

Opening Ceremony

Interactive Hearings

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Salutations:

I bring you greetings from a cautiously optimistic Civil Society (CS) community in the Caribbean. While we congratulate the progress that has been made to date on the development of the Post 2015 development we are also very concerned that there is still much to be done to ensure that we achieve the truly ambitious and transformative agenda which is essential to deliver the necessary development outcomes for our societies.

Noting that we near the cusp of the conclusion of the negotiations I want to remind us that achieving the ambitious agenda that will relevant, measurable, and accountable will require the right level of compromise. Just enough that that it pushes us all past the point of comfort with the status quo- in all areas- but not enough that we water down the fundamentals and give way on the core objectives of the Agenda.

I would suggest that we will truly know when we have achieved our goal if the Post 2015 development agenda demands a fundamental rethinking of the way we do development at all levels – the intergovernmental, global, regional, nation, the institutional - if we have not reached this threshold then we need to redouble efforts in order for us to do justice to the hopes and aspirations of the peoples and communities particularly within Small Island Developing States like those in the Caribbean.

Excellencies, colleagues I want to draw your attention to four critical areas, that from a Caribbean civil society perspective are critical pillars that should undergird the process. These are:

Firstly, the need to ensure a fully participatory process in the delivery of the post 2015 development agenda which mobilizes and engages the agency which already exists among CSOs and communities at the national level. While we fully recognize and are appreciative of the available spaces for participation within the various UN processes, that certainly have become more accessible during these negotiations, we are concerned that there is less energy being currently devoted to encouraging an iterative process of dialogue and solution building at the national levels. We must do more to redress the imbalance that exist between the collective wisdom of those of us privileged enough to participate directly in this process at whatever level and the voices of the people who the Agenda is intended to benefit.

This is not just about compartmentalizing participation in the follow –up and review discussions or including sentiments to this extent in the declaration but the fundamental challenge facing us all is the extent to which we will have an Agenda that not only meets its objectives on paper but is fully embraced and owned by the intended beneficiaries. This is not only a challenge for the UN system and national governments but also for all the CS representatives gathered here. It is challenge we should all pay close attention to ensuring that we grapple with and get right.

Secondly, there is collective agreement across Caribbean CSOs that unless the Post 2015 Agenda truly and honestly tackles the issue of gender equality in the most comprehensive way we will be “ spinning top in mud” which is a Caribbean saying for -we will doing much and achieving nothing. The message that I deliver from the gender equality advocates in the Caribbean is that while women’s and most civil society organizations recognize the United Nations as perhaps the most critical global policy-making space for advancing the realization of women’s human rights as well as a rights based sustainable development framework there remains evidence to suggest

that globally, international and national commitments have not been matched with action to improve the lives of people, particularly women. Clearly amongst this is the persistent pandemic of violence against women. Further in all areas of women's health and well-being, the presence of data on the 'better-off' drive progress indicators upwards, masking the enormity of the issues for the marginalised and the underprivileged. A framework that integrates rather than compartmentalizes gender equality principles, taking into account the intersectionality of gender issues and solutions, is the only sure way of addressing persistent gaps and failures. As we grapple with the consolidation of the targets and indicators for the SDGs we need to be hold them all up to a gender analytic frame to see whether they pass muster. This will be one sure test of telling us if we are on the right track.

Finally, excellencies colleagues one of the critical lessons from the MGDs is that we need a high level of international and national commitment if the agenda is to be properly resourced and prioritized. I believe that there is sufficient consensus on this; however there seems to be less recognition that it is difficult to fit the same old resource and financial architecture in a renewed sustainable development Agenda. The best fit requires a reformed trade and financial system which critically addresses issues of debt restructuring, the need for re-balancing and redistributing wealth and power as well as the need for overall reforms of global and national macroeconomic policies and development strategies to match the realities particularly of SIDS and to significantly reach the goal of addressing inequality for societies and their populations.

