and proposals for the 2nd UN Development Decade
7	1971	Progress on 2nd UN development decade
8	1972	Attack on mass poverty and unemployment
9	1973	Progress on 2nd UN development decade
10	1974	Industrialization of developing countries
11	1975	Progress on 2nd UN development decade
12	1976	Development trends
13	1977	Lessons of the international development agenda: the 1970s
14	1978	Development issues for the 1980s
15	1979	Development experience of the 1970s
16	1980	Development strategy for the 1980s
17	1981	World context of the 1980s
18	1982	World economic recovery and international cooperation
19	1983	International economic disorder
20	1984	Barriers to development
21	1985	Challenge to multilateralism
22	1986	Doubling Development Finance: meeting global challenge
23	1987	Development under siege: constraints and opportunities in a changing world
24	1988	The world economy
25	1989	The world economy
26	1990	The world economy
27	1991	The world economy
28	1992	Role of UN in framework of international economic cooperation
29	1994	World economic outlook
30	1996	Work program for 1997
31	1997	Globalization
32	1998	Asia's financial crises
1	1999	Employment
2	2000	Technology

3	2001	Reappropriation of development in Africa
4	2002	Aid effectiveness
5	2003	Rural development
6	2004	Implementation of the Programme of Action for LDCs
7	2005	Africa on the MDGs
8	2006	Full and productive employment and decent work for all
9	2007	Climate change and sustainable development
10	2008	Sustainable development and climate change
11	2009	Global public health
12	2010	Global Crises and gender
13	2011	Education for all
14	2012	Productive capacity and employment
15	2013	Science, technology and innovation
16	2014	Global governance (Global development agenda)
17	2015	Accountability for post-2015 era
18	2016	Productive capacity for LDCs
19	2017	Lessons learned in developing productive capacities