Means of Implementation

There is almost no dispute that the worst performance of all Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was registered on MDG 8, the Global Partnership for Development. The current deliberations to shape the post-2015 development agenda offers a high level political opportunity to correct that imbalance.

For that, it is important to avoid treading the same path as the MDG approach. The initial blueprint for the MDGs entirely neglected mention of the means of implementation necessary in the form of international support. Since it was clear that developing countries would never get on board with an agenda that would harshly judge their progress in improving certain quantifiable indicators without correlative commitments of support to help achieve them, one more goal was added, and this was Goal 8 on the Global Partnership. Accepting this approach condoned the methodological nonsense of putting means of implementation as a category equivalent to the goals they should serve. It condemned cooperation for development to the constraints of a format that required simplified, succinct, one-size-fits-all statements that could never capture the breadth, complexity and diversity of the support needed for development to work.

For a new set of goals to be credible and acted upon, therefore, they need a comprehensive and detailed set of goals that are systemic as well as specific, that address not only the global system but also the specific requirements of developing countries. Any discussion about sustainable development goals has to also talk about implementation; indeed, it is not an overstatement to say that the goals will stand or fall depending on this agreement on means of implementation.

The very notion of 'means of implementation' means that the mix of financial resources, technological development and transfers as well as capacity building and adequate global rules (the "enabling environment") must be supported by actions from developed countries at the international level: such as time-bound financing targets; associated trade and economic policies; technology transfer and other resources to assist and enable developing countries efforts.

A commonly held position among many countries as well as much of civil society that the Monterrey and Doha conferences on financing for development are a strong foundation for the development financing strategy. As currently outlined, however, the Means of Implementation are defined in terms of operational issues like finance, trade and technology, while the Global Partnership for Development, as outlined in Goal 8 of the MDGs, is defined primarily as a process of engaging stakeholders and of reporting progress.

This dichotomy goes against the globally accepted and practiced concept and operation of the Global Partnership for Development which includes specific goals and targets dealing ODA, trade, debt, access to medicines, technology, and so on. The UN produces an annual detailed report known as the Global Partnership for Development, or GAP report, in which the gaps in implementation of these goals are described.

The meaning of Global Partnership for Development should not be distorted into the notion of Partnerships in the plural, which overwhelmingly refers to engaging with the private sector or civil society. Rather, the Global Partnership for Development is one that is principally between governments of developed and developing countries, with the developed countries taking the lead in providing resources and the means of implementation.

Thus "what is needed is a strengthened and enhanced Global Partnership for Development, firmly based on international cooperation on a broad range of key development issues, and primarily on a North/South basis" argues Third World Network (TWN), an influential alliance of Southern-based organizations and researchers. TWN has spelled out in detail what a renewed Global Partnership should include:

What targets would really promote development?

Developed countries have proposed as a global partnership target to "promote open, rules-based, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading and financial systems." This merging together of the trade and financial system is entirely inappropriate, because while an open and equitable multilateral trade system should be promoted, an open financial system is an entirely different matter and should not be promoted.

An open financial system is defined as a liberalized system of financial flows that allow funds, including speculative funds, to move in and out of countries. This has triggered many financial crises over the decades, and has led to significant outflows of illicit financial flows from developing countries, particularly through corporate tax evasion and avoidance, the use of offshore tax havens and transfer mispricing by transnational corporations.

The existing heading of "**Finance and Debt Sustainability**" should include instead the following targets:

- **Regulate capital flows** to prevent or minimize destabilizing and volatile cross-border flows of short-term capital, including by encouraging reserve-issuing countries to impose controls over destabilizing capital outflows to developing countries;
- **Reform the exchange rate and international reserve system** with a view to reducing systemic instability, improving the international governance of finance and supporting development;
- **Promote a stable, rules-based, equitable and international financial system**, with equitable decision-making power, particularly within international financial institutions, and inclusive participation for all countries, developed and developing, that supports development and the real productive economy;

- **Control and regulate speculation in the commodities markets**, including through ensuring favourable terms for commodity-dependent developing countries in contracts with transnational corporations to enable them to add more value to commodities and obtain more revenues from commodity-related activities; and,
- **Regulate systemically important financial institutions and markets**, including international banks and rating agencies and markets for commodity derivatives with a view to reducing international financial instability and instability of commodity prices.

With regard to **debt**, the target should be amended to include "*ensure debt sustainability, debt restructuring and debt relief, and this should take into account the country's need to successfully implement the agreed SDGs*."

The targets on "**trade**" should include:

- **Review multilateral rules and agreements as well as trade and investment bilateral agreements** with a view to improving the policy space in developing countries in pursuit of national objectives;
- Discourage the proliferation of bilateral **Free Trade Agreements** that encroach on policy space of developing countries and divert trade from the multilateral arena;
- Reaffirm that **agriculture** is the sector where trade is most distorting, expressing concern that domestic supports in developed countries are maintained at very high levels (OECD data that this has now crossed the USD 400 billion level), and issue a call for the elimination or reduction of such domestic support in developed countries;
- Reaffirm the prime importance of **food security** in developing countries and that trade rules and negotiations have to recognize and respect this priority, as well as to promote the livelihoods and incomes of small farmers in developing countries;
- Eliminate **exports subsidies** for agricultural products and **restrictions over transfer of technology** in advanced economies; and
- Refrain from promulgating and applying **unilateral economic, financial or trade measures** not in accordance with international law and the Human Rights Charter that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries (as stated in the Rio+20 outcome document, para. 26).

Under "Technology transfer, technological capabilities," explicit mentions should be made to ensuring affordable access to technology for developing countries. Rio+20 (para. 73) emphasized the importance of technology transfer to developing countries, as well as access to information and intellectual property rights.

A technology section of a new development agenda should include key substantive targets:

- Implement measures to promote, facilitate and finance access to and the development, transfer and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies and corresponding know-how to developing countries, on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed, (Rio+20 outcome document, paragraph 73);
- Continue and better focus implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building, adopted by the United Nations Environment Programme, (Rio+20 outcome document, para. 278);
- Encourage and support developing countries to make use of Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) flexibilities, and countries taking part in negotiations for free trade agreements and discourage other agreements from proposing TRIPS-plus provisions that limit access to medicines and knowledge and other technologies; and,
- Reform the international intellectual property regime with a view to facilitating technological catch-up and improving health and education standards and food security in developing countries.

Multi-stakeholder initiatives and partnerships are being actively pushed within the UN as an implementation mechanism for the development agenda and cooperation in general.

However, such partnerships with the private sector raise serious issues about the UN, especially if they take place outside the purview of intergovernmental oversight, without regular and effective participation by Member States, be it under the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council.

If private participation is to be a new form of development cooperation, it must not substitute for or dominate over public financing. Transparency and accountability must be ensured ex-ante for all actions and initiatives, be they publicly or privately funded, and conflict of interest must be guarded against, particularly with regard to the UN Charter. ▪