



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**Sixty-ninth session**

Bangkok, 25 April-1 May 2013

Agenda item 8

Policy issues for the Asia-Pacific region**Draft report****Summary of messages from the Ministerial Panel on Sustainable Development and the Development Agenda beyond 2015**

1. The Ministerial Panel on Sustainable Development and the Development Agenda beyond 2015 discussed the contributions and limitations of the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific, as well as the region's critical and emerging development challenges beyond 2015. The panellists were:

- (a) H.E. Mr. Gordon Darcy Lilo, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands;
- (b) H.E. Mr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic;
- (c) H.E. Ms. Emilia Pires, Minister of Finance of Timor-Leste;
- (d) H.E. Dr. Jiko F. Luveni, Minister of Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation of Fiji;
- (e) H.E. Ms. Daggubati Purandeswari, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry of India.

2. Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, served as moderator of the panel. In his introductory remarks, he highlighted the progress that had been made under the framework of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular the Asia-Pacific region's contribution to reducing extreme poverty and increasing primary school enrolment. However, he noted that the growing and evident level of inequality in the region was a key issue. The region was also lagging behind on the maternal health targets and the water and sanitation-related target of the Millennium Development Goals, which according to some estimates could be achieved only by 2035 unless urgent measures were taken to accelerate progress. Targets related to education, water and sanitation were particularly important because they had multiplying effects on many other sectors, including on gender equality, health and child mortality. Emerging challenges, such as massive migration, urbanization, rapid technology change and risk of financial crisis, led to the

conclusion that the global economy faced a new normal and that the Asia-Pacific region had a key role to play in ensuring equitable and sustainable development. In formulating sustainable development goals and the development agenda beyond 2015, priority should be given to investing in institutions, infrastructure and people. The key to the economic development of Sweden, which had risen from having been the third poorest country in Europe to one of the wealthiest in that region in a 30-year period, was due to its strategy to build up strong institutions and invest in infrastructure and education. In addition, a rights-based perspective and the rule of law could be effective vehicles for change.

3. Mr. Lilo outlined the key recommendations on the development agenda beyond 2015 emanating from the Round Table Consultation on Pacific Issues, which had been held in Dili in February 2013. The recommendations included the following: (a) the development agenda beyond 2015 must be built on the Millennium Development Goals as well as on sustainable development goals; (b) sustainable growth was necessary to support social indicators; (c) the green growth sustainable model was essential for developing and fragile States; (d) there was a need for effective governance systems; (e) peace and development must be accommodated in the development agenda beyond 2015; and (f) the service delivery model for development goals beyond 2015 must be effective and sustainable. In that regard, he emphasized the need to take a more holistic approach to development and foster more equitable participation in discussions on the development agenda beyond 2015. He noted the importance of effective institutions and governance, ranging from those of States to communities and rural areas, if real development was to take place. With regard to Pacific island States, he highlighted the importance of an equitable and fair approach to utilizing marine resources, on which ocean States depended for sustainable economic growth.

4. Mr. Sisoulith highlighted key recommendations from the Final Regional Review of the Almaty Programme of Action, which had been held in Vientiane in March 2013. The outcome of the meeting, which had been adopted as the Vientiane Consensus, was of great importance and relevance to the ongoing discussion on the development agenda beyond 2015 and on sustainable development from the perspective of landlocked developing countries. In particular, in the Vientiane Consensus, there was a call for comprehensive transit policies in landlocked and transit developing countries by:

(a) Developing sustainable transport as a priority area of action to exploit cross-border trade and investment opportunities;

(b) Establishing efficient transit transport systems between landlocked and transit developing countries by enhancing public-private partnerships;

(c) Deepening regional economic integration in order to harmonize, simplify and standardize procedures for international transit transport;

(d) Enabling landlocked developing countries to expand their range of products and services and diversify their export base;

(e) Promoting trade capacity and enhancing trade facilitation by building productive capacities and diversifying their product base.

Realization of those recommendations would help landlocked developing countries to address special challenges and major development obstacles, which included limited access to global markets, limited infrastructure, weak institutional and productive capacities, small domestic markets, high levels of

vulnerability to external shocks, minimal participation in the multilateral trading system, an undiversified and narrow range of export products and low competitiveness.

5. Ms. Pires elaborated on the statement contained in the Dili Consensus, in which it was recommended that partnerships be based on mutual trust rather than conditionalities. Fragile and conflict-affected States faced unpredictable challenges that prevented plans from being made that were based on presumptions of stability and consistency in the near future. Frequent changes and reshuffling, challenges of limited capacity and support, and high vulnerability to global challenges required post-conflict States to continually reassess priorities; hence, conditionality, which required stability and unchanging priorities, did not work, whereas mutual trust, which would be more tolerant of certain levels of deviation and slower progress, could create an environment more conducive to bringing about the desired change.

6. Dr. Luveni, who spoke in the capacity of her country's position as Chair of the Group of 77 and China alliance, outlined the discussions of the Group of 77 and China on the development agenda beyond 2015 and noted the importance of developing implementation mechanisms that were vibrant and nationally owned. In that regard, she explained that national Governments were not directly involved in the design process for the agenda while most of the members of the Group of 77 and China had participated in many thematic debates which were centred on General Assembly resolution 65/1. In considering the approach of the Group of 77 and China to genuine dialogue and mutual respect for the sovereignty of Member States, she highlighted the importance of launching an intergovernmental process for designing the agenda owned and shaped by Member States themselves, including through the adoption of an intergovernmental document agreed at the special event that would be held on the margins of the high-level segment of the General Assembly, in September 2013. With regard to the substantive elements of the agenda, she emphasized a set of goals that were commensurate with a broad view of social justice and solidarity, paying particular attention to the well-being of developing countries and environmental limits. With regard to the importance of the agenda to be built on assessment of the contributions of the Millennium Development Goals and their limitations, she shared the findings of her country's report on the Millennium Development Goals, five of which (2, 4, 5, 7 and 8) were on track. She concluded her statement by highlighting the need to shoulder collective responsibility for sustaining the planet for posterity despite the diversity among countries in terms of status, culture, geography and developmental stage.

7. Ms. Purandeswari emphasized that the development agenda beyond 2015 should be formulated in such a way as to preserve national policy space and priorities for developing countries and to have a focus on poverty eradication. In that regard, she pointed out that the question "How had the world *not* changed?" should be asked instead of "How had the world changed?", because developing countries still faced persistent challenges, including poverty, deprivation, hunger and poor sanitation. Thus, the Rio Principles, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, should be the bedrock of the new development agenda. In taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of the Millennium Development Goals, she reminded the Commission that the development agenda beyond 2015 must be simple, practical and capable of being implemented, and provide goals for both developing and developed countries. She also highlighted the importance of providing the means for developing

countries to implement agreed goals through global partnerships, which would be built on Goal 8, for obtaining additional resources and technology and for capacity-building. With regard to the process for developing that agenda, she emphasized the need for an inclusive consultative process for all countries and the need for the United Nations to play the primary role in intergovernmental processes. She also advised caution about an overemphasis on the role of South-South cooperation, which, in her view, should be supplementary to North-South cooperation.

8. After the first round of discussions, questions were asked and statements made by participants joining a live webcast through Twitter, which involved national delegations, including those from Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Nepal. Questions asked through Twitter included those on the roles of young people in the development agenda beyond 2015, security issues and development in Afghanistan, and the roles of regional cooperation. Comments and questions from national delegations touched in particular upon the importance of distinguishing the roles and responsibilities between North-South cooperation (as a key source of resources) and South-South cooperation (as a means of knowledge-sharing), and making the Rio Principle on common but differentiated responsibilities a key element of the agenda. Delegations also noted the importance of taking a holistic approach to development, including the national happiness approach, and inclusiveness and justice for all countries in implementing the agenda.

9. In a comment, the representative of Nepal, Mr. Yuba Raj Bhusal, in his capacity as Rapporteur of the Asian and Pacific Regional Implementation Meeting on Rio+20 Outcomes, which had been held in Bangkok from 22 to 24 April 2013, highlighted key outcomes of the meeting. One outcome included strong emphasis on commitment to regional cooperation for sustainable development. Others were focused on the Rio Principles, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, as well as the following: (a) regional cooperation and global partnerships; (b) a sustainable and equitable development agenda and urgent attention to poverty reduction; (c) a unified development agenda, with a development agenda beyond 2015 that had sustainable development at its core; and (d) the role of ESCAP as a regional platform for promoting sustainable development.

10. The panel echoed some of the views of questioners by emphasizing the need to strengthen partnerships with youth (Ms. Pires and Dr. Luveni); to promote more effective partnerships for developing countries, in particular the smallest countries (Mr. Lilo); to view South-South cooperation as supplementary to North-South cooperation; and to take into account country-specific plans of action for the development agenda beyond 2015 (Ms. Purandeswari). The moderator concluded the ministerial panel discussion by drawing attention to the significance of development for all as well as by all, in that connection drawing attention to the need for investment in institutions, infrastructure and people.
