

6th Session of Intergovernmental Negotiations on Post-2015 Development Agenda

Intervention by Mr. Amit Narang, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of India on Common but Differentiated Responsibilities

June 23, 2015

Mr. Co-facilitator,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

We have a detailed statement on our views regarding the Declaration and we are submitting it in writing so that it can be uploaded on the website.

In the interest of brevity, I would only highlight a couple of key points at this time.

Firstly, it would be a grave remission not to refer to the World Summit outcome document of 2005 in this political declaration. It was adopted at the level of our Heads of State and Government exactly a decade ago and is a landmark document. We would request that it be referenced along with other important documents and declarations.

Secondly, we would also find it remiss if through this declaration world leaders do not pronounce themselves on the urgent imperative of reform of global governance, in particular the institutions responsible for maintenance of peace and security. Especially since Peace is one of the five main themes now for this document, it is important that the important ideal of enhancing the legitimacy and representativeness of institutions of global governance, including that of the UN Security Council be unequivocally affirmed in the Declaration.

Mr. Co-Facilitator,

I would like to turn now to share some thoughts on the issue of common but differentiated responsibilities, the inclusion of which in the zero draft has drawn several comments.

It is time perhaps to de-bunk some of the myths about this principle. I would like to focus on 6 such myths.

In doing so, my intention is to make a constructive contribution to our collective understanding of this key principle and its central role in the development debate.

I am doing so in the spirit of what Joseph Joubert stressed - "The aim of argument or discussion is not victory but progress".

Myth no. 1: The principle of differentiation is in contradiction to a universal agenda

Famous atomic scientist Neils Bohr said "The opposite of a correct statement is a false statement. But the opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth".

Likewise, universality is not in contradiction to differentiation. Both are important.

The notion of a universal agenda is dear to us too, as for us it signifies that this time around developed countries will join developing countries in taking action, and will also be held accountable for their actions across all goals and targets.

However, *universality* of relevance does not correspond to *uniformity* in application. To be meaningful, a universal agenda can and indeed must be a differentiated one.

Myth no. 2: This principle is a historical relic and has no contemporary relevance

It was in September 2013, less than 18 months ago, when the world leaders while mandating the elaboration and adoption of a post-2015 development agenda, unequivocally reaffirmed the validity and application of this principle.

In July 2014, less than a year ago, the international community decided by consensus that the principle of CBDR will apply to the SDGs; a decision that was welcomed and endorsed by the General Assembly.

Also in 2014, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities was reaffirmed by Ministers participating in the meeting of the High Level Political Forum, an institution that is going to be the home of the new agenda and the SDGs.

The point here is that this principle is neither outdated nor irrelevant. Indeed, it has been reaffirmed and validated multiple times in the last few years, including at the leaders' level.

Mr. Co-Facilitator,

This issue has in fact a wider implication. There has been a disturbing tendency across several platforms for not honoring agreements and reopening them even before the proverbial ink on the paper dries. We are witnessing this yet again in this process both with this principle and the Introduction to the OWG report, which is sought to be jettisoned.

If the new agenda has to succeed, trust would have to be built that agreed commitments will be honored and they will not be reopened or indeed re-interpreted for political expediency.

Myth no. 3: This principle is only applicable to environmental action

Even when it is sometimes grudgingly accepted that this principle is valid, it is contended that it narrowly applies to the environmental dimension and not to the development agenda as a whole. It is true that Rio principle 7 speaks of historical responsibilities in the context of global environmental degradation and the larger capacity for taking action of those who have over-occupied the environmental space.

However, the hallmark of the new agenda and the SDGs is that environmental action has been effectively mainstreamed across all goals and targets. This is also something which differentiates this agenda from the Millennium Development Goals, which primarily addressed the social pillar.

Environmental action is not a silo anymore, it underpins the entire agenda. Ipso facto, it is only natural that this principle is equally valid for the entire agenda too.

Myth no. 4: This is merely a political principle and has little or no professional relevance

Just to take two recent examples, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities has been reaffirmed at the technical level twice in just the past one year alone.

The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing, which had experts from 30 countries including many developed countries, confirmed the continued validity of this principle.

Even more importantly perhaps, the Committee on Development Policy, which is an expert body mandated to provide inputs and independent advice to the ECOSOC on emerging cross-sectoral development issues and on international cooperation for development, in its report on 'Global governance and global rules for development in

the post-2015 era', identified CBDR as one of the 5 central principles, arguing that it embodies equity in the formulation of international law.

Myth no. 5: North South divide in international cooperation has already vanished and those who invoke this principle are flogging a dead horse

Not quite.

It is a matter of fact not fiction that even today the developed countries continue to over-occupy the global economic, ecological and governance space. We have spoken about the economic dimension earlier to indicate how the Gini coefficient of international inequality has increased from three decades earlier. In the environmental sphere, the case is well known and may not need much elaboration. Taken together, the OECD economies account for almost 40% of global emissions as compared to their 17% population share. While the focus has mostly been on the recent growth of some large developing countries, it needs to be remembered that exceptions do not a rule make.

But it is really international governance where the rhetoric of 'shared responsibilities' meets its Waterloo.

And no, I am not talking about the Security Council, where of course the time stopped changing after 1945.

No, I am talking about international governance in development, issues that are at the heart of this agenda.

The most topical example is of course norm-setting on international tax cooperation, which continues to be an exclusive monopoly and this exclusive right is being defended even today in the parallel process of FfD.

Reform of international financial institutions continues to be stalemated and the notion of equitable geographic representation for selecting the heads of these IFIs continues to be resisted.

Let us also look inwards at this very institution, the United Nations in particular its Funds and Programmes which will ultimately lead the implementation of this agenda. The executive boards of all the funds and programmes of the UN continue to be over-represented by developed countries, and this inequity is defended even today in the name of efficiency.

The share of Western Europe and Others Group in the Governing Bodies of entities engaged in operational activities for development is almost 25% as compared to their share in UN membership of 15%. In the Executive Boards of UNDP, UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNFPA and WFP the seat share of WEOG is as much as 33%.

Not exactly a flat world, is it?

It is obvious therefore that for the rhetoric of shared responsibilities to be taken seriously, its proponents will have to visibly walk the talk.

Words will have to translate into action.

Myth no. 6: The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities means inaction by some on a global agenda

The fact is that the principle of CBDR has never been about action only by developed countries. Developing countries, including my own, have been and are fully committed to contributing to the global objective of ending poverty and achieving sustainable development.

We have all signed up to the SDGs, haven't we?

The fact is that this principle is not about differentiated responsibilities only. Its main thrust is on common responsibility of all. But common responsibilities must be differentiated due to our different starting points, historical footprints, and development levels.

To conclude **Mr. Co-Facilitator,**

The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities is a call for action, it is a call for ambition, but above all it is a call for equity, a fundamental principle that underpins the UN Charter and the Millennium Declaration and a fundamental article of faith that cannot be left behind in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

I thank you.