

7th Session of Intergovernmental Negotiations on Post-2015 Development Agenda

Intervention by Counsellor Amit Narang on 'Preamble' and 'Declaration' July 21, 2015

Mr. Co-Facilitator,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

Let me start by thanking both of you and your team members, as also the Secretariat for your efforts in producing this revised draft.

We like the fact that you are calling it 'final', but note of course that it is still a 'draft'!

It is good to be back from Addis Ababa, even though the weather there was much more pleasant and the hospitality of the Ethiopian people impeccable.

We hope that we brought back multilateralism with us. We will certainly need to recommit to the values of multilateralism, equality, transparency and good faith to achieve the development agenda we all want.

In this regard, we remain confident in your leadership and you can remain assured of our support.

Mr. Co-Facilitator,

We are happy with your approach so far - that of small, strategic changes to the draft while retaining its overall thrust. We continue to believe that it reads well, is reasonably balanced and more or less concise.

Some changes of course will be necessary but the Declaration should always be faithful to the SDGs, which represent the actionable core of the new agenda.

We remain committed to completing our work by or before the scheduled deadline of July 31 and send a positive message of collaboration and our common resolve to the world.

In this statement, we will share our views on the Preamble and the Declaration. We will revert with our comments on the rest of the sections later. We will speak to some larger issues and make some small but important language suggestions.

We like the revised title, as it is short and catchy, and avoids going into a debate about concepts. We have heard several suggestions to change it but do not support most of them. We support the proposal by Benin that it could be called 'Agenda 2030' in short.

Mr. Co-Facilitator,

We welcome the improvements in the so-called Preamble, but remain unconvinced with its inclusion and also its contents.

A preamble is not the same as an Executive Summary, which it seems at present. As the delegations of AOSIS and CARICOM pointed out, the inclusion of a separate Preamble - especially the way it is structured at present - runs the risk of overshadowing the Declaration or worse for re-interpreting it.

The 5 Ps, while a useful communication tool, may undermine the notion of 3 dimensions of sustainable development which remains important for us. In this regard, we support the specific language proposals made by Brazil a short while ago.

Current language on global partnership in the Preamble would also seem to go against the notion of common but differentiated responsibilities. Yet another example is the inclusion of 'sustainable lifestyles' under the sub-heading of Prosperity. This notion, which we strongly support, should be included under Planet to stress its linkage with climate change, sustainable consumption and planetary boundaries.

If communication is indeed the stated objective, then we would tend to think that the first two paragraphs of this Preamble would be good enough to constitute the Preamble.

Mr. Co-Facilitator,

There are many elements in the document that we would strongly insist on retaining. The reference to poverty eradication as the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development is one such element. As we have said before, wiping the tears of our poorest and most destitute fellow citizens of the world must be the heart of our political vision.

Any lesser vision, in our view, is simply not worth signing on to.

We would support the proposal made by the Holy See therefore, to add an affirmation that eradication of poverty is the primary and overarching objective of the agenda.

We would also urge that the reference to 'extreme' poverty be removed. You would recall that we had extensive discussions on this issue in the SDGs, where we finally agreed to refer to eradication of poverty. This is particularly important to maintain the notion of universality of the agenda. The reference to extreme poverty limits this issue to developing countries, ignoring the deep levels of poverty within developed countries which also need to be countered. Indeed, SDG goal 1 pointedly addresses both these dimensions in targets 1.1 and 1.2 respectively.

The notion of poverty is also conspicuously missing from the section 'Our world today'.

We would propose that we add as the second sentence to para 11 - "Billions of our citizens continue to live in poverty and are denied a life of dignity".

In paragraph 3 and indeed elsewhere, the notion of combating inequalities must be referred in the context of both within and among countries.

Mr. Co-Facilitator,

The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities is another such element that we will strongly wish retained. We are happy that our Ministers in Addis Ababa reaffirmed the application of this principle along with all other Rio principles. In fact, we would prefer that an explicit and unambiguous reference to this core principle be *strengthened* in the document as applicable to the entire development agenda. The word 'inter alia' from para 10 should be deleted.

We were curious to listen to some comments yesterday which implied that this principle entails inaction by the developing countries or that it seeks to divide not unite. Nothing could be further from the truth. Developing countries, including my own are fully committed to fulfilling their commitments as part of this agenda in solidarity with the global community.

As a matter of fact, the reality is that it is the developed countries who have repeatedly reneged on their side of the bargain.

The history of international cooperation, whether it is on climate change or development assistance, is unfortunately littered with the remains of unfulfilled commitments by developed countries.

Developing countries may be accused on under-promising, but they have consistently over-delivered. There is no reason to believe it will be any different this time around.

We also support the G-77 in calling for the deletion of the word 'shared responsibility'. After the experience of Addis Ababa there is no more doubt, at least in our minds, that this notion is nothing but mere rhetoric and its proponents have no intention of walking the talk.

Mr. Co-Facilitator,

We can support the suggestion by Japan to include a reference to 'people centered' in the Declaration.

We remain strongly supportive of the notion of 'policy space' and would suggest that our language in this regard remain fully consistent with the SDGs, where this issue was addressed. We would also request that paragraph 39 be retained.

We do agree with others who have supported a strengthening of paragraph 19 on gender equality. We would suggest inclusion of a reference to the full realization of human rights of women and girls, the need to mainstream gender perspective and to close the resource gap for promoting gender equality. A reference should also be made for enhancing support for institutions on gender equality at all levels.

We are not happy with the rather weak references to the issue of energy. We would like these references strengthened with a clear reference to universal access to energy as a central developmental imperative.

Without energy the whole agenda will remain weak, no pun intended.

We would suggest that in paragraph 7, the last sentence is amended to read "...and there is *universal access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy*".

All references to SCP and sustainable lifestyles should invariably include a reference for developed countries to take the lead. In paragraph 26, the last sentence should be separated into two for more clarity.

The paragraph on climate change remains problematic. The shelf life of a reference to COP 21 will be merely a few months, in a document that will remain with us for the next 15 years. We should therefore take a long-term perspective on this issue.

We do not support language like 'meaningful' and 'universal' as qualifiers for the anticipated Paris agreement as these are subjective. The notion of 'responsibility of all states' is also misleading. What is meant perhaps is that the Paris COP is a historic opportunity for global cooperation.

Mr. Co-Facilitator,

In the section on 'Implementation', there is an important omission. While paragraph 33 endorses the Addis Ababa outcome, there is no paragraph referring to the global partnership contained in the SDGs. There must be a new paragraph, before para 33, expressly recognizing that the goal 17 and goal-specific MOIs contained in the SDGs form the core of the global partnership for the new agenda, complemented by the outcome of the Addis Ababa Conference.

It is also important to recognize that the revitalized global partnership is primarily between Governments and between developed and developing countries, complemented by other actors. This is also the formulation contained in the Addis Ababa outcome.

In paragraph 43, the notion of 'disaggregated data' is wrongly linked with measurements of progress beyond GDP. It is a wider concept linked with the wider agenda and also contingent upon capacity building support to developing countries.

We reiterate our strong support for including the Chapeau of the SDGs in full in the section on SDGs.

Mr. Co-Facilitator,

Unlike the comments that we have heard, we would in fact prefer stronger language attesting to the importance of ensuring robust and sustained economic growth in developing countries as the first and necessary pre-condition for achieving this agenda.

In paragraph 9, it is not enough to say that economic growth should be sustainable. This is a partial view. We should add a sentence saying "We envisage a world where every country enjoys robust and sustained inclusive economic growth in order to generate the resources needed to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development".

Mr. Co-Facilitator,

We would also repeat our strong support for the important ideal of enhancing the legitimacy and representativeness of institutions of global governance, including that of the UN Security Council to be unequivocally affirmed in the Declaration.

To conclude **Mr. Co-Facilitator**, we are reminded of a Chinese story of a person who drew a picture of a snake and in his eagerness to make it more beautiful added four legs to it. No points for guessing that he did not win the first prize. The implication of course is that we need to be focused and strategic at this final stage of our discussions and not allow the perfect to be the enemy of the very good.

Thank you.
