



GLOBAL CONSULTATION ON ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES IN THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA



Leadership Meeting, 19 February 2013, Copenhagen, Denmark

Chairpersons' Summary Statement

The Leadership Meeting on Addressing Inequalities in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, held in Copenhagen on 19 February 2013, welcomed the Report: 'Addressing inequalities. Synthesis Report of Global Public Consultation' presented at the meeting.

The Meeting noted the report's analysis of the many inter-related forms of inequalities, which will need to be tackled, if the aspirations of the UN Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are to be fully realized on a sustainable basis. Inequalities and their underlying causes will need to be effectively addressed in a Post-2015 Development Agenda, in order to effectively eradicate extreme poverty, support equitable socio-economic progress and sustain it in future generations.

The following points were emphasised during the Leadership Meeting:

- Equality is not a new priority. It is a fundamental value of the Millennium Declaration adopted by all UN Member States in 2000. Since then, the world has seen the worsening of many forms of inequality - within as well as between countries. Today, the majority of poor and disadvantaged people live in middle-income countries and low-income, fragile states. Rising inequality is therefore a main challenge to sustainable human development, now and in the future.
- Inequalities are found in the economic, political, social and environmental domains. These are distinct, but strongly intertwined and can be mutually reinforcing. Inequalities therefore need to be tackled systematically and coherently, by addressing their structural causes, and through a new common and holistic development framework that is global in character and relevant to all countries.
- The MDGs have contributed to unprecedented progress in a number of critical areas for human development. However, structural inequalities and social exclusion have not been sufficiently addressed. In a new development framework, participants suggested that a self-standing goal to reduce inequalities could help ensure the political will necessary to do this. Targets aimed at universal access to basic services and resources, and 'getting to zero' – such as eradicating extreme poverty, hunger and preventable child and maternal deaths – are necessary to ensure that no one is left behind. Such targets could be reinforced by indicators that specifically measure progress in reducing disparities and that specifically track progress among the most impoverished, marginalised and excluded groups and individuals.
- Inequalities are not a necessary consequence of, nor a precondition for economic growth, but a result of particular policies and structural conditions. Inequalities can therefore be reduced through targeted and transformative policies and actions, including the promotion of inclusive and intergenerational growth and decent work while simultaneously addressing the priority needs and rights of poor, vulnerable and marginalised people. Striving to reduce inequalities is not only right in principle; it is also right in practice. Equitable societies promote social capital, social cohesion and stability, trust and tolerance and thereby innovation, economic growth and sustainable development.

- The Consultation put forward a recommendation to more strongly integrate human rights principles and standards in a new post-2015 framework. Several participants in the Meeting noted that the human rights framework offers a comprehensive basis on which to address inequalities, including through integrating the core principles of universality, non-discrimination, participation and accountability. This would offer a systematic way of addressing the root causes of human rights failures, thereby also addressing the various dimensions of inequality.

- A human rights framework for addressing inequalities also requires democratic systems of governance, transparency and the rule of law in order to enable people to claim their rights and to foster and maintain social cohesion.

- The empowerment and advancement of women and girls is crucial. Although there has been progress in some areas, stark disparities between men and women, boys and girls continue to prevail across a range of domains, from health and education to political participation, justice and jobs. This represents a global challenge. At the same time, it is well documented that investing in women and girls and ensuring their equal rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, is a “fast track” to development and inclusive economic growth. A new Post-2015 Development Agenda should therefore include not only a universal goal for gender equality and the empowerment and advancement of women and girls, but also ensure that gender and other dominant inequalities are mainstreamed in all relevant areas through disaggregated targets and indicators.

- Promoting greater equality across sectors and policies, within countries and between countries must be an integral part of a future set of international development goals. Addressing inequalities both within and between countries will require fair and just rules and practices in international relations in areas including trade, finance, investment, taxation and corporate accountability.

The Meeting recognized that all sections of society have critical roles to play, if all major forms of inequality, discrimination and exclusion - including those linked to gender, disability and minority status – are to be addressed. Transformative change will depend primarily on equity-based social and economic policies, legislation and actions by governments. This will require a special effort in countries with weak institutional capacity and limited financial resources in cooperation, where necessary, with the international community. It will also require innovation and sustained engagement with the private sector, civil society and communities, based on strong and equal partnerships.

Lastly, the Meeting commended the extensive public and expert consultation process - co-led by UN Women and UNICEF, with the support of the Governments of Denmark and Ghana, in association with the UN Development Programme and the UN Development Group - on which the Report is based. It noted with appreciation that over 200 experts provided written papers for the Consultation and that over 1,200 members of the public, from all parts of the world, participated in on-line discussions on various aspects of inequality.

Paul Victor Obeng, Chairman of the National Development Planning Commission of Ghana

Christian Friis Bach, Minister for Development Cooperation, Denmark

Anthony Lake, Executive Director, UNICEF

Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director, UNWomen