

**The Eighth Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable  
Development Goals (SDGs)  
3 - 7 February 2014**

**Statement by Ambassador Masood Khan,  
Permanent Representative of Pakistan**

**On**

**Promoting equality, including social equity, gender equality and  
women's empowerment**

**Co-Chair,**

I have the honour to speak on behalf of India, Sri Lanka and my own country, Pakistan.

Our Troika aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We thank the speakers and panelists for their substantive and constructive ideas; and the Technical Support Team for their historical synopses and constructive analyses on the issues before us: equality, including social equity, gender equality and women's empowerment.

**Co-Chair,**

We turn to equality first.

Recent reports and studies **indicate** that inequality both within and among nations is startling and, if left unchecked, it would grow rapidly in the years to come. It is our collective responsibility to reverse this trend.

Income inequality at the global level is stark: an estimated eight per cent of the world population has fifty percent of the world's income; while the remaining ninety two percent earn the other fifty percent.

In a report on Inequality launched last week, UNDP has established that at the global levels, the richest 1% of the world population controls 40% of global assets.

Confirming this trend, Oxfam's findings indicate that 85 richest people of the world own the same amount of wealth as 3.5 billion poor people across the globe. It is the same world, where 1.2 billion people eke out their living on US \$ 1.25 a day or less.

Simply put, in a world of plenty, vast swathes of humanity are barely surviving and remain economically deprived of opportunity and income.

### **Co-Chair,**

We are not here to quibble with the veracity of the statistics about inequality or the comparative merits of various economic models. We are here to deal with inequality within nations, and equally importantly inequality amongst nations. This is an unfinished business of the UN Millennium Declaration that underlined our collective responsibility to "uphold the international principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level".

By now, we all know that addressing inequality in regard to income and opportunity as well as social inequity are core imperatives within the evolving framework of sustainable development. These imperatives cut across many sustainable development goals, which we want to be action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries.

The pivotal objective of our work, in our view, is that every adult, every woman, every child, and, in fact, every nation should have a starting point that does not undermine their opportunity to reach a higher plane of economic growth and social productivity.

In sum, tackling inequality should be the front, center and end of our work.

While tackling inequality, what we need is more not less economic growth. At the same time, we need to mobilize and upscale investments in social and human capital development – in education, in health care, in rural development, in housing and in rural infrastructure. We also need to rapidly create new productive job opportunities for our people. Empowering people to benefit from economic growth makes the growth more equitable. Such equitable growth in turn generates more and sustained growth that creates much needed resources to pull people out of poverty.

We must also be able to pay equal attention in our work to the question of inequality between countries, which, as many speakers have pointed out, in fact directly contributes to inequality within countries. The role of unequal multilateral trade and subsidy rules, the growing imbalance in the IPR regime, better regulation of global financial markets, enhancing market access to Least Developed Countries must all be part of our discussion on a deliverable on inequality.

### **Co-Chair,**

Our troika believes that the following elements can assist us in crafting a holistic approach to tackling inequality in the SDGs:

- (i) Moving x% of countries by 2030 from the World Bank's low and middle income category to a higher category respectively;

- (ii) Reforming the rules for international trade, finance, business accounting and intellectual property to ensure consistency with the achievement of sustainable development goals;
- (iii) Increasing cross border movement of skilled professionals from developing to developed countries;
- (iv) Enhancing people's resilience notably to disaster, and violence;
- (v) Increasing the share of industrial sector in the GDP of developing countries;
- (vi) Ensuring universal quality primary education;
- (vii) Enhancing access to medicines and vaccines for preventable disease;
- (viii) Promoting the coverage of targeted cash transfers; and
- (ix) Enhancing investment in social and economic infrastructure to reduce imbalance between developed and underdeveloped regions.

### **Co-Chair,**

Moving to the second part of our theme, we would emphasize that this Group would have to put gender equality and women's empowerment at the very center of our discourse, because this too is a cross-cutting theme that impinges on our goals for eradication of poverty and sustainable development.

Evidence-based research shows that gender equality, women's empowerment and promotion and protection of women's rights catalyze a shift in societies and nations towards economic development, social stability and equilibrium between human population and environment.

Women in many countries continue to bear the brunt of poverty, disease, violence, and disasters. They face discrimination, exclusion and marginalization. Women also often do enormous amounts of work in running and managing households, which is not recognized. The best way to rectify this situation is to make gender equality a transformative, stand-alone goal, mainstream it across all other goals and assign measurable targets and indicators for it.

Fortunately, for this goal we do not have to start from scratch. An SDG on gender equality and women's empowerment will be a reincarnation of MDGs 3 and 5 to accomplish our unfinished agenda by making more ambitious commitments. By now, we know what works and what doesn't in the light of the experience we have accumulated in the last 15 years while implementing these MDGs.

We have learnt that gender parity in education; reducing women mortality ratios and universal access to reproductive health care have fallen behind. Besides, MDG 3 did not include, for instance, violence against women, access to credit, and equal participation in public decision-making.

We must also recognize that just as women are the worst affected by poverty and lack of economic opportunities, and therefore, they should be the first beneficiaries of inclusive development. A robust development-centric agenda that reduces poverty, boosts inclusive economic growth, promotes infrastructure, and accelerates access to modern energy is the best guarantee for women's empowerment.

A development-centered and poverty-focused agenda therefore is the first premise of promoting women's empowerment.

### **Co-Chair,**

This troika believes that the future agenda must be about development and empowerment. To this end, we believe that the following elements would be helpful:

- i. increasing women's political voice and economic participation in all strata of life;
- ii. Ensuring universal access for women to education opportunities;
- iii. Ensuring equal access to economic opportunities and resources including access to credit and ownership of productive assets;
- iv. Eliminating violence against women and girls;
- v. Ensuring equal pay for equal work.

In addition, Mr. Co-Chair, we believe that empowering women using enabling technologies can be a game changer if harnessed and applied to its full potential in developing countries. We can significantly expand the ambit of applying such enabling technologies in particular ICT technologies for women in education, access to clean drinking water, healthcare, rural handicrafts and communications and decentralize their uses by transferring the access, control, management and ownership of such technologies to rural women themselves and by doing so, bring about structural transformation in the lives of millions of women across the world.

### **Co-Chair,**

We would also like to highlight the need for addressing and integrating the concerns of persons with disabilities. They have poorer health, lower educational achievements, less economic participation and higher rates of poverty and inequality than people without disability. The sustainable development goals should holistically address their concerns across several goals.

On a lighter note, our Troika believes that we should also focus on ensuring gender parity in sports, particularly cricket. We believe that all women of the world must have an opportunity to play cricket, which in our part of the world is no less than a creed. We are happy to

announce that women cricket teams of Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka have performed exceedingly well in a game that has hitherto been dominated by men. As recently as last week, International Cricket Council launched a Women's World Cup. Our three nations look forward to participating in the games for this Cup.

**I thank you Co-Chair.**