

Helen Clark: Address on the New Global Agenda to the Council of the Socialist International

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I am delighted to address this meeting of the Council of the Socialist International on the emerging post-2015 development agenda and the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - which are due to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the end of this year. The new agenda is a universal one, and is relevant to countries at all stages of development.

The new development agenda is shaping up to be both ambitious and transformational. It covers all three dimensions of sustainable development – the economic, social, and environmental, and it addresses the many interlinked challenges which the Council is discussing at this meeting.

The SDG agenda will be reinforced by the outcomes of other major global development-related processes this year. Implementation of the outcomes of the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Japan four months ago, of next week's Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, and of the climate change COP21 in Paris in December will all have a major bearing on whether the SDGs can be achieved.

Without doubt, there has been tremendous development progress in the time span covered by the MDGs and their targets. Between 1990 and 2010, for example, extreme income poverty halved. Most children in developing countries are enrolled in primary schooling for at least some time, and infant and child mortality has fallen significantly. Maternal death rates are down too, although not nearly enough, and significant progress has been made on combating HIV, malaria, and tuberculosis. The goal set for access to improved water sources has been met.

Yet there remains much unfinished business from the MDGs. The UN Children's Fund UNICEF recently estimated that at the current pace of change:

- 68 million more children under five will die from mostly preventable causes by 2030;
- It will take almost 100 years before all girls from sub-Saharan Africa's poorest families can expect to complete their lower secondary education.
- To eliminate open defecation by 2030, the current rates of reduction would have to double.

Inequality has also emerged as a huge issue in many countries, rich and poor. UNDP estimates that seventy per cent of people in developing countries are living in societies which are less equal than they were in 1990 – the baseline for measuring MDG progress. The International Labor Organization (ILO) warns that child poverty is rising in 18 of 28 countries in the European Union, and suggests a link to falling levels of maternity and child benefits.

A defining feature of the new global agenda is its determination to leave no one behind. Clearly there is work to do to get more equal development outcomes.

The global environmental challenges are mounting too. It's almost six years since the launch of the report of the SI Commission for a Sustainable World Society, "From a high to a low carbon society". Yet despite that and many other reports calling for serious action on tackling climate change, there is still too little collective ambition.

We are fewer than five months away from COP21 in Paris where a new global agreement on climate change is due to be reached. To date, the trend of commitments being made to reduce greenhouse

gas emissions is insufficient to see global warming peak at under 2 degrees Celsius above pre industrial levels – the point at which we are told that catastrophic and irreversible climate change would occur.

There is now no time to lose. The impacts of climate change threaten development achievements in all countries, and especially in the poorest and most vulnerable. Low income countries are the least responsible for climate change, but are already bearing the greatest cost in terms of lives lost, livelihoods damaged, and housing and other infrastructure destroyed.

The new global agenda must take on all these challenges – multi dimensional poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. The alternative is to face a world characterized by even more turmoil and instability than the troubled world we live in today.

Political as well as economic and social inclusion is highly relevant to building a better world too. The extent of complex humanitarian emergencies fueled by war and conflict is overwhelming the international community's capacity to respond.

Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and a former S.I President, said last month that there are now sixty million displaced people in our world, about twenty million of whom are refugees. More people are on the move today than at any time since the UN was founded.

There need to be greater efforts to address the drivers of these conflicts. Goal 16 of the proposed new SDGs endeavours to do just that. It promotes peaceful and inclusive societies, based on access to justice and inclusive, effective and accountable institutions at all levels. UNDP has a huge global portfolio of work in governance. We support countries to open up political space and mediate their differences peacefully. More investment in this work and in preventive diplomacy is badly needed.

The SDGs also include goals and targets on economic growth, infrastructure, energy, and strengthening capacities to trade and attract investment. There are also goals targeting the unfinished business of the MDGs, environmental degradation, and the challenges of rapid urbanisation.

Implementation

The new development agenda will remain as mere words on paper unless it can be implemented. A strong package on “means of implementation” will be critical. Capacities need to be built. Governance needs to improve. Renewed global partnerships for development are needed. And, while money isn't everything, access to finance is vital.

Thus, the Financing for Development Conference in Addis Ababa next week needs an outcome which is as bold and ambitious as the new sustainable development agenda promises to be.

Socialist International members have led calls for the advanced economies to meet the international target of dedicating 0.7 per cent of their Gross National Income to Official Development Assistance (ODA). But ODA must be smart aid and support building national capacities for inclusive and sustainable growth, for domestic resource mobilization from that growth, and for the attraction of quality loans and investment.

The Addis Ababa Conference is also a place for concrete commitments to be made on combating the tax evasion and avoidance and illicit financial flows which constrain efforts to raise domestic resources.

Overall, there is much more international policy coherence needed across areas like trade, taxation, and migration. Developing countries also need readier access to the technologies which will enable them to make breakthroughs on sustainability.

As well, the range of challenges which the new global agenda seeks to tackle requires more

international public finance beyond ODA. More resources are needed for investments in areas ranging from communicable disease control to climate change adaptation and mitigation, and science, innovation, and new technologies.

Implementing a bold global sustainable development agenda requires the engagement of the world's private sector too. How business does business has a huge bearing on whether the SDGs can be achieved. The willingness of most of the global buyers of palm oil to refuse to purchase product from newly deforested land shows how a committed private sector can lead on global issues.

Implicit in this new universal agenda is the understanding that development is not just something which should happen for someone else somewhere else. The quest for attaining and sustaining high levels of human development is relevant to all countries. The challenges of sustainability of our ecosystems are faced by countries at all levels of development.

UNDP's contribution to the new global agenda

UNDP worked alongside countries as they integrated the MDGs into their national agendas over the past fifteen years. We have strengthened capacities, transferred knowledge, and supported access to finance. We have worked closely with countries as they design and scale up initiatives to meet the MDGs. Over the past five years, we have worked with our partners in UN Country Teams, including the World Bank, to accelerate progress on key MDG targets. We will be applying all our experience from this and from five decades of development work in support of meeting the SDGs.

Many UNDP offices and UN Country Teams are already working with national and local partners on how to roll out the SDGs. I saw this for myself last month in Botswana and Malawi where new national plans are being prepared with the SDGs incorporated.

The SDGs will require "whole of government" approaches across the economic, social, and environmental strands of policy. This will be challenging, especially where institutional capacity is low. Means of implementation needs to include institutional and capacity strengthening.

MDG acceleration efforts have focused on removing bottlenecks and obstacles to achieving development objectives. This approach will continue to be relevant to the SDGs - not least on the significant unfinished business of the MDGs.

As the lead co-ordinating agency in the UN development system with a mandate across sustainable development, governance, and building resilience to shock, UNDP is well placed to support countries on the SDGs. Among the areas we will emphasise are:

- reducing inequalities between rich and poor and on other dimensions. If the poor, women, and other marginalized groups are left behind, countries cannot achieve their full potential;
- harnessing the potential of youth. Large youth populations offer the potential for a big demographic dividend, if there is investment in youth potential. The converse is also true – alienated and angry youth can't make the positive contribution societies need;
- improving jobs and livelihoods. In Africa for example, more than four in ten people still live in extreme poverty, and eighty per cent of the workforce is in low productivity work in agriculture or low value service sector livelihoods which generate little income. More decent work and livelihoods need to be generated through inclusive and sustainable growth;
- maintaining ecosystem integrity. The SDGs will encourage all countries to promote economic and social progress with a light environmental footprint. This is essential if we are to preserve the global commons which secure our common future;
- addressing the drivers of conflict and instability. This can include strengthening social cohesion, establishing the rule of law and the capacity for peaceful dispute resolution, and making governance more inclusive and effective;
- building resilience to disasters. If development isn't risk informed, it cannot be sustainable development. So often we see everything a family and community has gained destroyed by natural hazards whose impacts could have been mitigated. Adaptation to extreme climate and seismic events

is an imperative.

Conclusion

In 2015 the opportunity exists to put our world on an inclusive and sustainable course.

If we all work together, we have a chance of meeting citizens' aspirations for peace, prosperity, and wellbeing, and for the preservation of our planet. Each one of us in this room, our organisations, and our countries have roles to play. I hope together we can step up to the challenge.