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Young ISSI Professionals' Corner

The status of Post-2015 Development Agenda negotiations

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June 22, 2015

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The concept of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was shaped at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in 2012, which was built upon the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and, within the framework of the post-2015 Development Agenda. The objective was to produce a set of universally applicable goals that would balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental. The Rio+20 outcome documents entitled *The Future We Want*, which resolved to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process that would be open to all stakeholders with a view to developing global sustainable development goals to be agreed by the United Nations General Assembly.

In 2010, the UN Secretary General initiated discussions on developing a post-2015 Development Agenda. A UN System Task Team and High Level Panel were constituted to complement national level consultations organized by the United Nations Development Group. The consultations focused on eleven thematic areas: conflict and fragility; education; environmental sustainability; governance; growth and employment; health; hunger, food and nutrition; inequalities; population dynamics; energy; and water. Citizens were also invited to contribute to the process through the “World We Want” platform.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), along with 169 targets, were adopted by the UN General Assembly on 19th July, 2014. Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere. Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation. Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries. Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. Goal

16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon presented his "synthesis report" on post 2015 Development entitled as The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet on 4th December, 2014. The synthesis report, prepared at the request of member states, brought together various negotiations, consultations and expert contributions to the post-2015 process, to give a framework to the Agenda. The synthesis report has six essential elements: (a) dignity: to end poverty and fight inequality; (b) people: to ensure healthy lives, knowledge and the inclusion of women and children; (c) prosperity: to grow a strong, inclusive and transformative economy; (d) planet: to protect our ecosystems for all societies and our children; (e) justice: to promote safe and peaceful societies and strong institutions; and (f) partnership: to catalyze global solidarity for sustainable development.

How will the goals be funded? That's the trillion-dollar question. Rough calculations from the intergovernmental committee of experts on sustainable development financing have put the cost of providing a social safety net to eradicate extreme poverty at about US \$66 billion a year, while annual investments in improving infrastructure (water, agriculture, transport, power) could be up to US \$7 trillion globally.

In its report last year, the committee said public finance and aid would be central to support the implementation of the SDGs. But it insisted that money generated from the private sector, through tax reforms, and through a crackdown on illicit financial flows and corruption was also vital.

The Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 13th July, 2015 will be an important milestone in the global effort to achieve universal and sustainable development. The conference would strive to generate funds for the SDGs and post 2015 Development Agenda to be adopted at the UN Special Summit for Sustainable Development in New York in September 2015. This trajectory will continue with the World Bank Group-International Monetary Fund Annual Meetings in Lima in October, and with the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris in December, which seeks a new international agreement on climate change. In short, 2015 will create a platform to support global development aspirations for the next 15 years.

The new goals come into force if member states agree the draft set of 17 SDGs at the UN summit in New York in September. They will become applicable from January 2016. The expected deadline for the achievement of SDGs is 2030.

UN SUMMIT of political leaders will be held in September 2015 to adopt the United Nations' post-2015 Development Agenda. This was decided at a UN General Assembly special event to review the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) held at the UN in New York last September. To prepare for the summit and its outcome, an intergovernmental process was launched in September 2014, at the beginning of the 69th session of the UN General Assembly. "The final phase of the intergovernmental work will culminate in a Summit at heads of states and government level in September 2015 for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda", states an "outcome document" adopted during the special MDG event.

The major difference between MDGs and SDGs is that the former encompassed only impoverished developing states whereas the latter covers the entire globe. Significant effort is being made to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will take effect at the end of 2015, once the original time frame of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has run its course. The proposed post-2015 development agenda is more ambitious than the MDGs. The SDGs have sought to increase stakeholder participation in the process to negotiate a new global framework to eradicate poverty through sustainable development. It has provided tools and opportunities for all stakeholders to make contribution to this agenda and help build a more sustainable future, through five focus areas: raising awareness; increasing engagement; empowering stakeholders; coordinating advocacy; and strengthening governance. Developing countries seem to think that the more goals there are, the more aid they will receive. But that may not be the case. The SDGs are expensive. Meeting them would cost nearly US \$2-3 trillion a year of public and private money over the next 15 years. That is roughly 15% of annual global savings, or 4% of the world GDP. At the moment, Western governments promise to provide 0.7% of GDP in aid, and in fact cough up only about a half of that. Planning to spend many times the amount that countries fail to give today is pure fantasy.

Proper checks and balances along with a strong monitoring system should be placed at national, international and global levels for the rapid and proper implementation of the SDGs. In order to eradicate corruption and to increase the transparency levels "Oversight Committees" should be put in place by the UN. The aid given should be free of conditionality. It should be fairly channeled where

needed the most. Prevalence of democracy, free and fair elections, along with proper health, educational facilities can ensure the achievement of SDGs. There should be more private-public partnerships, both at the national and global levels, as this would inculcate a sense of responsibility in the developed nations to help the developing countries. Effective institutions and organizations must be formed to propel these processes. In addition, the “post-2015 Development Agenda” must be owned at the local levels.

Pakistan has adopted 16 targets and 41 indicators against which progress towards achieving the eight goals of the MDGs is measured. Time series data available for 33 of these indicators reveal that Pakistan is on track to achieve the targets on 9 indicators, whereas its progress on 24 indicators is off track.

Diverse stakeholders including government officials, academia, civil society, private sector and the youth should identify Pakistan’s priorities and recommendations for the post-2015 development agenda. These must include: peace and security, governance, equitable economic growth, inclusive social development including access to health and education, population growth, engaging Pakistan’s expanding youth population in positive economic activities, and gender equity. It should also be highlighted that the post 2015 agenda should address the issues of human rights. Both developed and developing countries need to be held more accountable for fulfilling their respective obligations in relation to this historic post-2015 Development Agenda.