

Excellences, dear delegates, representatives of the United Nations, colleagues from Civil Society, Academia, local authorities, the private sector and other groups,

It is essential that Africa tell its own story about the development it wants to see in Africa and globally post 2015. I am humbled by this chance to tell you a part of the African story. I will therefore tell you about the lessons I have learnt from the Africa people. My presentation is a consolidation of perspectives of ordinary people that were expressed through a series of participatory research works organized by Participate and poverty hearings conducted by the African Monitor, The Global Call to Action Against Poverty and the Seed Institute. In Participate, people living with marginalization and vulnerability were supported to frame their own research questions, define appropriate methodology and carry out visual studies amongst themselves. They were the researchers, research population, the sample as well as the data analysts. For the hearings conducted in Liberia, Ghana, Mozambique, Kenya and Southern Africa, panels of eminent community volunteers listened to testimonials of people's experiences with poverty; testimonials that were presented with dignity and honor.

When grassroots communities described their lived realities, they taught me that the development they envision is not the same as the development the majority of the world imagines the poor want. In their own narrative, the strongest message from communities is a deep desire for the *capability to function*. Such a capability to function, as evident from data attained through peoples' first hand testimonials, was sought for the sole purpose of reclaiming *the power to effect decisions that affect their lives; access to equal opportunities; and an enabling environment to sustain livelihoods*.

In talking about the future they want, people presented a catalogue of critical blockages standing between them and the aspired capacity to function. This catalogue ranged from vulnerabilities, exclusion based on social norms, legal and political discrimination, corruption, insecurity and crime, inadequate skills and lack

of opportunities to own assets. Unlocking the African moment requires removal of these blockages.

Similarly, the testimonials were very clear about some of the enablers people require. They include access to information, meaningful participation and influence in decision making, quality and equitable education & training, access to grassroots focused infrastructure, quality and inclusive health care, access to productive assets, secure livelihoods and other social services.

Therefore as you talk about the people of African, I have some insights to help you agree on a strong and legitimate framework.

1. First, a transformative agenda requires a transformative declaration; a game changer that shifts the focus from merely treating people from a point of vulnerability to involving them as active participants in, and the best judges of, their own development. Do not just ask, “what can I do for the people?” Also remember to also ask, “what are the people doing?” “how can we accompany them in their local development innovations.” This bottom up approach must be reflected in the political declaration by explicitly naming and shifting focus to the often-unrecognized actors such as volunteer groups; grassroots community led organizations and marginalized communities.
2. Secondly, transformative goals, targets and indicators which go beyond what is easy to measure to instead prioritize the hardest to do tasks because these will make the biggest impact! What we can measure must not compete with what people want in defining the ceiling for our ambition. To be ambitious we must have a indicators that go beyond numbers of women in power to the actual influence they command and targets that go beyond numbers in schools to qualified teachers and pedagogical practices that make education for sustainable development a reality.

3. But no goal, target or indicator can achieve its lofty ambition if it does not have a clear and effective means of implementation. We cannot continue doing the same thing the same way and expect different results. In articulating the means of implementation, take my advice, “Money, partnerships and technology alone will not be sufficient. We also need to explicitly plan on how to increase opportunities for people to co-create locally appropriate development solutions. Let us look wider for the elements that will be needed to deliver a more people centered approach. Billions of people worldwide volunteer their time and energy (formally and informally) to help their local community, their country and their world. It is my advice that we recognize and integrate volunteerism explicitly and systematically as a people centered MOI so that, with effective support and planning, we can mobilize the huge pool of skills, capacity and passion that volunteers have for the realization of the SDGs. A MOI that includes volunteerism will support its huge potential and protect against its misuse.

Excellences, the current structure of defining MOI through the lens of Financing, Technology and partnerships naturally preclude people power. I propose we add a section on “people participation” as a framing theme in the MOI.

Finally excellences, allow me to notify you that if all the volunteers in the world were put into one country, that country would be the 9<sup>th</sup> most populous country in the world. From every paid member of staff that the Red Cross has globally, they have 20 volunteers. Back in sub-Saharan Africa where I come from, that figure is even great. The Red Cross and Red Crescent has 327 volunteers for every paid member of staff. Let us name this group as a recognized partner in the declaration and MoI. Let us state volunteering as an indicator of people participation.

Thanks.