

The UN Development Strategy for Transformative Changes Beyond 2015

A panel discussion of the Economic and Social Council and
the Committee for Development Policy

2012 Substantive Session - General Segment
23 July 2012

Concept Note

A. Background

The Committee for Development Policy (CDP) is a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It provides inputs and independent advice to the Council on emerging cross-sectoral development issues and on international cooperation for development, focusing on medium- and long-term aspects. The Committee is also responsible for undertaking, once every three years, a review of the list of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), on the basis of which it advises the Council regarding countries which should be added to the list and those that could be graduated from it.¹

In its resolution E/2011/20, the Council calls for more frequent interactions with the Committee to, among other things, exchange views on the Committee's work programme as well as on other pertinent issues that the Committee may wish to bring to the attention of the Council. In this regard, with the approaching of 2015, the Committee has considered necessary to review the experience gained with the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and its vision of development. It thus developed a research agenda that aimed at analyzing and proposing alternative development models that could contribute to a sustained improvement in human wellbeing worldwide.

At the general segment of the substantive meeting of the Council in July 2012, a dedicated panel discussion will be organized to introduce the CDP's reflections on the general contours of the international development agenda for post 2015, in light of Committee's review of the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) initiative so far. The panel will also address the Committee's main recommendations on the transformative changes in the international economic environment required to address emerging challenges, to enable the implementation of the UN agenda beyond 2015 at the country level, and to strengthen the international development cooperation.

This informal panel discussion also aims to contribute to indentifying effective approaches to move the international development agenda forward in view of the main outcomes of the Rio Conference, in particular of the need to take a comprehensive view of development encompassing economic, social and environmental dimensions. At the same time, the panel

¹ For more information on the CDP, see <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/cdp/index.shtml>

discussion will give the Council an opportunity to share with the Committee some of its own views regarding the future of the UN development agenda and to highlight those aspects it considers particularly relevant for future consideration by the Committee in its work programme.

B. Moving towards 2015²

The United Nations Millennium Declaration embodied a global consensus of the need for globalization to become a positive force for all and based on principles of solidarity, equality, dignity and respect for nature. The MDGs have been instrumental in galvanizing international efforts in eradicating poverty and promoting development as global priorities. In this regard, the MDGs have effectively forged a global consensus and mobilized public support for eradicating global poverty, put great emphasis on social spending, and kept the agenda transparent and focused. However, this approach brought an unintended downside effect, an over-simplification of the policy agenda, and neglected important priorities other than social spending.

In the Committee's view the implementation of the vision expressed in the Millennium Declaration --multidimensional poverty reduction in sustainable, equitable manner with security-- should continue but needs to be expanded to address a series of global challenges such as changing population dynamics, persistent inequality, environmental pressures and instabilities in global markets. Moreover, the formulation and implementation of the global development agenda must also accord with the fundamental principle of inclusive participation, and be applicable to all countries and not limited to developing countries.

The MDGS have been powerful communicators of the international consensus on the need to eradicate poverty, but there is need to adjust the current set of development goals. Looking forward, the Committee suggests that the goals for beyond 2015 should be rebalanced to better reflect the equitable growth and rights based development strategy expressed in the Millennium Declaration. In this regard, the new set of goals should: i) focus on improvements in human lives, sustainably, equity and security, as the purpose of development; ii) encompass development as a broad multi-sectoral process; and, (iii) be limited in number; and structured to include goals, targets and indicators.

The following elements need to be incorporated:

- reduced inequality in its many facets, across and within nations and groups, as a goal itself and also application to all specific goals;
- expansion of environmental sustainability to targets on carbon emissions;
- inclusion of targets on political freedoms;
- strengthening of targets on the provisions for partnership, including quantitative, time bound targets, besides those established for ODA flows;
- improved human security as applicable to assessment of progress toward every goal.

² For more information, see also Committee for Development Policy, *Report on the Fourteenth Session (12-16 March 2012)*, Economic and Social Council, Official Records, 2012, Supplement No. 13, available from http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/cdp/cdp_ecosoc/e_2012_33_en.pdf and *The United Nations Development Strategy Beyond 2015*, CDP Policy Note (forthcoming United Nations publication).

As thus defined, the achievement of goals requires the identification of appropriate development strategies, including key elements of policies which should promote a dynamic transformation of the economy while being adapted to country-specific contexts. The main effort in development must, of course, come from within each country. But the international environment plays an important enabling and supportive role. It enables by providing global public goods; mainly regulation of, and ensuring coherence among, different areas of international affairs; and coordination of national policies. It supports through an architecture that provides access to finance, markets and technology for development; the conditions of such access being the major determinants of national policy space.

International economic relations are governed by a number of institutions and are subject to a number of legal instruments. These elements do not always operate in tandem with one another and are not necessarily designed to support development. There is a need for improved coherence and better coordination among them and for more explicit development orientation. Moreover, the international framework needs to take into account important emerging trends. For example, activities that were formerly the exclusive responsibility of nation States must now be tackled in a context of increasing international coordination involving a wide range of stakeholders. With respect to development financing, new actors and new instruments have emerged: South-south cooperation has increased; private funding sources have gained importance relative to public funding; and a wide range of proposals for innovative sources of financing have been put forward.

Looking forward, it is necessary to reconsider the desired characteristics of the international environment for addressing multi dimensional wellbeing in alignment with national development strategies and sensitive to country-specific contexts. In particular, the system of global governance should be centered around the UN system to be globally representative and mandated to support broad-based development goals with enhanced coordination. Trade rules need to be development-oriented and provide increased market access for the products of the less developed countries, as well as policy space for achieving the necessary transformative changes in the structure of their economies. Flexibility should be also ensured for developing countries to adopt the system of intellectual property protection that best suits their development needs. The global financial architecture should rebalance the roles of international financial institutions to promote global macroeconomic stability and minimize crisis-induced external shocks to developing countries, as well as enhance coordination among donors, recipient countries and private actors, and also between traditional aid instruments and new financing sources. Furthermore, an international framework on migration is needed, and its conception need to be based on an integrated approach that includes trade, technology and finance to link migratory flows to the creation and diffusion of knowledge. Intensified efforts by the international community are required to debate and formulate concrete actions for creating an enabling international environment to support the achievement of the vision expressed in the Millennium Declaration in the years to come.

C. Format

It is important to maintain an informal approach to promote the free exchange of ideas on the agenda. In this regard, the use of written statements should be discouraged so as to engage all in more spontaneous and fruitful discussions.

In order to facilitate a productive dialogue, the panel discussion will be organized as follows:

- The chair/moderator will open the panel discussion and introduce the rationale and objectives of the meeting (5-7 minutes).
- A CDP member will present the CDP's recent work on the theme and will delineate possible directions for its work in the future (8-10 minutes). Focus will be on the lessons learnt from MDGs, and operationalization of the vision expressed in the Millennium Declaration.
- A second CDP member will complement these remarks and provide a perspective on the required changes in the international economic environment to support the implementation of the UN development agenda (8-10 minutes).
- These interventions will be followed by comments by a member of the ECOSOC Bureau providing feedback on the CDP's work as well as ideas for additional considerations on the theme (12-15 minutes).
- The floor will then be open for discussion (40-45 minutes).

Tentative panel composition:

Chair and moderator: Ambassador Miloš Koterec (President of ECOSOC)
Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba (Vice President)
Prof. Sakiko Fukuda-Parr (CDP Member)
Prof. Norman Girvan (CDP Member)
Ms. Ana Luiza Cortez (Secretary of CDP)

Expected outcome of the meeting:

Follow-up action to be included in the Council's resolution on the Report of the Committee for Development Policy on its fourteenth session.
