



SOCIAL WATCH

R E P O R T 2 0 1 4

OVERVIEW

Means and Ends

The **ends** (or goals) of humanity have already been agreed and include health and education for all, gender justice, peace, human rights, and the right to a development that ensures universal dignity within the planetary boundaries. The **means** are available to achieve this, but inequalities stand on the way.

A G L O B A L P R O G R E S S R E P O R T
O N P O V E R T Y E R A D I C A T I O N A N D G E N D E R J U S T I C E

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SOURCES:

Core Principles, Universal Goals, is excerpted from a Civil Society reflection group paper entitled “Towards a Framework of Universal Sustainability Goals as Part of a Post-2015 Agenda,” 19 March, 2013, available at <http://www.reflectiongroup.org/stuff/DraftTowardsaFrameworkofUSGs.pdf>

Means of implementation, is an updated version of the statement by TWN on behalf of the Women’s Major Group and other Major Groups on 30 April 2014; available at <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/8678muchhala.pdf>

Eradicating poverty, is excerpted from the Development Dialogue paper no. 1, by Roberto Bissio published by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation of Uppsala, Sweden in September 2013 and available at <http://www.dhf.uu.se/publications/development-dialogue/putting-the-development-agenda-right-development-dialogue-paper/>

Gender Roundtable was transcribed from a conference call among the participants in June 2014 by Courtney Lockhart.

Privatizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda is based on “Smuggling corporations in,” a column by Roberto Bissio published in *La Primera*, Lima, Peru, 21 February 2014; available at <http://www.socialwatch.org/node/1634> and “Fit for whose purpose?” a comment by the Civil Society Reflection Group, available at <https://www.reflectiongroup.org/#content> as well as excerpts from “Corporate influence in the Post-2015 process,” a January 2014 GPF working paper available at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/252-the-millennium-development-goals/52572-new-working-paper-corporate-influence-in-the-post-2015-process.html>

Righting Finances is taken from “Misdirecting Finances,” a Global Policy Forum paper, 21 February 2014, available at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/252-the-millennium-development-goals/52494-misdirecting-finance-who-benefits.html>; and a statement by the Righting Finances Initiative on “Co-creating new partnerships for Financing Sustainable Development,” 4-5 April, Helsinki, Finland, available at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/252-the-millennium-development-goals/52494-misdirecting-finance-who-benefits.htm>

Crisis of confidence is excerpted from a paper entitled “Whose Development, Whose UN?” by Barbara Adams and Lou Pingeot published by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, November 2013; available at http://fes-globalization.org/new_york

Big Data is based on a column by Roberto Bissio in *La Primera*, Lima Peru, 6 September, 2013, available at: <http://agendaglobal.redtercermundo.org.uy/2013/09/05/big-brother-se-llama-ahora-big-data/>

The difficult Arab transition was prepared for this publication by Ziad Abdel Samad and Joel Ghazi of the Arab NGO Network for Development.

Women’s Political Participation in Latin America is a slightly condensed version of a paper prepared for this publication by the UNITAS Urban Programme, January 2014; available at <http://www.socialwatch.org>

Full source citations have been eliminated in this publication but are available in the original publications.

Prologue

Monitoring is only meaningful if the powerful are held to account

Some 4,000 years ago, King Hammurabi had the laws of his domain between the Tigris and Euphrates carved in stone and placed in front of his palace. The laws were written in the plain language of the people, not in the arcane idiom of the priests, so that everybody could understand them. They were not engraved on clay, so they could not be changed at will, and they were not hidden, so that all were able to access them and learn, for example, that even judges had a duty to adhere to the rules in their decisions.

Thus were created the basic principles of accountability. Much more recently, only 200 years ago, *La Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* stated (Art. XIV) that every citizen has the right to check the need to pay taxes and that society has the right to hold every public agent accountable (Art.XV).

The idea that the people form the basis of a society and should be protected by justice is not new and is not the intellectual property of any specific region. It was articulated in the 14th Century by the Arab philosopher Ibn Khaldun, the father of modern sociology, who in his *Muqaddimah* quotes Aristotle as having established political wisdom in eight sentences:

“1. The world is a garden the fence of which is the dynasty (the state). 2. The (state) dynasty has the authority that defines proper behavior. 3. Proper behavior becomes policy when directed by the ruler. 4. The ruler is an institution supported by the soldiers. 5. The soldiers are helpers who are maintained by money. 6. Money is sustenance brought together by the subjects. 7. The subjects are servants who are protected by justice. 8. Justice is the harmony that makes the world a garden.”

If we translate “the garden” as “sustainable development” we have here all the elements that we need for a renewed agenda: policy and regulations, means of implementation (taxes) and compliance mechanisms (justice) which is what we really want to talk about when we talk about monitoring and accountability.

In the last decades all the rulers of the world have committed themselves to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948), that spells out the basic principles of human

dignity, the Rio Declaration (1992) that formulates the rights of future generations, the Copenhagen and Beijing declarations (1995) that promise to eradicate poverty and achieve gender equality and the Millennium Declaration (2000) that commits them to ensure the simultaneous realization of a triangle framed by 1) peace and security; 2) democracy and human rights; and 3) development and social justice.

Those commitments were translated into every language and carved onto the Internet, television, radio and the printed page that all can access and are more difficult to hide and erase than a stone. Yet, the non-compliance with the formal promises, while morally condemned in all cultures and places, is difficult to address. The commitments made to society tend to be easily forgotten if organized citizens and communities are not constantly reminding their rulers.

Social Watch was created in 1995 to help governments remember their promises and to assist those governed to monitor their realization... or lack of it. The first Social Watch report, in 1996, included national reports authored by 13 non-governmental organizations in 13 countries. Today the Social Watch network has active coalitions of over 1,000 organizations in 80 countries. Each national alliance defines its priorities, its message and how to engage with their authorities. To participate in the global network they agree to be inclusive, to report honestly and to advocate to improve the quality of the policies and the openness of the mechanisms that define these. The global network will in turn amplify the national voices, help them use methodological tools, such as the innovative indexes on gender equity and on basic capabilities that Social Watch developed, and collectively hold international organizations accountable for their own commitments.

In doing that, we found something that probably Hammurabi already knew: accountability is only meaningful if includes the powerful, such as, in some cases, the landowner, the mayor and the chief of police. In today's world the powerful are the rich countries, the intergovernmental institutions (particularly those dealing with trade and finances), transnational corporations and even some huge foundations and NGOs with budgets of billions of dollars.

Ultimately it is up to citizens to hold their own governments accountable. In exercising these rights, our member

coalitions have managed in some countries to identify millions of dollars of “pork barrels” hiding in obscure budget provisions and to redirect them to support genuine social development. They have also helped avoid civil wars through the development of credible election monitoring mechanisms based on social networks.

Often, the Social Watch national coalitions have also found in practice that the smaller, poorer or more vulnerable a country is the more it is held accountable to foreign actors. All countries are obligated to report to their peers on their compliance with human rights legal obligations under the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Right Council. This is a major step forward. But developing countries also have to report on their compliance with WTO accession commitments; they are supervised by the IMF, even if they are not debtors, and they report to each of their bilateral donors individually and also collectively. When the recipient country government sits at a table with its 12-25 donors, who are frequently also its creditors, plus the World Bank, the IMF and the regional development banks this is called “mutual accountability!” But while it might be more efficient for recipient governments to report to all donors and creditors simultaneously, this is obviously not the best setting to interrogate donors about not meeting their own development assistance commitments (0.7% of GDP) or about their unfulfilled promise to increase the voting power of African countries in international financial institutions.

In fact, our members observe that accountability to citizens is frequently postponed or denied by this accountability to the powerful in ways that weaken the role of parliaments and undermine democratic institutions. To make matters worse, over 2,000 bilateral and regional trade and investment agreements signed in the last few decades have created new rights for transnational corporations, including rights that humans don’t have: corporations have acquired the right to settle anywhere they want and bring with them any personnel they decide they need, they are allowed to repatriate profits without restrictions and even to litigate against governments in demand of profits lost because of democratically decided national policies, not through local courts but via international arbitration panels shaped to defend business interests and where human rights do not necessarily prevail. ICSID, the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes, hosted by the World

Bank, is a non-transparent tribunal that displaces national judiciaries and in essence creates its own law by ignoring human rights standards and environmental norms, even when they have been ratified as international treaties.

No single duty was created for corporations to compensate for this expansion of their rights, which may be one of the reasons for the current disproportionate share of capital in the capture of the benefits of growth and the symmetric reduction in the share of labour in those benefits that is so convincingly documented by Thomas Picketty’s *Capital in the Twenty-first Century*. Corporations have to be made accountable not only to their owners and consumers but to their workers and to the people affected by their operations. Corporate accountability requires rules set by governments, respect for human rights and environmental due diligence as well as reporting, ensuring access by those negatively affected to an effective remedy, tax transparency; proper land appropriation rules, and so on.

The Righting Finance coalition, of which Social Watch is a member, has elaborated a set of minimum criteria to be applied to all actors wanting to benefit from “partnering” with the UN, among them the mandatory declaration of any conflict of interest, and careful “vetting” of their human rights background and performance. Corporations in partnership with the UN should be subject to at least the reporting requirements already established for NGOs, which include regular reporting to ECOSOC, including on their finances and their origins, demonstrated adherence to Human Rights and UN principles, a description of initiatives undertaken to support the MDGs and demonstrated contribution to the work of the UN.

The mandate for this already exists, and has been approved by the UN General Assembly as part of the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. These principles require, for example, an impact assessment of multilateral organizations, corporations and the trade and investment regime. This important mandate needs to be implemented. The Rio decision that created the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) clearly intended to empower this Forum to hold these reviews. To do so, the Forum needs to be properly **assisted** by a strong secretariat, **informed** by adequate reporting and carefully **prepared** by an active chair(s) that provides continuity and leadership.

Following the Rio+20 mandate on universality, all governments and multilateral organizations have to be accountable. The Global Partnership for Development, described in Goal 8 of the MDGs, not only has no timeline, but also no proper accountability mechanism. No wonder it lacked implementation. A new agenda for development has to be specific about Means of Implementation and also about the forum for review and the monitoring and accountability mechanism, which could well be a strengthened HLPF as described above, to which multilateral agencies, the Bretton Woods Institutions and any corporation or “partnership” wanting to use the UN name, logo or flag should be required to report.

Accountability doesn't happen without transparency and access to information. Corporations should report their accounts on a country-by-country basis and countries should keep public registers of company owners, among other basic information. In general, citizens should have access not only to corporate information but also to all government documents, along with those of multilateral organizations. In particular, the secrecy involving the work of arbitration panels in investor states disputes should be declared as contrary to basic accountability and human rights principles. Banking secrecy undermining the ability of countries to tax their citizens or corporations operating in their territories needs to be identified as a major obstacle to the achievement of human rights and development goals and this should be a major issue to address in the context of the Financing for Development debates.

Monitoring and accountability needs to be institutionalized, but ensuring an enabling environment for civil society is critical in order for accountability to “work”. Civil society uses all available tools, including Internet-based social networks. But the essential role of organized civil society cannot be substituted by easily manipulated web-based instruments.

The US National Council on Public Polls (NCP), which includes the major TV networks and several universities, explains on its website that “unscientific pseudo-polls are widespread and sometimes entertaining, but they never provide the kind of information that belongs in a serious report.” Examples of those polls “include 900-number call-in polls, man-on-the-street surveys, many Internet polls....”

In a scientific poll, explains NCP, “the pollster identifies and seeks out the people to be interviewed. In an unscientific

poll, the respondents usually ‘volunteer’ their opinions, selecting themselves for the poll.” Ignoring this basic recommendation, serious UN reports quote web-based polls as if they were genuine consultations with civil society. This practice should be avoided.

Accountability is not the same as accounting. It cannot be left to accountants or other bureaucrats. Every development project and every “partnership” should have in its budget a provision to support independent civil society accountability mechanisms at least with the same amount as that devoted to auditing.

In 2012, the Rio+20 Summit decided to kick off a negotiation process towards an international agreement on a set of sustainable development goals that “should be action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries, while taking into account different national realities.” Universality was understood as meaning that developed countries should not just contribute to eradicating poverty abroad but also make an effort in areas to be agreed, such as for example reducing emissions that cause climate change, modifying unsustainable production and consumption patterns, reducing inequalities or ensuring adequate universal social protection.

These “goals for the rich” should have time-bound targets and monitoring mechanisms at least as effective as those that watch over the efforts of developing country governments. Yet, two years after Rio+20 the developed countries have still offered no hint on any new commitment on their side. In turn, developing countries are reluctant to commit themselves to achievements for which no means of implementation are made available.

Without the will there will be no transformation and the blatant unfairness of the current world can only become worse.

Seven centuries ago, Ibn Khaldun concluded that “injustice ruins civilization. The ruin of civilization has as its consequence the complete destruction of the dynasty (state).” Goals for the rich and effective monitoring and accountability of the powerful are essential. Without them there will be no credible development agenda and the multilateral system will lose its legitimacy. ■

Means and Ends: The messages from the country reports

The ends were agreed and clearly articulated, the means were (and still are) available. And yet something stands in the way. Among the many obstacles identified by Social Watch coalitions around the world, inequalities and its associated symptoms of inequity and injustice clearly emerge as the main reason why the common aspirations of humanity are not being achieved.

The “ends” are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 with its commitment to free people everywhere from fear and want. That common objective of humanity spelled out at the end of the Second World War and embodied in the United Nations soon was split into two by the Cold War: on the one side those that cherished civil and political rights, on the other side those that argued social, economic and cultural rights had to be achieved first. In the middle the Third World, the impoverished majority of humanity, successfully struggled for independence but did not manage to translate political self determination into a dignified life for its citizens.

At the end of the Cold War, in the last decade of the 20th century, the UN agenda was revised and updated by a series of world conferences establishing the rights of children (New York, 1990) and of women (Beijing, 1995). The concept of “sustainable development” was endorsed in Rio de Janeiro (1992), asserting that present needs should be met in a way that does not prevent future generations to meet theirs, while the Social Summit of 1995 in Copenhagen committed all governments to free the world from poverty and ensure decent work and “social integration” for all.

The challenge heads of states and governments expressed at that Summit was that “we are witnessing in countries throughout the world the expansion of prosperity for some, unfortunately accompanied by an expansion of unspeakable poverty for others. This glaring contradiction is unacceptable and needs to be corrected through urgent actions.”

At that moment, the “urgent need” was recognized “to address profound social problems, especially poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, that affect every country.” And the leaders understood as “our task” to

Every year the Social Watch national coalitions report on their countries’ progress or regression towards the internationally agreed goals. As UN member states start negotiating a new development agenda and a new set of goals key “means and ends” questions must be addressed: Are the goals relevant? Are the means appropriate?

The country reports are available at www.socialwatch.org. Common themes that emerge are summarized here.

address “both their underlying and structural causes and their distressing consequences.”

Yet, under pressure of the donors that provide the bulk of their budget and without inter-governmental negotiations similar to those of the big conferences of the previous decade, the UN development agencies and the multilateral financial institutions shrank their mandate to a minimal set of Millennium Development Goals focused exclusively on “extreme poverty” in low-income countries and its associated symptoms in health and education.

In his 2005 report to the General Assembly, then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan explained that the MDGs “do not directly encompass some of the broader issues covered by the conferences of the 1990s, nor do they address the particular needs of middle-income developing countries or the questions of growing inequality and the wider dimensions of human development and good governance.” Nevertheless, he argued, “the urgency of achieving the MDGs cannot be overstated.”

The analogy with an emergency was convincing: Let’s focus on those at extreme risk first! But in practice that strategy was not effective. Foreign aid (known in development jargon as “official development assistance” or ODA) and particularly aid directed to the least developed countries, did not increase substantially as a result of that focus on the “poorest of the poor,” in spite of UN resolutions and an explicit mandate in that regard in the

Lisbon Treaty, the unofficial constitution of the European Union.

ODA is not the only way in which richer countries can contribute to development (other options include technology transfer, fair trade terms, debt cancellation, etc.) and perhaps not even the most important. But as it implies direct budget decisions, ODA can be a good thermometer of the “political will” of the donor country. In 2013, which was a “record year,” net ODA from OECD countries stood at 0.3 percent of gross national income, exactly the same percentage as in 1992 and less than half of the longstanding UN target for an ODA/GNI ratio of 0.7 percent.

While the MDGs did not help to substantially improve the behaviour towards the emergency victims, governments of middle income countries did not feel major pressure from those goals to make extra efforts, as the benchmarks were set too low for them. They had basically achieved the goals before the start of the race. In Thailand, the national Social Watch reports how the country claimed to have achieved the MDGs long before 2015, even when those achievements are at risk due to threatened economic instability and “environmental sustainability is more difficult to fins than a needle in a haystack.” Similarly, huge problems of employment and social integration in the developed countries also fell off the UN radar, as no goal mentioned them.

The UN is, of course, a body of universal membership with a clear global mandate to maintain international peace and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. And yet, focusing exclusively on the MDGs created the notion that the organization should only focus on the poorest countries. Such a misrepresentation led the Canadian minister of Citizenship and Immigration to describe in May 2012 as “completely ridiculous” the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food to his country. The envoy of the Human Rights Council, a body with universal mandate, was told that he should not get involved in “political exercises in developed democracies like Canada.”

Universality is practiced by the UN Human Rights Council through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a mechanism for all countries, Canada included, to report regularly to their peers on their obligations to respect, protect and promote both civil and political rights as well as social, economic and cultural rights.

Further, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, meeting in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 emphasized that the “sustainable development goals” to be negotiated multilaterally should be “action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and *universally applicable to all countries* while taking into account different national realities.”

The logical conclusion is that all countries will have to report on actions taken towards those universal aspirations. For the Social Watch coalitions this is not new. They already bring together citizens from richer and poorer countries in all continents. The methodology of checking commitments against accomplishments is common, and the problems and obstacles faced are also surprisingly similar.

Impacts of the crisis

The feeling of crisis, frequently of catastrophic dimensions, permeates many of the national Social Watch reports in the last two years. In some cases the crisis is rooted in history. The report from the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, situates the origin of the crisis in

the collapse of copper prices and the simultaneous increase of oil prices in 1974, forty years ago. This imbalance in trade was made worse by bad governance and strong demographic pressure from young people entering the labor market in search of jobs every year. Persistent armed conflicts and lack of social policies or job creating economic policies make the situation worse and currently there are 16 million people (out of 66 million total population) suffering malnutrition and a majority of the population without formal jobs or any social security protection.

The Social Watch report from Armenia also points to a prolonged crisis, in this case beginning 25 years ago when the Soviet Union (of which Armenia was a confederated republic) collapsed. The impact on Armenia was “catastrophic”: about 1,000 industrial enterprises ceased to function, agricultural associations were disbanded in 1020 agricultural formations, and more than 1 million people became unemployed. The country still faces a huge drain of the population that migrates abroad in search of jobs, plus “problems with monopolists, the shadow economy sector and corruption.”

The Czech Republic, previously seen as having performed a successful transition from the Warsaw Pact into the European Union, now faces severe hardships, with “unemployment at 10 percent, government reforms undermining the economy, antisocial and anti-family policies, corruption among politicians and capital flight into tax havens, destruction of the instruments of environmental protection, inability of the media to aptly inform on domestic and foreign affairs and low level of cooperation to address the crisis among civic actors.”

In Italy, the Social Watch coalition reports on the deterioration of the living conditions of a large part of the Italian population, especially the “working poor.” Fifteen percent of total employed, or 3 million workers are poor, compared to 10 percent in Denmark or 6 percent in Sweden. Almost one third of Italians are at risks of suffering poverty or social exclusion and income inequality has widened. The richest 10 Italians own as much as the poorest 3

million. The proportion of Italians who cannot afford an adequate full meal at least every two days, doubled in 2013 and affects one in every eight Italians. Yet, in a context of strong and generalized reduction of public spending, the Ministry of Defence got a budget increase in 2013-2015, 25 times higher than that of social policies.

A similar frustration emerges out of the Portuguese Social Watch report, which denounces “increasing unemployment, impoverishment and increasing vulnerability of powerless groups and communities” as the major consequences of austerity policies. Given the high levels of unemployment and poverty already being experienced in Portugal, and the findings that early anti-crisis measures disproportionately affected poorer people, very serious impacts might be anticipated on vulnerable groups, putting at risk the more elementary economic, social and cultural rights. For these reason, the authors recommend “the implementation of a human rights based approach to national budget and welfare state reform, allowing the social protection of the powerless and dis-empowered groups.”

South Korea was hit both by the Asia financial crisis in 1997 and the global financial crisis in 2008. According to the Korean Social Watch report, the impressive economic growth (GDP doubled between 2000 and 2010) helped hide “gaps between regions, industries, social strata, and sectors” and dubious practices such as the concentration of funds in the hometowns of former presidents. In 2013, “the economy has recovered but inequality and polarization of poverty got worsened.” The lack of social protection transformed the working poor, the self-employed and small business owners into a new vulnerable group, joining the ranks of the traditional vulnerable groups: indigent children, female household, the disabled, and the elderly.

The federal government of Canada shares the obsession with deficit reduction at all costs. Federal programme spending as a share of the economy is at its lowest level since the 1950s and the lowest of any national government in the industrial world. Cuts to federal-provincial

health, social, and equalization transfers alone will amount to USD 60 billion over the next decade. The result has been a reduction to health and social services for Canadians at the time when they need them most—during Canada’s slow recovery from recession.

While inequality in Canada may be less extreme than in the U.S., it is growing at a faster rate in Canada and it is also highly racialized and gendered. Women, Aboriginal peoples, new immigrants, people with disabilities and ethnic minority communities all carry a disproportionate burden of lower incomes and lower employment rates. For every dollar earned by white Canadians, racialized Canadian workers earned only 81.4 cents. For every dollar earned by men in Canada, women earn 76.7 cents (working full-year, full-time).

Inequalities

The ILO’s June 2014 World Social Protection Report 2014-15 states that “contrary to public perception, adjustment measures are not limited to Europe. Since 2010, world governments embarked into premature expenditure contraction, despite vulnerable populations’ urgent need of public support. In 2014, the scope of public expenditure adjustment is expected to intensify significantly, impacting 122 countries, of which 82 are developing countries.

Thus, many countries experiencing fast economic growth are not seeing the benefits of that prosperity. The report of Social Watch Philippines offers this dramatic example:

In 2011, GDP increased by USD 17 billion; on the other hand, the collective wealth of the forty richest Filipinos rose by USD 13 billion in the same year (or a collective 37.8% jump). This means that the increased wealth of the country’s richest forty individuals is equivalent to the bulk —76.5 percent or more than three fourths— of the country’s overall increase in income last year, reinforcing perceptions of an “oligarchic” economy.

Philippines’ economic growth rates have averaged at 5.1 percent since 2000, so that now, the country is heralded as one of the more important emerging economies. In the meantime, poverty incidence has remained high, reaching 26.3 percent in 2009, 25.2 percent in 2012, and 24.9 percent in the first half of 2013.

Ghana is another “model country” that has seen sustained economic growth over the past decade and “graduated” from to the level of a lower middle income country. Yet the Ghanaian Social Watch coalition reports that “despite the seemingly impressive growth recorded, income and regional income disparities continue to be an issue and in some instances have in some instances been exacerbated: 28 percent of the population according to the UNDP (2010) continue to live on less than a dollar a day and more than half of Ghanians live on less than USD 2 a day. Income disparities are compounded with gender inequities. Women in Ghana continue to be too heavily represented among the poor, with rural women in particular experiencing high levels of poverty.

In India, the economy has also been growing at phenomenal pace during the last decade, and yet employment in the organized sector has declined in absolute numbers from 28 million in 1999 to 27.5 in 2008. India’s dependence on international aid, especially for the financial resources is minimal. In fact India’ had declined bilateral aid from many countries, but it lags behind dramatically with respect to gender equity, poverty, hunger and infant and maternal mortality rates. The absence of inclusiveness in the development model is the primary cause, according to the report of the National Social Watch. Instead of enabling the people to acquire the basic needs such as food, sanitation, water, health care, the Government is promoting ‘non-inclusive growth’ and sought to provide the subsidized basic social services with associated problem of inefficiency, corruption, and so on.

Chile has claimed to be the best performing Latin American country in terms of meeting the MDGs, yet the Chilean Social Watch report argues that the deep-rooted inequalities

have not been addressed and thus the public is not happy with the declared achievements. When the poverty reduction figures are disaggregated by age and gender it becomes obvious that women and children are lagging behind. In 2011 and 2012, massive mobilizations of students demanding free education were received with sympathy by the public, as the young demonstrators were clearly non-violent and creative in the streets. The struggle for better education became a symbol of discontent with the whole neoliberal model.

Similarly, in Dominican Republic the national Social Watch report concludes that two decades of economic growth “have not resulted in genuine human development,” with rural communities and women at a clear disadvantage. Lack of proper governance and access to state services is one of the causes (one fifth of the population lacks identity documents) and the informal economy another, as some half of the economically active population lack access to social security. Women comprise a majority of university students but their salaries are lower than those of their male colleagues and, contrary to expectations, that gap is increasing since 2000, despite improved education for girls.

Peru and Zambia, two countries rich in minerals, have also experienced high economic growth during the last years, but with diverse social impacts. Peru registers sustained economic growth of six percent a year since 2000, and in this case, yes, poverty has been reduced, through a substantial investment by the State in social assistance programmes, particularly the so called “conditional cash transfers” (where poor families receive money if, for example, they send their kids to school). Millions of households living in poverty now depend on those cash transfers and the Peruvian Social Watch report wonders if that is sustainable in case of a fall in commodity prices. Infant malnutrition has dropped significantly and maternal mortality decreased. Yet, Peru still has a high incidence of tuberculosis and disparities are blatant, between the three geo-ecological regions of coast, highlands and forest, between rural and urban and between

rich and poor quarters of the same city. Discrimination based on race and gender is visible in the gaps between private clinics and public hospitals, elite universities and public education.

For the period 2006-2009 Zambia's economy grew at an average of 6.1 percent per annum, pulled by Chinese demand for Zambian copper. Yet, due to tax incentives and holidays, the mining companies' contribution to the treasury is quite low. Further, there is little transparency and accountability for the resources that government receives from taxes and royalties. As a result, the Gini coefficient that measures inequality increased from 0.64 in 2004 to 0.67 in 2008. The Zambian Social Watch coalition reports that "the (economic) gains have not been felt by the most vulnerable sections of society."

Similarly, in Azerbaijan, where extractive industries have led to more revenue, employment remains high. While oil and gas account for half of GDP, the sector hires less than 1 percent of the work force. Construction, highly dependent on government spending, is responsible for most of the new jobs created. Prosperity has reduced poverty, but at the same time the share of the poorest quintile in national income also diminished.

Policies do matter and El Salvador provides a dramatic example. The country was severely affected by the global economic and financial crisis that started in 2008 with the fall of Lehman Brothers. The economy shrank 3.5 percent in 2009 and then stagnated and is now very slowly recovering. The Government of the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) executed several plans to support the historically excluded, such as senior adults, women, children and rural population. Those policies allowed it to continue reducing poverty in spite of the crisis and to achieve major improvements in health and education. The Salvadorean Social Watch report celebrates these achievements but wonders about their sustainability. Because of the high sensitivity of the economy to global volatility, structural changes are needed, argues the national Social Watch report, such as a fiscal reform that

raises domestic resources to base social welfare in genuine domestic funding.

Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay are among the few countries that managed to reduce poverty and inequalities at the same time. Uruguayan Social Development minister Daniel Olesker, in dialogue with Social Watch explained last February that "policies to ensure basic incomes improved the income of the poorest sectors and salary policies raised the income of workers faster than inflation, while at the same time we introduced fiscal policies that affected the distribution of wealth." In 2005, when the current governing coalition arrived to power, Uruguay was still suffering the social and economic impact of a severe financial crisis that erupted in 2002. So we started fighting poverty in 2005... but already in 2007 we started with the tax reform," explains Olesker. "And then came health reform to provide universal coverage and in 2008 the reform of education. While poverty was still an important problem, we started to do simultaneously structural reforms and anti-poverty policies. The link between the two generated a virtuous circle that allow for economic growth while poverty was reduced and income redistributed. This is the main lesson we learned."

Official Development Assistance (ODA)

In this context of crisis in developed countries, and Europe in particular, ODA diminished in 2011 and 2012. It recovered in 2013, but in relative terms reached only 0.3 percent of total domestic product of donor countries, less than half of the 0.7 percent promised decades ago. The Belgian Social Watch report explains the political dilemma: "In times of crisis, when poverty is scaring the Europeans, businesses are closing and the welfare state is being dismantled, development cooperation needs to be redefined." In fact, thanks to effective campaigning of civil society, Belgium has chosen to reinforce its UN contribution and in supporting UN development efforts it mainly contributes to the

regular budget of the organization, instead of supporting pet projects with earmarked funds as is common practice among many donors.

Aid needs to be assessed on its quality and not just on quantity. Forty percent of Korean aid, for example, is "tied," meaning that it can only be used to buy Korean goods and services, a limitation that reduces the effectiveness of aid and in some cases can be seen as a hidden subsidy to its own economy. Further, Korea prefers to assist middle income or low middle income countries rather than the least developed countries (LDCs) that need aid the most. According to the Korean watchers, this is because the purposes of Korea's ODA are economic cooperation and energy resources of recipient countries rather than humanitarian.

Similarly, Malta, a "new donor" within the European Union, prioritizes bilateral aid over multilateral contributions. Civil society criticizes the Government for not being transparent in how ODA funds are being allocated and which organizations and initiatives are benefiting from it. The Government seemingly invests a great amount of ODA funds in the detention or repatriation of irregular migrants, including many asylum seekers. Further, scholarships to foreign students are also counted as ODA.

In Switzerland, pro-development civil society groups such as Alliance Sud have been campaigning on the return of "stolen assets." In 2011, the Federal Cabinet arranged to block unlawful assets from Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, saying they are to be returned as soon as possible. "The goal nevertheless should be to prevent any more stolen assets from entering Switzerland," says the Swiss Social Watch report. "To date, urgently needed tightening in anti-money laundering and the exclusion of dictators' funds is still pending."

Contrary to the trend amongst OECD donor countries, in Switzerland civil society campaigning has succeeded in making the development budget grow by about 9 percent annually until 2015. However, Swiss contributions to climate funds are now coming from the increased ODA budget. The Government argues that this is all *new and additional* money, as

requested by the climate agreements. Alliance Sud, the national Social Watch coalition, argues that this money is indeed *new* since it was earmarked for climate finance recently, but it is not *additional* as long as it comes from ODA.

This debate around the meaning of ODA related terms is generalizing, as the OECD has kicked off a process to re-discuss what constitutes “aid” and how to account for it. According to the current definition by the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee, ODA comprises all flows by public institutions to developing countries aimed at promoting well-being and economic development. If these take the forms of loans, not grants, then in order to be listed as ‘assistance,’ they should be ‘soft’ loans (at below-market interest rates) and contain a significant concessional component.

A study now before parliament in the Netherlands proposes five different alternatives to redefine aid, all of which include ‘innovative financial instruments’ in the definition and more lax rules on loans, so as to count as ODA credits currently excluded. One proposal is to exclude ‘middle-income countries’ completely from the list and concentrate cooperation, reduced to 0.25 percent of GDP, in the lowest-income countries. Another is to target this same percentage to the poorest countries and reach the 0.7 percent figure by counting as ODA all types of financial flows to middle-income countries, including funds aimed at ‘facilitating success for Dutch companies abroad’— particularly in the water and sanitation sector where the Dutch are perceived as having a comparative advantage.

The report regrets that under the current rules “public funding for private initiatives is also omitted from the ODA statistics in the cases where fiscal measures (tax expenditure) applied by the government encourage private initiatives, even though they act as a lever to release private funding flows.” It notes that the Netherlands currently spends public monies on ‘international public goods’ such as mitigating climate change, global security and social assistance to refugees and migrants, and proposes to change the definition

of ODA so that these can be recorded as such. This would add to Dutch ODA some 300 million euros per year spent on UN peacekeeping operations and 330 million euros budgeted as future contributions to combating climate change.

This changes in how aid is defined can result in many countries reaching the 0.7 percent target simply by counting as aid the activities of their corporations abroad, or worse, large corporations could access the aid budgets, privatize profits if their investments are successful and socialize the losses if they fail.

The report from the Dutch Government notes that these proposals “would in all probability raise objections from the G77” and could “compromise other policy discussions.” The reason is not difficult to guess. In 2009 the advanced economies pledged during the Copenhagen climate change conference to increase their contributions to mitigating climate change to USD 100 billion a year by 2020. This USD 100 billion would double current annual ODA. If the new OECD standard accepts climate funding as ODA and not as a separate and additional commitment, the Copenhagen promise would be met basically by relabeling present funds.

These changes in ODA have obvious implications in developing countries, as both governments and civil society organizations see funding from those sources diminish. In the case of Zambia, the local Social Watch reports a reduction in the contribution of ODA to the national budget; thus in the 2013 budget, “76.8 percent of expenditure will be financed through domestic revenues, 4.6 percent will be financed from grants from ODA, while the balance of 18.4 percent will be raised from external and domestic borrowing. Paradoxically, they add, this has a positive side-effect “as it means the Government must now focus on internal accountability to its citizens.” Yet, accountability remains an area of weakness. “Year after year the Auditor-General reports many cases of abuse, misuse and misapplication of colossal sums of money in the public service. But very little action is taken.” There is need to put in place measures to guarantee

citizen participation such as effective decentralization” conclude the Zambian watchers.

Governance

Corruption emerges as a major obstacle in many countries. The Ugandan Social Watch report denounces that “the misappropriated resources would have contributed to poverty reduction, narrowing of gender gaps, improvement of health, education and other social services, access to safe drinking water, and addressing the environment sustainability.” But in neighbouring Tanzania the local Social Watch report identifies another form of wasting resources: tax incentives. After much effort inviting foreign companies to invest in the country, Tanzanians aren’t seeing the expected results. Incentives and tax evasions are so high that little is obtained to enhance the national income.

A regressive tax system is also hindering Nicaragua from benefitting from the historic opportunity provided by democratic transition and the “demographic bonus.” The recent reduction of the fertility rate has produced a situation in Nicaragua where a majority of the population is young and of working age without having to care for a disproportionately big younger generation, as happened to their parents, or having a big older generation to care for, as will happen to their children. This “bonus” is being wasted because the few jobs generated by an economy based on agricultural exports are informal, badly paid and do not even allow workers to escape from poverty.

The art of living in peace

They suffer from extreme poverty, ill health, and hunger, but Afghans define the lack of security as their greatest problem. The Government of Afghanistan has added peace as a new goal to the eight global MDGs, recognizing its critical role in achieving all other development aspirations. “World communities have learned the art of living in peace and have developed foundations to sustain peace and security.

Afghanistan after three decades of war and conflict also needs to learn the art of living in peace” argues the national Social Watch report. The key to that is seen lies in education... and in the fulfillment of Goal 8 of the MDGs, the global partnership for development.

While some countries, such as Italy, are reportedly following the path of “military Keynesianism,” using public spending on defense to stimulate domestic demand for consumption and investment, war and conflict are nightmares for all countries suffering from them. In Lebanon, for example, the flood of Syrian refugees is a major humanitarian crisis. Official figures from Lebanon estimate the number of Syrians to be about 1 million while UNHCR estimates the number to be about 750 thousand. Most of them are living in very difficult conditions. Lebanese authorities have been reluctant to provide them with any support, limiting their role to organizing the registration process, thereby trying to hold the international community responsible for the refugees’ dire situation.

In addition, the polarization of the country politics and the sectarian nature of the regime makes implementation of development policies very difficult. In 2004 Prime Minister Hariri nominated a multi-ministerial committee for poverty eradication and MDG implementation, but he was assassinated in 2005 before taking any tangible steps in this regard. Another multi-ministerial committee was nominated in 2006 to suggest a national strategy for social development, which was never implemented owing to the Israeli war on Lebanon in that same year. In 2010, the Minister of Social Affairs proposed a national strategy for social development which was not presented to the council due to the resignation of Prime Minister Mikati’s Government and the delay until April 2013 in the formation of a caretaker government. Thus the main obstacle to true citizenship in the country is still the partition of state offices and institutions among the different religious confessions.

Conflict is bad for people and for business alike. Thus, the Social Watch report from Bahrain quotes the international credit rating

agency Standard and Poor, in its lowering the country’s rating because of “severe domestic political tensions, high geopolitical risks, stagnating real GDP per capita, and the fiscal dependency on sustained high oil prices.” Many of these factors are self-inflicted by the ongoing stifling of democratic dissent and the intensification of racial and anti-religious practices. In 2012 and in the aftermath of the democratic movement starting in February 2011, officials increased employment discrimination against Shi’a seeking government jobs, expanding restrictions to include general government departments dealing with information and making it more difficult for them to be hired in education and health. The only explanation is that of punishing Shi’a for expressing their democratic wishes, concludes the report.

In the case of Iraq, the economic and social costs of the prolonged conflict are obviously enormous, but impossible to quantify because the national census has been postponed four times since 2007, under the pretext of security concerns. The survey is required by the article 140 of the Constitution to reach a settlement over the internal dispute areas, but according to the Iraqi Social Watch coalition, powerful political blocs have been delaying indefinitely the census because it will affect state budget allocations and the impact on provincial level quotas as well. This lack of a basic assessment tools leads to lack of transparency, corruption and mistrust among groups that further fuels the conflict.

The alternative plan proposed by civil society organizations requires the Government to design and implement comprehensive and smart policies to reduce poverty, improve the educational system and empower women. The government doesn’t seem to be listening but voters did, electing more women to parliament in 2014 than the number stipulated by the legal quota, in a clear show of trust.

The active leadership and participation of women was key to the success of the January 25 Revolution, as Egyptians call the movement that ousted president Hosni Mubarak. It is the fourth Egyptian revolution in the last

130 years, explains the national Social Watch report. “The modern Egyptian national movement has consistently sought three goals: self-government in the basic sense of allowing Egyptians to be in charge of public offices; independence in the international community and effective domestic sovereignty, in particular with regard to the national economy and the ability to secure socio-economic justice in the distribution of national wealth and income.” Democracy is central to the movement, not just as a utopian goal—one whose practical implementation would be indefinitely deferred—but rather as the necessary foundation. The success or failure of Egypt’s transition will have a significant effect on the rest of the Arab world and civil society has a crucial role to play.

Having experienced conflict and political instability in their own country, the Social Watch report of Nepal concludes that “the root causes of the conflict include not only the severity of poverty and inequality but also the sense of entrenchment—that opportunities are limited or non-existent for the poor to climb out of poverty. Therefore, addressing constraints on the inclusiveness of development is critical in order to make a real difference in the lives of ordinary Nepalis and reduce the risks of instability. Systemic changes in the development approach must be undertaken to adequately address the needs and priorities of the excluded and marginalized sections of the society. A stable political structure upon which well-informed policies, institutions and mechanisms can function over time is a major determinant for people’s empowerment and strengthening Nepal’s peace and fragile democracy.”

Development is a complex process of transformations. Corruption and conflicts are obvious obstacles, but they can be understood as a consequence as much of as a cause. The Somalia Social Watch report formulates the difficult question: Why is progress is more or less the same in the stable areas of Somalia, where the situation is less complex and access is smooth, as in the conflict-ridden areas?

In searching for explanation, the Somaliland Millennium Development Report concluded that the direct implementation of programmes, without local coordination, resulted in inappropriate prioritization and increased delivery cost. Not utilizing the existing development expertise and obtainable facts and figures, and not taking into account the priorities of local beneficiaries turned aid into “rain, where no one has a say about when, where, and how much to rain.” In such cases the aid organizations themselves are perceived by the public as clouds that carry such rain.

The dozens of organizations that work in these stable areas conduct needs assessments prior to their interventions, as a practical way to discover the needs of destitute people. However, these assessments are seldom used to refine objectives, develop new strategies or design new interventions that are tailored to the needs of the targeted people. They are very often used for validating ideas of pre-decided objectives of a certain project.

Villages are visited and plenty of needs are discovered, including many dire needs that are not in line with the project in hand. If that project does not address the needs mentioned by the communities, such needs are ignored. Even worse, their needs are not shared with the concerned stakeholders. One rural villager, addressing a team commissioned in 2012 to conduct assessments in that area, stated: “Every month, two or three assessment teams come to our village enquiring about our needs. We tell them the challenges we face. They disappear and do not come back. I wonder what kind of needs these people look for that they are not seeing in our communities.” What the villager does not see is that intervention objectives are selected first and information to justify them is then searched for.

Things are much the same with respect to baseline studies, used to set up indicators to monitor activities and evaluate progress resulting from the intervention. Destitute people looking for any kind of aid exaggerate as the interviewers make clear from the beginning what kind of information the study is looking for it. Sometimes they point to other needs

that they have, but they are told that the intervention is confined to only one need, and that the study is merely assessing its severity. The interviewees continue exaggerating, and as the interviewers are only hired for this task, the other needs are not reported back. As a result, organizations that do want to address these needs look in the wrong places, and the suffering continues.

In the process of setting new development goals for the international community, values such as democracy, civility or inclusiveness are extremely difficult to quantify and measure, and yet they are essential for well-being. The Venezuelan Social Watch report highlights that point. Since the turn of the century, income poverty has declined dramatically, falling from 54 percent of households in 1998 to 32 percent in 2011, while extreme poverty fell even faster, from 23 to 9 percent. However, violence and insecurity is on the rise and the rate of homicides more than doubled in that same period. “Public space and social activities are reduced during the evenings and generalized violence affects the enjoyment of rights by the more vulnerable sectors” observes the report. “Night classes are being reduced in secondary education, teachers are reluctant to attend schools in high delinquency areas, hospitals close night-time emergency services and intense therapy units are clogged with assault victims.”

The Social Watch report from Slovenia offers another illustration of civil society trying to make sense of optimistic official statistics that do not reflect the malaise perceived by citizens. Officially there were 936,000 active workers in 2011 and 111,000 registered unemployed. In November 2012 registered unemployed remained more or less the same, but the active workforce shrank to 807,000. As unemployment is one of the main causes of poverty and social exclusion, it is important to explain how within a period of just one year close to 130,000 people (more than the entire registered unemployed workforce) were deleted from the public register of employment seekers. Forty thousand of them may be explained by unpaid housework, but this still leaves up

to 90,000 unaccounted for. Ten percent of the entire workforce became invisible!

Environment

Environmental destruction is, along with conflict, a major obstacle and, like conflict, it can originate from internal factors or be imposed from abroad. In the case of Costa Rica, the local Social Watch report takes pineapples as an example of how narrowly defined objectives can be counterproductive. In search of higher economic growth, the Government sought foreign investors with tax exemptions for export-oriented pineapple producers. In a few years, this crop resulted in land erosion and agrochemical contamination of rivers and groundwater because of the mishandling of wastewater. It also produced loss of biodiversity and wildlife poisoning by pesticides, air pollution with fungicides, flies and pests due to poor waste management, as well as a high concentration of toxic substances in the hair and urine of pregnant women and children residents of communities near the pineapple plantations. As tax exempted pineapples replaced tax-paying banana production, the finances of local governments were affected and therefore their provision of social services. Finally, as a result of civil society pressure, in 2012 the municipality of Pococí declared a ban on pineapples on grounds of the water contamination.

In Bangladesh the national Social Watch report also finds efforts to reduce poverty undermined by environmental constraints, but in this case the cause is climate change over which local and national authorities have no say. Despite remarkable progress in primary schooling, gender parity in primary and secondary education, decreased extreme poverty, lower infant, child and maternal mortality, improved immunization coverage, and fewer incidence of communicable diseases, the country and the vulnerable people in particular suffer the impact of cyclones and monsoon floods directly related to climate change. The Government has earmarked more than USD 10 billion in

investments for 2007-2015 to make Bangladesh less vulnerable to natural disasters. But despite this effort, the direct annual cost of natural disasters over the last 10 years is estimated to be between 0.5 and 1 per cent of GDP. "If Bangladesh is lagging in achieving MDGs due to climate change, who will be the responsible?" asks the report, emphasizing how climate change, "exaggerated by greed, steals from future generations, penalizes the poor and puts diversity at risk."

In Sri Lanka, the Social Watch report looks for solutions to similar problems: Experiences of farmer organizations and people's organizations over the last 15- 20 years show that ecological agriculture is a very effective way to overcome hunger and poverty and reduce ill health and ecological destruction caused by conventional chemical farming, which has also become very expensive since all chemical inputs are imported. Government has had to spend huge sums of money to provide chemical fertilizer at subsidized prices— about USD 100 billion is spent annually on the fertilizer subsidy alone. It has now been found that chemical agriculture leads to severe health problems and death. In Padaviya in the North Central Province around 20,000 people have died of a mysterious kidney disease proved to be caused by arsenic or Cadmium poisoning due to chemical agricultural inputs. In the North Central Province the people affected by this disease is over 100,000.

Sri Lanka still has a very large percentage of small farmers who are concerned primarily with producing their food, growing mainly rice, vegetables, pulses, yams and potatoes. In the late 1990s, the Government adopted World Bank policies that would push these people out of their land and agriculture, getting them to migrate into cities to find non-farm employment. This however, has not worked and still large numbers of people live in rural areas.

Young people have waged three armed rebellions that killed around 10,000 people in 1971, about 60,000 in 1988-90 and over several hundred thousand in the northern war that lasted for 30 years. Trying to make the country attractive to foreign investment over the last

36 years has failed and only cost the country a tremendous increase in foreign debt.

"It is foolish to expect the very creators of these crises to find solutions" concludes the Sri Lankan Social Watch coalition. "In finding solutions it is necessary to find ways in which the poor and hungry people take over the tasks of overcoming hunger and poverty. Since they do not have capital and since borrowed capital cannot be expected to support a process that does not benefit capital such a strategy will have to depend on capital to a minimum and use the free gifts of nature to the maximum through non-chemical agriculture."

What about the MDGs?

In his 2013 report to the General Assembly, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon optimistically stated that the Millennium Development Goals "have succeeded in placing people at the centre of the development agenda" and as a result "many countries — including some of the poorest — have aligned their policies and resources with the Goals to make unparalleled gains."

Yet the reports from the civil society organizations working on the ground are more sceptical, not just about the progress they perceive but also about the usefulness of the framework. The international community is now actively engaged in discussing a new set of Sustainable Development Goals, as decided in 2012 by the Rio Summit, and a new development framework to substitute the MDGs when they "expire" in 2015 (the so-called post-2015 agenda). It is therefore interesting to cite the opinions of the protagonists of the anti-poverty struggle at the grassroots level directly:

In Zambia, for example, "The MDGs are too minimalist and quantitative, ignoring issues related to quality are not dealt with. In education, the good rates of primary school enrolment and completion hide the poor quality of education many children receive. Having good reading, writing and arithmetic skills is an essential part of quality." And in Bangladesh: "The MDGs are seriously lacking of ownership, participation and partnership, which are the core principles in implementing

pro-poor development strategies. The poor are the best experts on their own situation, but the goals and targets have been set with a top down approach. Those suffering from deprivation have not determined the priorities and have had no role in defining the concept of poverty and of what is needed to reduce poverty and suffering in the Bangladeshi context."

As some of the MDGs are "non-universal" they promoted policies targeting populations located near the poverty line, the "low hanging fruit." The people who were most distant from the line were often neglected and have seen their living conditions deteriorate. In Armenia, for example, programmes intended to eradicate poverty and achieve equality were sentenced to fail, since the interests of local oligarchs dominated over the national priorities. "We have not won poverty but poverty won us," people say. Similarly in Benin, the MDGs have neglected sectors essential for the poor, such as agriculture, while three quarters of the poor live in rural areas and urban poverty is partly due to the lack of rural development. The MDGs do not take into account a multidimensional approach to poverty, overlooking the link between poverty eradication and inequality, which requires redistribution policies.

In Cyprus, where the MDGs failed to account for disparities in initial conditions, they also "exhibit an agenda and not a strategy for development. The MDG agenda does not present an overview of the structural causes of poverty and social exclusion. Thus, the emphasis placed on "outcomes" rather than on the actual "processes" that lead to development is perceived by many as the main weakness. And in Finland: "Several problems hindering the achievement of the MDGs are rooted in the structures of the global economic system, which discriminates against developing countries and in other structural biases based on such things as gender or ethnicity. Setting up a new agenda will be futile if these structures of impoverishment are not addressed. Other deficiencies have been a closed and donor-led formulation process, the impossible reduction of broad structural problems into eight goals, the inability to take into account the special

needs of fragile states, and the lack of parallel goals for rich countries. Both extreme poverty and extreme levels of wealth hinder more equitable global development; in order to diminish inequality we need to address both poverty and wealth in their structural terms.”

In Paraguay, too: “The MDGs have a reductionist view, leaving aside goals of human life as well as international agreements and commitments such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the various summits and conferences on decent work, population and sustainable development. They focus on results and not on the structural causes; they do not address all the dimensions that make people poor or vulnerable. Nevertheless, on the positive side the Paraguayan coalition sees the MDGs as a “valuable tool for monitoring the few commitments made by the State towards Paraguayan citizenship.”

Protest and propose

Malaysia is one of the countries depicted as on track to achieve most of the MDGs by 2015. But the national Social Watch report concludes that “when the achievements are disaggregated and examined more closely, it is apparent that much more needs to be done.” Moreover, a proposed trade agreement, namely the proposed U.S.-led Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) now poses a risk to all efforts at improving the socio-economic welfare and future of all Malaysians. The proposed TPPA, which Malaysia is negotiating with 10 other countries, as well as the proposed European Union-Malaysia free trade agreement (FTA) pose a larger spectre of corporate-driven liberalization than previously seen or attempted.” These agreements threaten irreversible changes to the fabric of Malaysian public life by putting in place legally-binding mechanisms to tip the balance of policies, laws and regulations in favour of the protection of corporate interests.

The TPPA, in particular, would not only do away with nearly all tariffs among TPPA

countries, but would also commit their governments to reforms and protections for foreign investors, such as enhanced safeguards for intellectual property (IP) holders which will impact on agriculture, technology-related industries, health, education, etc., freedom to carry out profit-making operations with minimal restrictions which raise environmental concerns, and limitations on state-owned enterprises, with implications for government-linked companies with socio-economic prerogatives. In addition, the TPPA’s investor-to-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism would allow private foreign corporations to sue governments in international arbitration tribunals for any act, policy or law – including those put in place to protect the environment or public health – that the corporations argue have “expropriated,” or threaten to expropriate, their investments, profits and even expected profits.

As the crisis lingers, in many countries a risks is perceived that citizens may become disillusioned with democracies that do not deliver on their promises. In Hungary, the Social Watch report dramatically denounces the development of “a system that has turned against the democratic ideals of the world.” This adds that “political life is characterized by a murderous policy divergence, confrontation and a dangerous ideology-based polarization. The majority of the society is struggling with unjust and unequal relationships without even the hope offered by mutual solidarity.” However, this is not happening without resistance and civil society organizations, progressive groups and individuals have already started to form new coalitions of civic groups, movements, trade unions and opposition parties. The CSOs of the Hungarian Social Forum Network actively participates in these new movements.

In Malaysia, a nascent ‘green movement’ steered by grassroots civil society leaders is being empowered by tens of thousands of ordinary citizens who have not been cowed from rallying onto the streets of Malaysia to make their concerns known. The historic scale of the green movement has demonstrated that environmental issues, among other public interest

concerns, can no longer be dismissed by invoking ‘Malaysia’s development’ aspirations as trumping over socio-economic, political and civic rights. The Government must address them straight on as a systemic problem of lack of transparency, and disregard for people’s rights and the environment.

Similarly, in Slovenia, high levels of corruption and the fraudulent behaviour of key figures of the economic and political elite, combined with a falling quality of life for the majority have led to mounting discontent. Resentment and outrage first exploded in Maribor, where a combination of national and local factors contributed to massive protests against the mayor and members of the town council. The Facebook group “Franc Kangler should resign as Mayor of Maribor” got more than 40,000 supporters (in a town that has a population of 95,000) and mobilized the first massive protests.

Inspired by the sheer force and scale of protests, other towns quickly followed suit. The banners of protestors and group statements carry divergent, yet clear messages. The revolt is both local (after the first uprising in Maribor, revolts took place in 27 other towns) and national, systemic and personal (against mayors and the current government). A minor yet important component was also the international dimension with some demands for withdrawal from NATO and protests against the EU.

While the revolt against political figures, joined under the common slogan “Gotof je!” (You are finished!) was predominant, protestors also called for systemic change – such as the end of party politics, corruption, theft of common goods, casino capitalism and exploitation of workers. The response from the political elite was not surprising. The ruling party called the protestors zombies from the socialist regime, mercenaries of the opposition and marionettes of “godfathers in the background.” A common criticism from government and often repeated in the subservient mass media was that the protests have no clear message and offer no solutions. While the demonstrations themselves were more contra than pro

anything in particular the parallel insurgence of people's initiatives and civic movements has introduced a plethora of highly constructive proposals spanning the full spectrum of necessary shifts in orientation. The message of the uprisings was clear – the revolt is much more than just a protest against the current government and mayors, it is a revolt against the entire establishment.

In a study titled "World Protests 2006-2013," economic policy analysts Isabel Ortiz and Sara Burke examined strikes, demonstrations, rallies, riots, road blockages, occupations and other protest actions in almost 90 countries worldwide. Those in 2010 were double the number in 2006 and doubled again in the first half of 2013, including 15 with over 1 million people participating. Between 2006 and 2013, there were 70 events with global demands, but nine out of ten were directed at national governments. These occurred worldwide, but were more numerous in the high-income countries as a result of the financial and economic crisis and its aftermath, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean. In the Arab world the greatest number of recorded protests took place before the Arab uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia. The majority of the violent riots happened in low-income countries, almost half of them in Sub-Saharan Africa, mainly as a result of sudden increases in food and energy prices. The largest demonstrations happened in Egypt, where 17 million people took the streets against President Mohamed Morsi before his overthrow by the military, and in India, with a 100 million demonstrators

against poverty and inequality. In some cases, demands grew, as was the case in Brazil, where huge marches against the price of public transport turned into protests against corruption.

The authors cataloged 843 protests in four categories. In over half the total (488), protests were motivated by issues of economic justice, against austerity measures, unemployment, poverty, taxes and inequality. Over 40 percent (376) were directed against the political system, protesting corruption, demanding democracy, justice and transparency. Global justice was the generic theme of 311 protests, directed specifically against the IMF and other international financial institutions, trade agreements or to protect the environment. Finally, 302 events aimed at gaining or defending rights, including ethnic/indigenous/racial rights; right to the Commons (digital, land, cultural, atmospheric); labour rights; women's rights; right to freedom of assembly/speech/press; religious issues; rights of lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered people (LGBT); immigrants' rights; and prisoners' rights.

The authors identify two "jumps" in the growing number of protests over five years. The first, in 2007, relates to the increase in fuel and food prices resulting from the global financial crisis and the second, in 2010, coincides with the expansion of the austerity measures worldwide. In 2013, at least 119 countries were experiencing cuts in government spending as a result of increased public debt (in many cases after rescuing failed banks) and lower economic growth. Globally, only

two in five people of working age were employed and 900 million workers fail to escape poverty due to low wages. Austerity measures implemented in 2010 and 2013 include tax increases (mainly in socially unjust direct taxes like VAT), elimination of subsidies, reduction of wages of civil servants, labor flexibilization or reforms of the pension system.

"Protests that appear random are linked by a set of policies adopted by Ministries of Finance and generally advised by IMF surveillance missions," conclude the authors. In contrast, the second group of events is more subtly linked: "The occupation of Puerta del Sol in Madrid (calling for "¡Democracia Real YA!"), Syntagma Square in Athens ("Demokratia!") and Zuccotti Park in New York ("Democracy Now!") spread because the grievances in one place—frustration with politics as usual and a lack of trust in the usual political actors, left and right, coupled with a willingness even on the part of the middle classes to embrace direct actions—resonated in the other places. Frustration with politics as usual and politicians, coupled with a willingness even on the part of the middle classes to embrace direct actions, led thousands of people to occupy public spaces in large assemblies that became experiences of democracy and a new form of protest, based on principles of autonomy and solidarity."

Almost four in ten protests achieved some satisfaction of their demands. The "contagion" of examples and the non-satisfaction of the craving for real democracy and economic justice is likely to feed further movements. ■

Core Principles, Universal Goals

The debates on a post-2015 development agenda offer the opportunity to (re)address well-being and justice in societies in a holistic way. Given the economic, social and ecological challenges in the world, this is urgently needed.

The present framework centering on the MDGs and the related strategies does not provide adequate answers to the global problems, be they accelerated global warming, the growing gap between rich and poor, the financialization of the world economy or disrespect for human rights.

The discussions about any Post-2015 Agenda must address the structural obstacles and political barriers that prevented the realization of the MDGs. Without an honest assessment of these obstacles and barriers any so called “new” development goals will remain a paper tiger.

The Post-2015 Agenda needs to be based on shared principles and values. The following eight principles can serve as a normative basis for a future development agenda:

1. Solidarity principle. Solidarity is a widely accepted principle to govern the relationship of citizens within a country. Central to this concept is the equality of persons and their shared responsibility for a common good. In the notion of solidarity, assistance is not an act of charity, but a right of every woman, man and child.

2. Do-no-harm Principle. Originally a key principle of medical ethics, this principle has been included in humanitarian principles of UNICEF since 2003, and it has been adopted by major humanitarian organizations in their codes of conduct. In essence, the commitment to implement policies in a way that they do no harm to people or nature should be regarded as a guiding principle in all policy areas and at all levels.

3. Principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. By acknowledging the responsibility developed countries bear in view of the pressures they place on the global

Reflection Group

The Civil Society Reflection Group on Global Development Perspectives is an alliance of civil society groups, networks and foundations, including Third World Network, DAWN, the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation, Global Policy Forum, terre des hommes, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and Social Watch.

The Group aims to assess conventional and alternative models of development and well-being, reconsider

development goals and indicators, draw conclusions for future development strategies and provide specific policy recommendations to support a holistic, right-based approach of global development and well-being. The six Universal Sustainability Goals described here have been proposed by the Group, based on its analysis of the core common principles and values already approved by the international community. ■

environment, this principle goes beyond the principle of ‘special and differential treatment’ based on economic capabilities and needs. It applies at regional, subnational and even communal levels: those who can bear more burdens have to contribute more to the well-being of their communities – either through progressive taxation or practical action.

4. ‘Polluter pays’ principle. While this principle is widely acknowledged in international environmental law, it should be applied in other areas as well. In the context of the recent financial crisis, many –including European Commissioner Michel Barnier—asked for the ‘polluters’ – that is, the banks and the financial industry – to bear the costs.

5. Precautionary principle. In the absence of a scientific consensus on the impacts an action or policy has on people or nature, the burden of proof that it is not harmful falls on its proponents. policy. This principle is also laid down in the Rio Declaration, which says: *“In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing costeffective measures to*

prevent environmental degradation,” and is part of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

6. Subsidiarity principle. Political decisions must always be taken at the lowest possible administrative and political level, and hence as close to the citizens concerned as possible. It recognizes the inherent democratic right to self-determination for people, communities and nations, but only as long as its exercise does not infringe on similar rights of others. Therefore, it must not be misused as an argument against central governmental action at national or international levels, but must always be applied in combination with the other principles, in particular the solidarity principle.

7. Principle of free, prior and informed consent. According to this principle, communities have the right to give or withhold their consent to proposed projects and actions by governments or corporations that may affect their livelihood and the lands they customarily own, occupy or otherwise use.

8. Principle of peaceful dispute settlement. This is a core element of the UN Charter, which says in Article 2: *“All Members shall settle their international disputes by*

peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.” Deriving from the most basic human right to a dignified life, this principle also applies to the relationships between states and people as well as among people themselves.

In the Millennium Declaration, governments committed themselves to the following values:

- **Freedom.** Men, women and children have the right to live their lives in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice. Democratic and participatory governance based on the will of the people best assures these rights. But there are also limits to freedom – namely where the freedom of our peers is touched.
- **Equality.** No individual and no nation or group must be denied the opportunity to participate in and to benefit from development. Equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured. Equality also includes the concept of intergenerational justice – that is, the recognition that the present generation shall only meet its needs in a way that does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- **Diversity.** Human beings must respect one another, in all their diversity of belief, culture, language, looks, sexual orientation and gender. Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. A culture of peace and dialogue in mutual learning should be actively promoted.
- **Respect for nature.** Respect must be shown in the conduct towards all living species. This also applies to the use of natural resources and the ecosystems as a whole. But respect for nature means much more than sound management of the human environment: it means that all living species have intrinsic rights. They should not be regarded as objects but as subjects whose value goes beyond use and exchange.

Governments have generally given their approval to these principles and values.

However, they need to be translated into legally enshrined rights and duties. Here, the universal system of human rights plays a key role, providing key principles such as progressive realization of human rights, maximum available resources, nonretrogression and extraterritorial obligations.

A rights-based social contract also requires the Rule of Law being more than the law by rulers or rule *by* law. In the 2012 *Declaration on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels*, member States reaffirmed their “*commitment to the rule of law and its fundamental importance for political dialogue and cooperation among all States and for the further development of the three main pillars upon which the United Nations is built: international peace and security, human rights and development.*”

Despite the commitment to achieve the international development goals, trade, investment and monetary rules and policies have too often exacerbated poverty and inequalities. The obsession with growth, backed up by the dominant economic regime, provides the drive to exploit nature, rely on fossil fuels and deplete biodiversity, undermining the provision of essential services.

Countries compete in a race to the bottom, offering lower taxes and cheaper labor so as to attract investments. Tax havens allow for tax evasion; global, bilateral and regional investment and trade agreements have undermined social, environmental and human rights standards and have reduced the policy space of governments. These policies have strengthened the power of investors and big corporations through deregulation, trade and financial liberalization, tax cuts and exemptions, and they have weakened the role of the state and its ability to promote human rights and sustainability.

No other sector in society has gained more rights globally and locally than ‘big business,’ be it national or transnational. The Post-2015 Agenda should lead to structural transformations instead of being led by players whose advice has taken us down paths that are unsustainable.

The realization of Universal Sustainability Goals requires more than money. It is the regulatory and institutional framework at national and international levels that counts. For example, it may accelerate or prevent processes of impoverishment, influence

consumption and production patterns and promote or stifle democratization processes.

An Integrated System of Universal Sustainability Goals

The formulation of Universal Sustainability Goals should set out from a critical stock-taking of the strengths and weaknesses of the MDGs, and address the problems mentioned above. This ensures that the Universal Sustainability Goals capture an holistic development approach and reflect the scope of the Millennium Declaration; are valid for all countries of the world, not only the “developing countries”; consider regional, national and subnational differences; do not fall short of codified human rights, including the economic, social and cultural rights; address the planetary boundaries; define desired results, necessary (financial) resources, comprehensive technology assessment systems, and formulas for burden sharing and user rights. They should be based on meaningful indicators of socioeconomic disparities using alternative ways to measure well-being and societal progress beyond GDP.

An integrated system of Universal Sustainability Goals could comprise six dimensions, which overlap and are partly interdependent:

1. Dignity and human rights for all
2. Equity, equality and justice
3. Respect for nature and the planetary boundaries
4. Peace through disarmament, demilitarization and nonviolent dispute settlement
5. Fair economic and financial systems
6. Democratic and participatory decision-making structures

Absolute goals and boundaries

The internationally codified rights and obligations and the ecological boundaries are by their very essence absolute goals, universally valid and not time-bound. They apply to all people, not only to a section of the world population. Their achievement is premised on tackling and overcoming structural barriers. Thus the right to food implies that everyone in the world should have enough to eat and it is not acceptable to just reduce the proportion of people suffering from hunger by a certain year or ignore the impacts of the financial sector on food prices.

Differentiated targets

In the path towards reaching global absolute goals, differentiated targets should be defined in democratic decision-making processes at regional, national and local levels. Specific groups facing intersecting inequalities based on gender, age, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, abilities, and so on should be prioritized. In this manner, the different socioeconomic contexts and the specific social situation of a country are to be taken into account. Such targets should also be defined similarly for the global level with regard to global commons.

These differentiated targets should respect the human rights principles of progressive realization and non-regression. This means that instead of fixing a date when the goals have to be achieved, the variables are the degree and speed of progress in achieving the absolute goals. Rather than defining new “2015 Goals” that would subsequently be referred to as “2030 Goals” or “2050 Goals,” governments commit themselves to continuous progress defined for a shorter period of, say, five years. This can take place within the framework of a “pledge and review procedure” in which the individual states commit themselves to achieve specified targets at national level within a period of five years and subsequently have them independently monitored and assessed.

Any UN review process should address not only national performance but also global obstacles, for example, those posed by the intellectual property right regime in achieving the goal of universal access to medicines.

Meaningful indicators

Experience with the MDGs has illustrated how important are the choice of meaningful indicators and the limiting or threshold values. For example, the “one dollar a day” threshold does not accurately measure a country’s true state of poverty. This also applies to the exclusive use of national average values. The selection of suitable indicators will be crucial and should be chosen with a view to their universal applicability.

Indicators and public access to the data are influential in shaping policy priorities, budget allocation and holding authorities accountable; data collection and

dissemination are per se an expression of political commitment to transformation.

Indicators of distribution and inequality should be designed to run like a thread through the system of goals. The Gini Coefficient and the Gender Equity Index developed by Social Watch could be possible indicators for the second goal dimension (promoting equity and justice). In addition, the indicators ought to be disaggregated according to income or wealth and gender. What is the quality of water supply for the poorest tenth of the population in comparison to the richest tenth? What differences are there between the “ecological footprint” or CO₂ emissions of the poorest and the richest income groups? Violations of women’s rights could be identified more easily, too. What differences are there between men and women in terms of eligibility for social security systems in a country? How is landed property distributed among men and women? How do men and women differ in terms of participation in political decision-making processes?

In using the Universal Sustainability Goals as communication and mobilization tools, it might be useful to identify aggregated coefficients or indices for the six goal dimensions. Examples to explore are the Gross National Happiness Index and the Gender Equity Index, as well as the Ecological Footprint.

Universal Periodic Review on Sustainability

An integrated system of Universal Sustainability Goals is not limited to targets and indicators. Its political effectiveness also includes mechanisms for the monitoring of progress or regression in achieving the goals. Here, the monitoring mechanism that already exists in the form of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in the human rights field could serve as a model. An extended UPR on Sustainability, complementary to the existing one, could be adopted that encompasses all dimensions of the Universal Sustainability Goals.

Its *modus operandi* could follow the IBSA (Indicators, Benchmarks, Scoping and Assessment) mechanism, which comprises four steps to check whether a country is fulfilling its obligation to comply with the realization of the economic, social and cultural

rights: 1) the indicators for the assessment of progress are defined; 2) the country defines benchmarks that are to be achieved within the prescribed period; a review at UN level of whether reasonable objectives have been set; and 4) an assessment of the achievement of the goals. Then the cycle starts again.

The assessment procedure will be based on information provided by governments as well as civil society and other independent sources. A review of this kind offers a “coherence check” covering a country’s entire policies and would put to the test its compliance with universal sustainability principles and human rights as well as the extraterritorial obligations of the international community. The High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development could be the appropriate body to implement the UPR and make this a meaningful body.

On the Way to the 2015 Summit

The proposed framework of Universal Sustainability Goals as part of a Post-2015 Agenda is comprehensive. Some have warned of a danger of overloading the Post-2015 Agenda and are calling for a limited focus on poverty eradication and social development in the countries of the South – and hence *de facto* for a continuation of the present MDG approach.

However, a reductionist approach of this kind would mean engaging in business as usual and holding out in the same patterns of dealing with problems sector by sector, which has so far prevented solutions to the global problems. This would be the wrong course to pursue and would not do justice to the “multiple crisis” with its interdependences. If the aim is a holistic development agenda, which is what both the UN and governments as well as civil society organizations have emphasized again and again, then this has to be reflected in the discussion and negotiation processes taking place up to 2015. ■

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. ■

Eradicating poverty by lowering the bar

World Bank statistics, using a definition of poverty based only on income and with a very low extreme poverty line (currently estimated at USD 1.25/day) substantiates the claim that the first Millennium Development Goal was already achieved in 2010, primarily due to poverty reduction in China. Yet, while extreme poverty so defined is the key aspect in all assessments of the MDGs, 75 of the 161 countries categorized as “developing” lack available data to assess progress on this indicator. If the approach was successful, goes the implicit logic, it makes sense to continue it beyond 2015, the year in which the MDGs are meant to be reached, with a small set of goals centered around poverty eradication and a target of “zero poverty in a generation,” that is, by 2030. This is precisely what the World Bank has already decided it would do.

In fact, several studies show that the speed of progress towards several key indicators, such as reducing infant mortality or reaching gender parity on primary school enrollment, has slowed down since 2000, rather than being boosted by the political commitment expressed in the MDGs. Total world exports multiplied almost five times over the last 20 years, growing from a total value of USD 781 billion in 1990 to USD 3.7 trillion in 2010. Over the same period, the average income of the world’s average inhabitant more than doubled, from USD 4,080 per year in 1990 to USD 9,120 in 2010. Yet the growth in trade and wealth is not reflected in similar progress along social indicators. The Basic Capabilities Index (BCI) computed by Social Watch, which averages infant mortality rates, the number of births attended by trained personnel and enrollment rates in primary school, all key components of the MDGs, moved up only 7 percentage points between 1990 and 2010, which is very little progress. And over this period, progress was faster in the first decade than the second – increasing over four percentage points between 1990 and 2000 and of barely three percentage

points between 2000 and 2010. This trend is the opposite of that for trade and income, both of which grew faster after 2000 than in the previous decade. Moreover, slowing progress on social indicators will only get worse as the impact of the global financial, economic food and energy crisis is gradually being registered in internationally comparable statistics.

The obvious explanation of this mismatch between a growing economy and slow social progress is increased inequalities, both between and within countries.

The distinction between “absolute poverty” in low-income developing countries and that of “relative poverty” in advanced economies was formulated in 1973 by Robert McNamara, then president of the World Bank, and the absolute poverty line was set at 30 cents of the US dollar per day. Adjusted for inflation, 30 cents in 1973 amounts to USD 1.60 in today’s dollars. Yet the current line, is now USD 1.25, hardly enough for “the elimination of malnutrition and illiteracy, the reduction of infant mortality, and the raising of life-expectancy standards to those of the developed nations” as envisioned in 1973. It might merely keep a person from starving, which is the new definition of “extreme poverty.”

According to the World Bank’s own projections, it is likely that the proportion of people

under the USD 1.25 line will be less than 10% by 2030 if current growth rates are maintained and inequality does not worsen. The message to the governments of the world is, therefore, that nothing needs to change to win this war. So why are we not celebrating? People around the world do not rejoice because the poverty they experience and perceive is not the same as that measured by the Bank, one that remains fixed even as people rise above it.

The founder of modern economics, Adam Smith, wrote in the 18th century that “by necessities I understand, not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without...” At a time when technological change occurs faster than it did 80 years ago, it makes little sense not to allow the poverty line to increase with actual wealth, but to freeze it at the levels established in 1973, adjusted below the inflation rate.

If the poverty line moved according to income, and if we assume that the very low USD 1/day line was correct in 1990 (the baseline date for MDG1), this line should currently be located far above USD 2/day, as the world per capita income has more than doubled between 1990 and 2010. Which

Serbia: A fast way to reduce poverty

According to the 2009 National Report on the Realization of MDGs, the poverty rate in 2007 was halved in Serbia in comparison to 2002 (14% vs. 6.6%) and the extreme poverty rate was close to zero. That would have been an overachievement in terms of the MDGs. Yet, the latest data have shown that this positive trend was only a result of the methodology used for measuring

poverty. The 2012 Report, based on EU standards, shows that in 2010, 9.2 percent of the population lived below the absolute poverty line, up from 8.8 percent in 2006, while the Gini coefficient of inequalities rose from 32.9 to 33.0. The unemployment rate in Serbia is among the highest in Europe. ■

Mexico: A human rights perspective is needed

The UNDP places Mexico among countries with the highest level of development, but ECLAC statistics on poverty and homelessness show that while Mexico was below the Latin American average on rural and urban poverty in 2000, this figure rose to 36 percent in 2010, way above the regional average of 29 percent. This means that of Mexico's 112 million inhabitants in 2010, over 40 million were poor.

This figure is conservative when compared to the numbers provided by the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (Coneval), which uses eight factors to measure poverty: income, education, access to health services, access to social security, quality of housing, basic services at home, access to food and social integration.

Coneval defines *poverty* as affecting the population whose income is less than the requirement of a well-being line (monetary value of a basket of food and essential goods and services)

and lacking in at least one of six social deprivation areas. Extreme poverty is defined as affecting those that suffer deprivation in three or more of those areas and whose income is below the monetary value of the food basket. Thus, Coneval estimated that in 2010, about half of the Mexican population lived in poverty (i.e., 52 million people) and just over a tenth lived in *extreme poverty* (some 13 million people). Of the remaining population, nearly three in ten (32 million people) were considered *vulnerable*, as they had at least one social deprivation, even when their income was above the welfare line. Only a fifth of the population was not considered poor or vulnerable.

According to the Mexican Social Watch report, "to achieve significant and sustainable change in the lives of people and communities, and not only reduce gaps in statistics, it is essential to rethink current paradigms of social and economic development from the perspective of human rights." ■

means that a much larger proportion of the world's population than what the World Bank estimates lives below "essential decency". Yet to substantially improve their lives would still be an achievable goal, since average global income now equals about USD 30 per day per person.

Does it make any sense to raise the bar of development objectives when the major advanced economies are in recession or growing very slowly? Won't the public in those countries reject the notion of spending more abroad when austerity is cutting down social expenditures at home? For a global agenda to obtain the public's support, which is at the root of political commitment,

both the poverty extremes and the inequalities that account for mass mobilizations from the "indignados" of Europe to the Arab Spring to the Occupy movement in the US, need to be addressed.

Will the global community today be able to agree on such an ambitious agenda? If the non-starvation level as defined by the "extreme poverty" line is inadequate, how can "essential decency" be defined internationally? As early as in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights combined both the aspiration of freedom from fear and freedom of want. With the exception of sustainability, which can be constructed as the rights of future generations, all other goals

are already spelled out in the Human Rights instruments. This includes all civil and political rights, equality between women and men, rights of the child as well as the right to food, water, housing, health care education, the right to work and rights at work, and the right to social security. Each state is responsible to progressively achieving those rights "to the maximum of available resources." For a rights-based approach the question is not what the goal is, because the goals are already spelled out as rights, but *when* will they be progressively realized (and governments should ensure that there is no regression, even in times of economic crisis).

The road ahead: Monitoring and accountability

In a letter to the negotiators preparing for the Rio+20 Summit on sustainable development, two dozen special rapporteurs of the UN Council, the globally most trusted independent experts on Human Rights, expressed that "commitments will remain empty promises without effective monitoring and accountability."

Such accountability should be both international and domestic. Moreover, monitoring should be carried out through the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council or a similar ad hoc mechanism. Nationally, independent monitoring bodies should be created or strengthened "that enable civil society participation not only in defining the indicators to measure progress, but also in providing information to evaluate implementation."

In a highly unequal world, "mutual accountability" as defined in the aid agenda is not an appropriate mechanism. Monitoring developing countries' performance should not be handed to donors or carried out within a donor-recipient framework. It should be the role of the carefully balanced human rights mechanisms. Unless a set of rigorous monitoring and accountability mechanisms are integrated into the new framework, we are likely to witness an ineffectual development agenda that fails to deliver. ■

Gender Roundtable

What are the key gender justice issues today?

Kate McInturff (Research Associate, Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives, Ottawa): There has been a lot of talk about ‘big data’ and how wonderful it is and I think it’s actually quite concerning that we’ve seen not only the CEO of Unilever, Paul Polman, on the SG’s High Level Panel on the Post 2015 Agenda, but now this new panel of private sector CEOs who will serve as a leadership advisory group for UN Women. Perhaps I’m being too cynical but I think the interests these corporations have in big data is not only to know more about gender inequality and address it, but in selling more soap and the like to more women.

The key with big data is to make sure that the data is open and transparent, and that it’s also being returned back to the people’s lives that are being described in the data. I’ve heard representatives of the high level panel talk about how they’re going to collect data on the poorest, most vulnerable, most marginalized people but there’s no talk about how we return the data to those people. I think that would be a note of caution going forward.

Barbara Adams (Senior Policy Advisor, Global Policy Forum, New York): I think we have some crucial issues in terms of inequalities. We’ve been talking about gender inequalities from a gender justice point of view for a long time. This is now more and more on the agenda, but it tends to be there without specificity and it tends to be emphasized only from an income angle. We need to keep looking at how we measure inequalities, income and non-income, very specifically. What I think is at stake at the moment is the future of the approach to development and what is happening is that it is becoming more and more voluntary, more and more private, very short-term interventions where we can get immediate results. It is totally undermining the rights agenda. Even though we keep on saying rights, when you actually look at the practice, we’re increasingly just signing up for what you can do.

It is the same when it comes to inequalities among nations. In the UN debate on the Sustainable Development Goals, developed countries insisted that a stand-alone goal to ‘reduce inequality within and among countries’ proposed by developing countries to address such inequalities be merged into the goal on poverty, to read: “End poverty and reduce inequality in all their dimensions everywhere.” Despite the word ‘everywhere’ developed countries prefer to address inequalities within a goal on extreme poverty that does not commit them to reduce inequalities at home or help bridge the gap among nations.

Gigi Francisco (General Coordinator, Development Alternatives with Women for the New Era (DAWN), Manila): There is a tendency by states now to use ‘women’s rights’ versus ‘women’s human rights.’ And this totally negates the bodily rights and the sexual rights of women. ‘Women’s rights’ could mean anything under the sun. I also think it’s quite dangerous how governments play women’s rights vs women’s human rights in actual negotiations. This brings back everything that we had fought for in terms of the expansion of women’s human rights—particularly in the area of bodily rights. There is also backtracking in the area of discrimination against women and on the basis of sexual orientation and diverse gender identities. The concept of discrimination is now limited to women in terms of equality with men. And once again this is a very dangerous retrogression of not just women’s human rights but people’s human rights.

We also need to study the political economy of conflict—not just inter-state conflict, but also the increasing conflicts over natural resources, over energy resources as well as the impact on climate change and disasters. So, a big area for us at this point is looking at how the political economy of conflict affects women from all sides.

UN Women Announces Private Sector Leadership Advisory Council

The invitation-only Council is comprised of chief executives whose companies “demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting women and girls,” according to the UN Women press release. It will offer advice in three areas: accelerating women’s economic empowerment, ending violence against women and increasing funding for UN Women.

1. Mr. Jean-Paul Agon: Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, L’Oréal
2. Mr. Dominic Barton: Chief Executive Officer, McKinsey & Company
3. Mr. Lloyd C. Blankfein: Chairman & CEO, Goldman Sachs Group, Inc.
4. Ms. Maureen Chiquet: Global Chief Executive Officer, Chanel
5. Mr. Mark Cutifani: Chief Executive Officer, Anglo American plc
6. Mr. Rick Goings: Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, Tupperware Brands Corporation
7. Mr. Christopher Graves: Global Chief Executive Officer, Ogilvy Public Relations
8. Ms. Sally Kennedy: Chief Executive Officer, Publicis Dallas
9. Mr. Muhtar Kent: Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, The Coca-Cola Company
10. Mr. Paul Polman: Chief Executive Officer, Unilever

Zahra Bazzi (Programme Manager, Arab NGO Network for Development, Beirut): It is important to include women's rights and gender inequality specifically in the Post 2015 process to boost all aspects of women's rights. In the Arab region, women have always been at the heart of the civil society movement and have played key and active roles in the recent revolutions and uprisings. Arab countries signed and ratified all the international agreements on women's rights, including CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action—albeit with important reservations which we are trying to get lifted. Yet discrimination is ongoing.

Hanaa Edward (General Secretary, Iraqi Al-Amal Association, Baghdad): Discrimination within the constitution and laws—this is really what we are fighting against, especially in Arab states, where we are trying to review our constitutions and also to revolutionize personal status laws and the penal codes. These are really essential in the region, not only in Iraq. Recently, we have been fighting against the draft bill on Personal Status, which gives the legal right for a girl under nine years old to be married.

The breakdown in the rule of law is key at this time. We are seeing impunity for human rights violations, denials of access to justice, corruption and weak institutions of the state. The breakdown of peace and security leads to the increase of physical and sexual violence. This is now quite systemic, going beyond violence against individuals, already quite awful, to be part of deliberate efforts to dehumanize whole populations, and is a major priority for us.

The increasing power of tribes during unstable or transitional periods is also a priority. The tribes justify discrimination, polygamy and early and forced marriage by customs, traditions and religion. And even in Iraq we can speak about FGM in the Kurdistan region where about 72 percent of females are subject to this.

Akua Opokua Britwum (Convenor, Network of Women's Rights in Ghana, Accra): Our main concerns have been around women's leadership in institutions, including in government, such as the women's machinery in terms of policy and monitoring the adherence of the state to women's human rights

commitments. We have been struggling with how to strengthen these institutions to play a policy monitoring role and also to deliver in terms of women's concerns.

We perceive in Africa, and particularly in West Africa, the absence of consistent national policies to address women in the informal economy. Access to reliable income is one of the major ways to address inequality. When social protection and income support policies are linked to employment, women in the informal economy fall out. Most social protection is based on access to a consistent income. So we have to take on the issue of women in the informal economy, and place it squarely on the agenda.

We have been struggling with how cities can be developed in a way that recognizes the fundamental rights of women to carry out their activities in dignity, free from harassment. We are also struggling around security and the increased insecurity in West Africa—for example, how to stop the harassment of women at the border as a fall-out of trade policies that do not take women's activities into account.

Tanya Dawkins (Executive Director, Global-Local Links Project, Miami): In addition to these policies that have the potential to wipe out overnight the little access to funds and business that women have—is there a corresponding conversation about the social protection that women who were being placed in that situation would require?

Akua: There are conversations around social protection—in particular, around pension schemes and how they can provide for self-employed women. In Ghana there is a pilot scheme for the informal economy where workers can contribute to a pension. But what we are asking is that pension schemes be designed to protect those who are not able to make contributions.

Hanaa: In Iraq, which is an unstable situation, there is insecurity. But this is what I really feel so proud of: in the parliamentary elections in May, we elected 83 women. We have the electoral quota, which is in the constitution. But out of these 83 women, 22 of them were over the quota. They surpassed the quota. This is really a success for gender equality. Especially because they

earned the trust of the citizens. We feel that this was the first step. Concerning executive power—it is still the case that women are missing there.

Tanya: I've heard a lot of resonance around the theme of security. Security at multiple levels: economic, personal/physical, and, it wasn't articulated this way, but literally the security of democracy and democratic practices. There are assaults coming from so many different directions. For example, the changing face of civil society in places like the UN. And by changing face I mean the legitimization of multinational corporations, as just the same as civil society organizations working at the community level.

A subtext of what many have said is the issue of where accountability comes from, especially in this period when the trend is to move towards “let's celebrate what we can do and the rest we will figure out in the future”—as opposed to having increasingly ambitious and binding commitments and having the adequate accountability mechanisms to measure them.

Kate: One of the common themes is the adoption of the language of “women's rights” in the place of the actual empowerment of women. I've seen that in Canada's foreign policy. We've just had a huge global conference on Maternal and Child Health here in Canada. And our government has made another significant financial commitment and the government's commitment of funds, while very welcome and it is going to some marvelous programmes, precludes any funding for access to abortion.

If you look at all of the money being spent thus far, which amounts to over USD billion, a tiny fraction of it, goes towards any kind of family planning; in spite of all the things we know, not only about the reproductive rights guaranteed in the Cairo Declaration, but just the basic science of reducing maternal and child mortality, which the WHO has stated very clearly requires access to reproductive health services, including family planning and abortion.

For me that is a very clear example of a kind of “we are here for women” rhetoric that is actually quite disempowering. It also puts civil society in the awkward position of

having to say “we are against this, but we are for this.” Obviously, we are in favour of reducing maternal and child mortality, but doing it at the expense of sexual and reproductive rights is nonsense.

Barbara: We are seeing the erosion of the commitment to the rights approach, accompanied by a kind of agenda or narrative capture. The Canada example is a very interesting one, because the Canadian government pledge is actually not to a multilateral process that has any accountability mechanism attached to it, but is to another one of these “coalition of the willing” types of partnerships. It’s a very interesting way in which

governments like Canada are actually moving public funds, accountable presumably at the end to Canadian taxpayers, into an initiative with corporate partners, self-selected participants. The accountability is only to that partnership and it is totally divorced (unless it is in the partnership agreement) from the UN, and human rights, CEDAW, the Cairo Declaration, the Beijing Platform for Action and so on.

It is a really good example of the slip-page away from the commitment to rights, to a whole voluntary form of governance, where you are doing forum shopping and you have governments choosing which forum they want to be held accountable to.

Basically the one in which, you know, there is no real monitoring or challenge.

Gigi: The issue of intergenerational leadership in the feminist or women’s movement is also a concern here. With the backlash and derogation in human rights we feel that there are perceived difficulties in terms of true feminist leadership in the women’s movement.

Akua: Women’s groups need to strengthen accountability, to build civil society and the women’s movement worldwide, to develop strategies to make national governmental and international agenda setting mechanism responsive and answerable to women. ■

From the Social Watch national reports....

Afghanistan

UN estimates put school attendance in Afghanistan at about 6 million children, of which only one third are girls. Half of the school children attend classes in tents. Girls walking to or from school risk being assaulted with acid. Teachers have been killed and parents who allow girls to attend school have been attacked. Eighty-seven percent of Afghan women are illiterate.

Canada

Employment rates for working age Aboriginal men are 15 percent lower than for their non-Aboriginal counterparts in Canada. Aboriginal women’s employment rates are 5 percent lower yet. For every dollar earned by white Canadians, racialized Canadian workers earned only 81 cents. For every dollar earned by men in Canada, women earn 77 cents (working full-time).

South Korea

The female share of government officers increased from 34 percent in 2003 to 42 percent in 2010 in South Korea, but only 2 percent of board members of listed companies are women and no company has at least three female directors. In 2007, 49 percent of college graduates were female. However, Korea registers a gap of 39 percent between men and women’s salaries, double the OECD average.

Iraq

Although they are illegal under 15 years of age and between 15 and 18 years require special authorization from a judge, early marriages are still frequent in Iraq. Many girls between 11 and 15 years old enter into marriages outside the court in religious communities. An estimated 5 percent of girls marry before they are 15 years old and 22 percent before 18 years. Those girls sink into an illegal status that deprives them of education and health. On the other hand, tribal leaders justify the usual practice of forced marriages on traditional and cultural grounds.

Ghana

Despite free health care for pregnant women, maternal mortality ratios are still high in Ghana. According to the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs only one fourth of women in the lowest income quintile attend a health facility during childbirth. In rural areas, poor women, who tend to have large families (4-6 children) cannot access the free health services.

Privatizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda

The increasing influence of corporations over the UN development agenda is already evident: from the redefinition of Official Development Assistance (ODA) that will put more public funds in the hands of corporations, to the lack of accountability in the various agreements between corporations and UN agencies, to the privileged access that big corporate players have gotten in the post 2015 development agenda and may get over international norm-setting.

According to World Bank and Fortune Magazine data, in 2011 of the 175 largest global economic “entities” 110 (over 60%) were corporations. The revenues of Royal Dutch Shell, Exxon Mobil and Wal-Mart were larger than the GDP of a hundred national economies, more than half the world’s countries. In that list Royal Dutch Shell is on par with Norway and dwarfed the GDP of Thailand, Denmark or Venezuela.

At the same time, increasing market concentration has put great power in the hands of a small number of these corporations. A study of 43,000 transnational corporations by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology identified a small group of companies, mainly in the financial industry, with disproportionate power over the global economy. According to the study, “transnational corporations form a giant bow-tie structure and ... a large portion of control flows to a small tightly-knit core of financial institutions.” At the centre of the bow-tie, a core of 147 companies control 40 percent of the network’s wealth, while just 737 control 80 percent.

As they grow larger and more powerful, transnational corporations have become a major actor in global policy debates on poverty eradication, development, the environment and human rights. At a time when governments seem unable or unwilling to resolve pressing challenges in multilateral settings, business is positioning itself as an alternative solution, more flexible, efficient and un-bureaucratic than states. Corporations, governments and various civil society organizations are promoting multi-stakeholder initiatives and public-private partnerships as innovative models to tackle global issues.

Redesigning the World

The World Economic Forum’s report on the future of global governance, “Global Redesign,” posits that a globalized world is best managed by a coalition of multinational corporations, nation-states and select civil society organizations. The report argues that states no longer are “the overwhelmingly dominant actors on the world stage” and that “the time has come for a new stakeholder paradigm of international governance.” In terms of the environment, for example, it sees an “opportunity to achieve a step change in global environmental governance by focusing not on the traditional agenda (UN structure, new legal frameworks) but on a new agenda to build “practical, often public-private, mechanisms.”

The report’s vision includes a “public-private” UN, in which certain specialized agencies would operate under joint state and non-state governance systems, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization through a “Global Food, Agriculture and Nutrition Redesign Initiative.” This model also assumes that some issues would be taken off the UN agenda to be addressed by “plurilateral, often multi-stakeholder, coalitions of the willing and able.”

Similarly, the “Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations,” an initiative designed to “identify ways to overcome today’s impasse in key economic, climate, trade, security, and other negotiations” and chaired by former World Trade Organization head Pascal Lamy, proposes to establish a “C20-C30-C40 Coalition” made up of G20 countries, 30 companies, and 40 cities that would work together to “counteract climate change.” Although this “coalition of the working,” based on “inclusive unilateralism,” would report to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, it would not rely on binding commitments. ■

Indeed, one of the most prominent features of the Secretary-General’s report on the Post 2015 Agenda is the high degree of trust and hope he puts on new so-called partnerships between state and non-state actors and corporations in particular.

The corporate sector has been active in several processes and initiatives influencing the Post-2015 Agenda, including the High-Level Panel (HLP), the Global Compact, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and, to a lesser extent, the Open Working Group (OWG) and the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

High Level Panel

The HLP, which the Secretary-General set up in 2012 to advise on the global development framework beyond 2015, includes “leaders from governments, civil society and the private sector, among them Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever, and Betty Maina, CEO of Kenya’s

Association of Manufacturers. Its 2013 report, “A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development,” followed a series of consultations with “stakeholders,” including the chief executive officers of 250 companies in 30 countries, with annual revenues exceeding USD 8 trillion.

Global Compact

The UN Global Compact is a voluntary corporate responsibility initiative designed to “mainstream” a set of ten principles related to human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption in corporate activities. It is open to all businesses that commit to respect these principles, and the 7,000 participating companies are required to report on their progress in implementation. In early 2011, the Compact launched the Global Compact LEAD, which currently has 55 members (including Bayer AG, Heineken, Lafarge, Tata, Coca-Cola, and

Vale), committed to implementing the “Global Compact Blueprint for Corporate Sustainability,” a roadmap to achieve the ten principles.

The Global Compact feeds directly into the post-2015 process through its report to the Secretary-General and promotes the active participation of its LEAD initiative members in the post-2015 discussions. It is considered one of the official “work streams” of the post-2015 process, which gives member companies a significant channel for influence.

Sustainable Development Solutions Network

Launched by the Secretary-General in August 2012 as a way to mobilize “scientific and technical expertise from academia, civil society, and the private sector” to support sustainable development problem solving, the Network is another of the official “work streams” in the post-2015 process and the source of one of the four official reports considered in the Secretary-General’s MDG/Post-2015 report in 2013.

The Network has 12 expert Thematic Groups, one of which, led by Peter Bakker of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and Klaus Leisinger of the Novartis Foundation, focuses on “Redefining the Role of Business for Sustainable Development.” With 21 representatives of corporations and business associations in the Leadership Council (including Anglo American, Citigroup, Siemens and Unilever), the Network’s findings are heavily shaped by views from the corporate sector.

What is troubling about these two initiatives is that they were both launched by the Secretary-General, outside of the inter-governmental process. The Global Compact began as a policy speech prepared for former Secretary-General Kofi Annan and as such, in the opinion of the UN watchdog, the Joint Inspection Unit, it lacked a “clear and articulated mandate” and moreover, in light of its extra-budgetary funding, it put the UN in a risky situation where “any external group or actor(s) may divert attention from the strategic goals agreed to promote interests which may damage the reputation of the United Nations.”

Open Working Group and High-Level Political Forum

Although the corporate sector has not been prominently involved in the OWG and HLPF

until now, business participates in consultations around these processes through the Major Groups format, which has also been used to facilitate interaction between civil society and the OWG. The International Chamber of Commerce, one of the “Organizing Partners” for the Business and Industry Major Group, has spoken several times on behalf of the group. Statements for the Business and Industry Major Group were also delivered by Norwegian fertilizer company Yara International (a member of the Global Compact LEAD group) on behalf of the Farming First Coalition (a multi-stakeholder initiative), and by One Acre Fund, an NGO which takes “a business approach to helping 130,000 smallholder farmers in East Africa increase their incomes and reach household food security.”

A significant number of companies involved in the post-2015 agenda process are active in the resource extraction, technology, chemical and pharmaceutical, and food and beverages sectors. Among the Global Compact LEAD group, for example, mining, oil and gas industries are well represented, with companies including Total, Vale and ENI. This is also true in the SDSN Leadership Council and Thematic Groups, which include representatives from Anglo American and Anglo-Gold Ashanti (mining) and BG East Africa (oil and gas). The food and beverages industry is represented by Unilever, Nestlé and Heineken, and the pharmaceutical and chemicals industry by BASF, Bayer, Novartis and others.

Unilever CEO Paul Polman is perhaps the most prominent corporate figure in the post-2015 process, being a member of the HLP, the SDSN Leadership Council and the board of the Global Compact. Gavin Neath, Senior Advisor to Polman, is a member of the SDSN Thematic Group on agriculture. Unilever participates in the Global Compact LEAD group, in the advisory council to UN-Women and led the “private sector outreach for the post-2015 development agenda,” the outcome of which fed into the HLP report. In addition, Unilever is a member of both the World Business Council on Sustainable Development (of which Polman is vice-chair) and of the World Economic Forum, both involved in the post-2015 process.

Moreover, other private sector actors, such as “non-profit” business associations and philanthropic foundations may represent the concerns and interests of the corporate

world or facilitate their participation in the post 2015 process. Many UN institutions and governments actively promote the increased involvement of business actors in the UN.

In 2008, UNDP launched the “Business call to Action,” aimed at engaging business in achieving the MDGs. Partners include companies involved in the post-2015 process through the Global Compact and/or the SDSN, including Anglo American, Citigroup, Ericsson, Novartis and Yara International. UNDP’s Private Sector Division is also leading the “Growing Inclusive Markets” initiative, a “global multi-stakeholder research and advocacy initiative” that seeks to enable and inspire “the development of more inclusive business models around the globe.” Other parts of the UN have set up bilateral partnerships with corporate partners, including WFP, UNICEF and most recently UN Women.

What are the risks of growing corporate influence?

In a vision in which the corporate sector takes a central role in the future of development, the market-led economic system becomes the only way for individuals to relate to the world. Individuals are seen as consumers and entrepreneurs, but more rarely as citizens. In the HLP report, for instance, rural people are framed as workers and consumers, and not as full rights holders. When it mentions individual aspirations, it is by stressing “the potential for individual entrepreneurs to fulfill their dreams” and how government “must give people the assurance of personal safety (and) make it easy for them to follow their dreams and start a business.” The report only mentions “dreams” in this entrepreneurship context, suggesting that these are the only “dreams” of value in the new development agenda.

Making the “business case” for sustainable development conveys a vision of the world in which everything becomes an instrument to achieve growth and productivity. The reports, for instance, sometimes promote an instrumental view of women’s rights, education and health, although their “intrinsic value” is at times reaffirmed. The HLP report suggests that gender discrimination should be abolished so that “women can inherit and own property and run a business.” And in a list of what women should have access to, “financial services” come first, before “infrastructure” and “the full range of health services.”

Business language permeates the evaluation of progress towards sustainable development, suggesting that progress must be monetarily quantifiable and provide a good “return on investment” to justify efforts. The HLP report, for instance, notes that “every dollar invested in stopping chronic malnutrition returns USD 30 in higher lifetime productivity. Expanded childhood immunization improves health in later life, with benefits worth 20 times the cost. The value of the productive time gained when households have access to safe drinking water in the home is worth three times the cost of providing it.” This begs the question of what to do when necessary efforts do not constitute a “good investment.”

Particularly worrying is the way in which the reports promote the use of public money. The HLP report notes “the huge potential to use public money to catalyse and scale up private financing for sustainable development,” while the Global Compact report promotes “the leveraging of development assistance for private sector development.” The use of public resources to leverage private sector investment may be seen as a way to channel funding to innovative sectors of the economy, especially in countries where credit is hard to come by. However, a 2012 report by Eurodad found that, in cases of international funding from the European Investment Bank and the World Bank going to the private sector, almost half of the money spent went to support companies based in OECD countries and tax havens, and only 25 percent of all companies supported were domiciled in low-income countries.

Letting corporations off the hook, limiting the role of government

The reports’ recommendations adopt a business-friendly view of corporate regulation, noting that governments should offer incentives to “encourage” the private sector to move towards sustainability rather than legally binding regulations. They promote a soft approach to corporate accountability, relying on the willingness of large corporations to report on their impact and the voluntary commitments they have made. As ACORD International points out in its review of the HLP report, “the report argues that many of the goals and targets can be met by the actions and efforts of the private sector, but has very little on how the private sector will be genuinely accountable to those living in poverty.”

The HLP report states that “accountability must be exercised at the right level: governments to their own citizens, local governments to their communities, corporations to their shareholders, civil society to the constituencies they represent.” It maintains that shareholders can disinvest if firms do not adhere to industry standards and worker safety issues. This is a limited form of accountability based on the assumption that market forces will favour companies committed to sustainability over those which are not.

Governments’ role is limited in the report to building “enabling environments” in which business can thrive, with no recognition of the important role that governments play in holding corporations accountable. The Global Compact report similarly states that companies must pay attention to any negative impacts their operations may have on human rights, without mentioning that governments also have a responsibility to exert due diligence to prevent and provide remedy for human rights abuses. The soft approach to corporate responsibility does not only let corporations, but also governments, off the hook.

The UN Partnership Facility

How development is financed will shape the way that it takes place. Recognizing this, Brazilian Ambassador Guilherme Patriota deplored the “outsourcing of development responsibilities” in his statement to the General Assembly in February 2014 and announced his country opposition to the UN Partnership Facility (UNPF) proposed by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The new facility is intended to “scale up UN capacity to engage in transformative multi-stakeholder partnerships with the private sector, civil society, philanthropists and academia across a broader range of issue areas.” But as financing for the new institution will come from donors rather than from the regular UN budget (which is scrutinized by UN member countries), there are serious questions regarding its accountability and oversight.

Negotiations on a “new development agenda” to replace the MDGs are scheduled to begin in September 2014, allowing time for countries to study the issue. These will culminate in a Development Summit in 2015 attended by heads of state and government. But the creation of a “partnership facility,” which is one of the key proposals in the new

agenda, was included in the budget proposed for 2014 back in September 2013. The new facility would have a budget of USD 1.5 million a year, 90 percent of which would pay five senior officials, led by an under-secretary-general. “Extra-budgetary resources” (donations) are estimated to provide more than USD12 million a year. The proposed office is mandated to coordinate existing partnerships with the private sector (corporations, private foundations and civil society organizations) and encourage new ones to “significantly increase existing resources and expand the effectiveness of their use,” globally and in developing countries.

At a time when many developed countries suffer recession and have cut their ODA budgets, the idea of using private philanthropy funds seems obvious and reasonable. However, an alliance of civil society networks has issued a policy statement warning diplomats about the possibility of precisely the opposite effect: “*Contrary to the perception that leveraging actually draws in private resources to available public funds, increasingly it is about using public money (ODA) to cover the risks of private investment. Losses will be socialized while profits continue to be private – and too often untaxed. Recent experience in many countries shows that these ‘innovative’ mechanisms are often ineffective, poorly regulated, and can lead to corruption in borrowing and lending countries.*”

The official press releases are very optimistic. “Every Woman, Every Child” has purportedly “delivered” USD10 billion and “Sustainable Energy for All,” an initiative launched just a year ago, “has seen pledges” of USD 50 billion. These amounts are impressive, considering that the total ODA of the richest countries is about USD100 billion a year and is falling. However, what these numbers actually mean is not easy to figure out. “Education First,” chaired by former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced with great fanfare “commitments” worth USD 1.5 billion a year ago. Of these, USD 1 billion would be provided by Western Union, a corporation specializing in channeling remittances from migrants, and USD 500 million by the credit card issuer MasterCard.

However, the MasterCard Foundation has a total grant making capacity for all its programmes of USD 100 million a year and the Western Union Foundation website reports grants of only USD 71 million since 2001. The

small print of the “Education First” website says that MasterCard will provide scholarships for 15,000 African university students over ten years, while Western Union will “provide up to USD 10,000 per day in non-governmental organization grant funding.” At that pace, it will take 274 years to reach one billion dollars!

In either case neither the UN itself nor developing country governments receive any grant monies or in any way control or supervise them. There is no demonstrated additionality to ODA and other financial commitments made in inter-governmental fora, nor is there any proof that those monies add to what the foundations would have disbursed anyhow. Neither is there any clear link with the official objective of “Education First”, which is to accelerate progress in primary education in the poorest countries.

On the other hand, big corporations do benefit in public image terms from the use of the blue UN flag, as well as improved access to privileged information and high-level contacts. In some African countries, for example, the alliance of big pharmaceutical companies with the UN has allowed them to win lucrative contracts with the state, to the detriment of local small and medium enterprises.

The UN Partnership Facility deserves careful discussion before it is approved in order to

clarify who benefits from what. For a start, the following questions must be addressed:

- Growing influence of the corporate sector in political discourse and agenda-setting: Do partnership initiatives allow corporations and their interest groups undue and unsupervised influence over agenda setting and political decision-making by governments?
- Undermining accountable and transparent multilateralism: Will the proliferation of partnerships contribute to the continued institutional weakening of the UN system and hinder comprehensive development strategies?
- Weakening democratic public institutions: If partnerships create the equivalence of equal rights among stakeholders, do they undermine the political and legal position occupied legitimately by accountable public bodies (governments and parliaments)? Given the inequality amongst participating actors, how can conflicts of interest be avoided and checks and balances amongst the participating actors be ensured?
- Unstable financing – a threat to the sufficient provision of public goods: Will the funding of the Post-2015 Agenda

become increasingly privatized, dependent on voluntary and unpredictable channels of financing through benevolent individuals or private philanthropic foundations? Are the financial resources committed in the existing partnership initiatives effectively increasing available resources? Do the financial commitments of governments constitute new and additional funding?

- Lack of monitoring and accountability mechanisms: What instruments are in place to guarantee that partnerships as well as the proposed UN Partnership Facility will be open, transparent, and accountable?

At a minimum, the UN should take steps to make business participation in UN processes and UN-business partnerships more transparent and accountable. If the ill-defined “multi-stakeholder partnerships” are to be at the centre of the post-2015 agenda, as the Secretary-General is calling for, governments have to adopt much more stringent criteria and rules for those who will enter these partnerships and how these actors will be held accountable. Basically, participants in all UN multi-stakeholder initiatives should be subjected to screening and monitoring by the UN and member states. ■

Smuggling corporations in

A popular story has it that a customs officer was obsessed with finding out what the old man was hiding, as he crossed the border every day with a donkey loaded with hay. Never able to discover anything unusual in the forage, one day he announced:

- I have just retired and I have no authority any more, but I will not die in peace if I do not get to know what your business really is.

- It's easy, -replies the old man- I smuggle donkeys.

With a similar zeal, diplomats, international bureaucrats and NGO activists—meeting in a 30 country working group commissioned by heads of state and government are scrutinizing every line of the draft that summarizes months of preparatory “conversations” about how to define the Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved in the next 15 years. As negotiations continue it is important that they not, like the customs officer, lose sight of the essential: the great innovation proposed is not in the goals but on who bears the task of achieving them.

The SDGs could become the smuggler in legitimizing the irruption of corporations in global decision-making, implementation and

monitoring. These “partnerships” dilute and weaken the responsibility of the states, which are no longer in the centre of the action, and reinforce power asymmetries. Corporations have already acquired through bilateral investment agreements the right to sue states in supranational tribunals (and not through the constitutional justice) and are now candidates to receive official development assistance and sit in the forums where rules are negotiated, at the expense of national (and popular) sovereignty, democracy and human rights.

In the MDGs, the eighth goal, A Global Partnership for Development, clearly described the responsibility of developed countries to contribute with aid, fairer trade rules, technologies, and a solution to the external debt problems. These promises were not dated and are far from being fulfilled, but at least they made clear what to claim and from whom. Now, with the systematic addition of a plural and obviating the capital letter this Global Partnership is transformed into multiple “partnerships” and they are not any more between rich and poor nations but between governments, multilateral agencies and large multinational corporations. ■

Righting Finances

As part of the preparatory work for agreement on a Post-2015 Development Agenda, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (known as “Rio+20”) called for the establishment of an intergovernmental committee of experts on financing for sustainable development tasked with preparing a report “proposing options on an effective sustainable development financing strategy to facilitate the mobilization of resources and their effective use in achieving sustainable development objectives.”

In this regard the Righting Finance Initiative issued a statement on “Co-Creating New Partnerships for Financing Sustainable Development,” which called for the post-2015 agenda, including means of financing it, to be aligned with the international human rights framework and sustainable development commitments.

It stressed that in view of the systemic market failures of the past decade, the need for an effective and capable government as a protector and guarantor of human rights in development rather than a mere enabler of private sector development is greater than ever. Moreover, there is enough experience documented in the literature on the negative impact of privatization on growing inequality and gaps regarding access to basic services, such as education, health, water, and energy. States in the end bear primary responsibility for international cooperation to achieve human rights, so the nature of the Global Partnership for Development as one driven by States should be reaffirmed.

The initiative states that while a number of partnerships can play a role in the post-2015 development agenda, those partnerships do not operate in a vacuum. As they are voluntary, opt-in and opt-out arrangements, they cannot by any means crowd-out States’ existing obligations of cooperation to achieve human rights. So, the international human rights framework takes primacy and precedence above any agreements with the private sector.

Ensuring such primacy and precedence will entail a number of consequences for the approach to partnerships, as follows:

- Governments’ commitments on tackling global asymmetries in areas such as trade, debt, finance, ODA and taxation that represent the international enabling conditions and mobilize resources to achieve sustainable development and human rights should remain at the core of the agenda. Governments also should acknowledge and transform the unequal power relations between different multilateral organizations of global governance, between transnational corporations and States, and between the more and the less developed States.
- States are required to use the maximum available resources to meet their human rights obligations. These include (1) government spending and revenue, (2) development assistance; (3) debt and deficit financing; and (4) monetary policy and financial regulation. A more realistic and long-term focus on strengthening public resourcing for development will lead to financing for development that is not only more reliable and sustainable, but also more democratic and open to scrutiny by the

very people we claim to be “developing.” Consistent with the commitments made at the Rio + 20 Conference, new sources of financing such as public-private partnerships and South-South cooperation must be recognized as complementary and not a substitute for traditional means of implementation.

- Private sector actors are essentially mandated to realize maximum profits for their shareholders, an aim that more often than not comes at odds with the public interest of home and/or host States. States, individually and in concert with one another, are duty-bound to ensuring the progressive realization of human rights for all, so guaranteeing equity and non-discrimination based on income, gender, race-ethnicity, location, sexual orientation, and age, among others. This means that only through strong regulatory and accountability frameworks can we hope that the private sector will be a useful contributor to the realization of sustainable development goals. It also means that governments, operating jointly or individually, can at any time declare there are areas that will remain off-limits for any form of partnership with the private sector.

Key questions on “outsourcing development”

- As private finance follows market trends leading to a concentration of resources, what regulatory framework or policies could ensure that it delivers development objectives?
- Analysis by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) has shown that “leverage ratios do not have a one-to-one relationship with additionality.” How can we be sure that these mechanisms really leverage additional resources?
- With private investment increasingly taking the decisions that determine development funding, how can the UN ensure transparency and accountability and regular reporting?
- Should mechanisms be promoted when they may increase developing countries’ debt burdens to unsustainable levels? ■

- In those areas where the private sector is potentially deemed a suitable partner, given the history of human rights abuses implicating private companies, especially transnational corporations, the following guidelines should be embraced:
- The partners in these partnerships should act in accordance of the human rights framework, which imposes obligations and correlative duties. Consistent with the call by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, governments are required to prevent and protect people against human rights abuses perpetrated by private actors, and people affected by breaches of those obligations have a right to effective remedy. It is also important to use a dose of healthy scepticism when projecting the extent to which, in practice, they will address human rights concerns raised by private sector behaviour. Study after study show that the private sector uses its transnational presence as a way to arbitrage, when not entirely avoid, the domestic laws of places in which it operates, and ultimately escape any accountability for its actions. Moreover, the economic power of these actors often means they have the level of access and capacity to lobby decision-makers to shape to their advantage legislative, regulatory and judicial environments. This way they can frequently rig access to remedies for victims, or pre-empt it altogether (examples are regulatory stability agreements and arbitration clauses that subject human rights controversies to investment tribunals).
- Human rights principles call for full participation by, and transparency towards, those affected in the negotiation, implementation and monitoring of partnerships. Participation cannot be fully realized without civil society groups that independently evaluate whether objectives set by governments are met and shape public opinion in holding government agencies to account for failing to deliver. Partnerships should accord an institutionalized role for civil society, particularly with regard to priority-setting and accountability. Partnerships can only be truly effective if founded on full transparency and meaningful accountability of all partners involved. As a summary of post-2015 consultations observed, “the consultations consistently present human rights as a non-negotiable element to deliver accountability to the new commitments.” Over and above public-private ventures, ensuring accountability of these key development actors to human rights will be the essential ingredient to making the new generation of goals transformative. Accountability cannot take place in the absence of a legal framework guaranteeing that civil society groups will not risk their safety and physical integrity for seeking to expose business’ misconduct – whether such misconduct was with or without State complicity.
- There need to be clear criteria, in advance, to determine whether a specific private sector actor is fit for a partnership in pursuit of the post-2015 goals. This is not only in the interest of human rights, but in the interest of the UN, which might never recover from the reputational shock if chief private financiers it engages with are also chief violators of its most cherished principles. Such criteria should examine:
 - (a) whether the private actor has a history or current status of serious allegations of abusing human rights or the environment, including in their cross-border activities;
 - (b) whether the private actor has a proven track record (or the potential) to deliver on sustainable development, as articulated by the UN outcome by 2015;
 - (c) whether the private actor has previous involvement in acts of corruption with government officials;
 - (d) whether the private actor is fully transparent in its financial reporting and fully respecting existing tax responsibilities in all countries it operates, and not undermining sustainable development through tax avoidance;
 - (e) any conflicts of interest in order to eliminate potential private donors whose activities are antithetical or contradictory to the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and the SDG framework.
- Governments should commit to take immediate measures to ensure that businesses respect human rights and the environment, including by mandating independent, rigorous and periodic human rights and environmental impact assessments of large businesses.
- Partnerships must not limit the capacity of governments to mobilize their maximum available resources and avoid retrogression in the enjoyment of rights, as defined by existing human rights legal commitments. Where fiscal support is provided to the private sector, such resources are being deviated from their potential use to support the fulfillment of economic and social rights. Fiscal resources should only be applied to support the private sector in instances where it can be demonstrated concretely that a) such allocation will advance certain rights, b) this is a more effective use of such resources than through public investment, c) mechanisms exist for the transparent and public participation of those affected by the use of those resources and d) performance in meeting the promised targets will be evaluated and monitored periodically, with lack of compliance credibly giving rise to a withdrawal of the fiscal support. ■

Crisis of confidence

Social movements which emerged in the wake of the economic crisis are sceptical of the UN's capacity to be a space to think of and enact the changes that are needed. The governance model proposed by the organization—and in particular the prominent role it gives to the corporate sector—and the type of solutions it is putting forward beg the question: is the UN up to task of building an alternative model, or even serving as a forum to discuss new models?

Some NGOs, seeing multi-stakeholder governance as an opportunity for more participation and influence in policy processes, have gone along with this model, while others are more critical.

As the UN enthusiastically embraces the corporate sector as “part of the solution” some are entertaining the idea that it may be very much part of the problem. By embracing transnational corporations as partners, the UN risks legitimizing the idea that “there is no alternative” to a free-market, privatised world. While one should be mindful of painting “the UN” with too broad a brush, this shift is affecting the system as a whole, including the Secretariat, the funds and programmes and the specialised agencies.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and multi-stakeholder governance models tend to favour well-established and well-resourced players and they often focus on technical solutions, allowing states to outsource their responsibilities and obligations to civil society and the private sector while pleading impotence. Although promoted as “complementary” to governmental efforts, multi-stakeholder partnerships often become replacements for intergovernmental initiatives, especially in areas where the difficulty of achieving international agreement is leaving governance gaps. These multi-stakeholder initiatives, however, often lack transparent reporting requirements; while they claim billions of dollars in pledges and investments, it is usually difficult to assess where money has gone, whether it is “additional,” and its impact on policy direction. PPPs act

as “coalitions of the willing” but need to be answerable to agreed-upon frameworks, in particular international human rights instruments and environmental treaties.

If governance models promote “partnerships” and “consensus” without recognising the power imbalances between “stakeholders” and the interests invested in the status quo, “consultations” and “dialogues” are likely to lead to more of the same with minor changes and reinforce the imbalance. While the UN has a good track record of developing spaces for the participation of civil society and social movements, UN processes also tend to put too much emphasis on input. Ultimately, the consultation / dialogue model is limited if it posits that, with enough information on the impact of their decisions, policymakers will come to a rational conclusion beneficial to all. It bears stating that economic policies are not implemented not because decision-makers do not realise their harmful effects; they are the result of very deliberate choices answering to powerful interests. “Having a voice” in the process, while key, is not enough to challenge these. The possibility to hold powerful interests accountable, not just to debate with them, is critical.

Is the UN still “the best thing we have” to achieve a more just and sustainable world? In 2010, the French activist organization ATTAC argued in favour of “Another UN for another world.” ATTAC stressed that the UN is the repository of human rights-based international legal instruments—a legal framework that powerful, ad-hoc fora such as the G20 do not possess.

In spite of its recent turn towards the corporate sector and its embrace of market-led solutions, the UN remains the international forum friendliest to groups seeking to challenge the global concentration of power. Some parts of the UN have proven open to and supportive of alternative concepts and models. The UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service

(UN-NGLS) have all worked to promote the “Social and Solidarity Economy,” a development model based on cooperation, complementarity and mutual support that has gained traction in Brazil, Ecuador, France and other countries.

Time for an Ambitious Agenda

The post-2015 development agenda can be an opportunity to reclaim value-based multilateralism at the UN, to move beyond a development policy geared towards making the current system “better” to truly transformative change. The UN is the only place to hold all players accountable to universal standards and responsibilities, and to promote a value-based framework for sustainable development rooted in the UN Charter and human rights instruments.

This direction is possible if the UN stops favouring “stakeholders” whose interest is only to tinker at the edges of the system. The involvement of “stakeholders” who are not risk-averse and promote and defend a value-based, rights-based approach to development, including social movements, is crucial.

The UN has established many best practices for the participation of civil society and social movements. More consistent application of these best practices could help build a better institutional model for engagement, which would make clear that “multi-stakeholder dialogues” and “consultations” can challenge the status quo and would bring alternative policies forward. Such practices would help to:

- Promote a diversity of views, including social movements and people most affected who have so far been marginalised. While these people cannot be automatically assumed to be democratic and progressive, they are often representatives of communities who can bring alternative views to the table. The experience of people on the ground is a form of “expertise” just as relevant to the post-2015 process as the expertise of the scientific and academic community.

- Better feature local experiences to inform policymaking debates at UN headquarters. Contributions from CSOs and social movements do not only take the form of direct participation in processes, but their innovative experience at the local or national level is not recognized in processes that adopt a hierarchical, top-down interpretation of global decision-making.
- Build an institutional environment that moves beyond “consultations” and “consensus” to allow the expression of dissent and alternative views. This would counter the worst aspects of the “multi-stakeholder” model, which tends to focus on weak areas of agreement rather than tackle difficult issues. The post-2015 process should give a space to and recognize the expression of alternative and confrontational views and not force “civil society” to speak in one consensual voice. Dissenting positions should be respected and clearly recorded into official proceedings and documents. This is especially necessary when “civil society” becomes a misnomer that includes representatives of the corporate sector and of private philanthropic foundations.
- Recognize and address the power imbalances between “stakeholders.” Giving more time to people on the ground and social movements to speak, make their positions known and present alternative policies can rebalance the power dynamics. That time is especially important for groups that are looking for recognition of their constituency at the global level (such as Indigenous Peoples).

Accountability

Good modalities for engagement are a step in the right direction but not enough: a successful post-2015 development agenda also demands policy and political changes. The question is not only whether participation in policy processes reflects diversity and alternative views; the process must also be able

to challenge power structures responsible for the status quo, and people at the local and national levels must ultimately be able to support its outcome. People on the ground and social movements support the UN when they see it as a credible forum to remove global obstacles to justice and sustainability that cannot be tackled nationally, and to set norms and standards that will help and support national level rights-based mobilisation. Without necessarily directly participating in UN processes, these movements can play a key role in engaging their national government to push for change and implement policies negotiated at the global level. But they are not likely to do so if they see UN policies as one more barrier to achieve social justice and protect the commons.

A new accountability framework, rather than a new partnership for development, should be the priority on the post-2015 development agenda. Accountability can ensure that the interests of “stakeholders,” especially of the most powerful players, are truly aligned with the purpose they are claiming to be working towards and do not contradict the value-based standards of the organization. Transparency and accountability standards should of course also be applied to NGOs, CSOs and social movements. However, in the current context, the UN and member states have generally submitted “civil society” to more intense scrutiny than the corporate sector. While organizations applying for ECOSOC accreditation have to be approved by member states, there is no equivalent accreditation process for corporations independent of the business associations they may belong to. Further, many individual states have enacted draconian legislation that seriously limits the capacity of their citizens to organize as CSOs and to demonstrate, while transnational corporations rarely encounter the same difficulties.

To rebalance the power relations, the UN should focus on accountability for the corporate sector.

At the very least, it should establish better public disclosure and conflict of interest

policies to regulate corporate sector engagement. In the current system, international business associations can participate in UN processes as “NGOs” on the ground that they are nonprofit, even though they represent the interests of their corporate members. Public interest NGOs have long called on the World Health Organization (WHO) to classify private-sector actors outside of its NGO category, to better make the distinction between Public Interest NGOs (PINGOs) and Business Interest NGOs (BINGOS). Such distinction could be made systemwide.

Better public disclosure and conflict of interest policies are also needed for the UN itself. The organization should disclose financial contributions from the corporate sector (including in the form of “extra-budgetary resources”) and establish a clear framework for interacting with the private sector and managing conflicts of interest, in particular by differentiating between policy development and appropriate involvement in implementation. Protection for whistleblowers would ensure that UN staff can speak out on practices that do not respect the mandate and values of the organization. Specific language in the code of ethics for UN employees could also help address the potential issues raised by the circulation of staff between UN entities and national governments, private foundations, corporations, lobby groups and CSOs.

Progressive NGOs, CSOs and social movements can advocate and lobby for such changes. They can also challenge the UN to rethink how it has adopted the language and worldview of the corporate sector. What does it mean when the organization promotes health, education and even people as good “returns on investment?” When it argues that sustainable development needs to be sold to the corporate sector as “more profitable” to save us from disaster?

Are there opportunities for member states and civil society to work together to build an alternative to a multi-stakeholder governance model that privileges the

corporate sector? A recent initiative in the Human Rights Council, spearheaded by Ecuador and supported by more than 100 governments and dozens of CSOs, proposes to advance a binding instrument to regulate transnational corporations. Could this be an indication that the discourse on the role of the corporate sector is shifting?

The UN has so far seemed to assume that cooperation with large transnational corporations would help it regain relevance. This trend has accelerated in the context of discussions and negotiations around the post-2015 development agenda. The

challenges that the UN addresses—poverty eradication, climate change mitigation and adaptation, a shift to sustainable production and consumption practices—require nothing less than radical changes. But the UN's corporate partners (and the powerful states that advocate in their favour) are generally happy to support UN efforts only as long as they fall into the realm of acceptable discourse.

The UN is reflecting, rather than driving, many of the trends in the current world order. But the organisation has the potential to be a space where this order can

be challenged, and the processes for the post-2015 development agenda offer a window of opportunity. The post-2015 agenda cannot be limited to allowing “stakeholders” to debate future goals and establish partnerships based on weak areas of agreement that avoid difficult issues. Rather, the post-2015 provides a moment to reclaim the UN's value-based framework, challenge the powerful interests and politics that have led to the current situation and hold all players accountable. ■

“Big data”: threat or revolution?

Steve Baccus, an American farmer and president of the Kansas Farm Bureau, made a trip to Washington in April 2014 as part of what he called “an educational effort” to make sure members of Congress know about data collecting and “the implications of the issue for our farmers and ranchers.”

The issue is the gathering of large swaths of data by large seed companies, Monsanto in particular, using sensors installed on tractors. The corporations argue that the sensors help crop yields by measuring and evaluating soil conditions and seeding rates, among other variables.

That information would allow them to give out seed prescriptions optimized for each farm's soil, disease history and pest evaluation in the area.

Monsanto calls this a “Green Data Revolution” — a play on the so-called Green Revolution of the 20th century, based on intense use of fertilizers and pesticides and seeds adapted to resist them. To steer this revolution, Monsanto has recently purchased Precision Planting, a farm equipment manufacturer and Climate Corporation, a database analytics firm.

Similarly, biotech giant DuPont Pioneer has partnered with farm equipment manufacturer John Deere to provide “decision

services” that allow farmers to upload data onto servers, which ultimately feed electronic data prescriptions of seed and fertilizer back to the tractor in the field. Tractors may be built with GPS systems or seed monitoring tablets that allow farmers to download information. In theory, this GPS technology serves as an information dragnet, analysing raw field data to provide farmers with industry-funded solutions.

The prospect of sharing intimate details of their operations with the companies has raised concerns with some farmers who are worried that the companies could tap the information for their own purposes or sell it to other entities, like commodity traders. By gathering information directly from the tractors in the moment of seeding, corporations could make estimates about harvests several weeks in advance (and with better accuracy) than the US Government itself. This information can then be used to speculate in commodity markets, resulting in price fluctuations that may hurt the very farmers that provide the data but do not control their use.

Yet, in reply to their concerns, Kansas Representative Lynn Jenkins expressed the prevalent view in Washington that “information and data utilization is the way of the future.” He did acknowledge privacy concerns and wrote plainly that “just as our

federal government struggles with privacy concerns through records at the NSA and various health records, so too must we maintain appropriate privacy protection of individuals from corporations.”

A spokeswoman for DuPont said that the company abides by data-privacy laws, but urged farmers “to always read and understand the terms and conditions of any services they sign up for as each company maintains its own policies and provisions.”

Governments should take this advice very seriously, since as part of the post-2015 development agenda, the UN Secretary-General has stated that advances in information technology over the past decade provide an opportunity for a “data revolution” that should enable countries to strengthen existing data sources and develop new ones.

This rather cryptic language echoes the observation of the High Level Panel (HLP) co-chaired by UK Prime Minister David Cameron and Presidents Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia that there have been “innovative initiatives to use mobile technology and other advances to enable real-time monitoring of development results.”

Earlier, in a *Wall Street Journal* piece, Cameron envisaged using aid “as a catalyst to unleash the dynamism of developing

economies: from professionalizing cross-border customs services and enabling farmers to access price information by mobile phone, to using satellite photos to map plots of land that will facilitate the creation of property rights.”

In a book called *Big Data*, Viktor Mayer-Schonberger and Kenneth Cukier explain that “big data” is about predictions that result from applying math to an enormous amount of information. Thus Google is able to predict an epidemic before people know they are sick by correlating searches for terms like “fever” and “headache” in a certain locality with similar search patterns in the days before the outbreak of previous epidemics. And soon it will include information gathered by your refrigerator or your car, not just your mobile phone, in light of the emerging “Internet of things.” For individuals, they add, “this implies risks for their privacy.”

While “big data” has enormous potential, the potential is for evil as well as for good. In promoting a “data revolution” as part of

any monitoring and accountability mechanism attention must be given to privacy and rights issues. Miniaturization enabled broad participation as shown by the use of mobile cameras to document human rights violations or convene demonstrations during the Arab uprisings. Independent producers can use cheap handheld cameras to create movies able to compete with those from huge Hollywood studios. But “big data” requires harnessing big computing capabilities, so big that they are out of the reach of most civil society organizations and even of most developing countries.

The Guardian blogger Anne Marie Cox published an “educated guess” of what a minimum list of restraints should include to guarantee basic rights:

Individual control: the right to exercise control over what personal data organizations collect from them and how they use it.

Transparency: the right to easily understandable information about privacy and security practices.

Focused collection: the right to reasonable limits on the personal data that organizations collect and retain.

Accountability: the right to have personal data handled by organizations with appropriate measures in place to assure they adhere to the Bill of Rights and relevant human rights standards.

In her UN speech in 2013, protesting the electronic spying revealed by Edward Snowden, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff added an intergovernmental dimension: “The time is ripe to create the conditions to prevent cyberspace from being used as a weapon of war, through espionage, sabotage, and attacks against systems and infrastructure of other countries. The United Nations must play a leading role in the effort to regulate the conduct of States with regard to these technologies.”

Without adequate checks and balances, the “data revolution” could become Orwellian nightmare. ■

Social networks monitor elections, services

“Traditionally, the only role for citizens during elections is as voters. But citizens need to be a greater part of this electoral ecosystem and engaged in the entire process,” said Philip Thigo, programme director for Social Development Network (SODNET), the Kenyan chapter of Social Watch.

During the 2010 constitutional referendum SODNET partnered with others to implement *Uchaguzi*, an effort to “protect the vote” by allowing any citizen to text a message, send an e-mail or otherwise communicate complaints about the electoral process using a crowdsourcing software called Ushahidi (“witness” in Swahili). The key to the success of this system, unanimously credited as having contributed to the transparency

and credibility of the electoral process, is the mechanism used to validate the communications, based on the social recognition of the originating source.

The example spread regionally and the mechanism was adapted and used in elections in Uganda, Zambia and Tanzania in the following years and was used again in the 2013 Kenyan general elections.

The positive results of Uchaguzi led the Kenyan Government to partner with SODNET in establishing Uhuma (“service”) a system enabling citizens to report on the quality of public services using the same technology. ■

The difficult Arab transition

Turmoil, transitions and trespasses

Arab countries that experienced uprisings are currently at a crossroads, facing tremendous political, social and economic challenges. The various groups that took power have all failed to lead the transition: they were unable to reach a consensus on the state's new framework or to address the immediate needs of citizens. In some countries, such as Bahrain, violence and foreign intervention are preventing peaceful transition, while in others, especially **Syria, Yemen and Libya**, uprisings have become increasingly violent, raising the death toll exponentially and making peace barely feasible. In Egypt and Tunisia, too, tensions are again on the rise, threatening any potential national consensus.

A primary objective of the transitional period was meant to be the elaboration of a holistic new social contract, as well as a means for implementing participatory, transparent and accountable governance. However, after decades of oppression and weak and unaccountable institutional structures, the countries lacked prior experience and had limited capacity to democratically manage diversities and differences, which is essential for engaging effectively in the political process. Moreover, remnants of the old regimes are still omnipresent among political and institutional elites: corruption, nepotism as well as accepted forms of graft in state institutions hinder a country's ability to provide for its citizens and to guarantee their rights.

In **Egypt**, where the Constitution adopted in January 2014 is meant to protect political, civil, economic and social rights, it is clear that fundamental rights, including freedom of assembly and freedom of expression and demonstration are under grave threat. The Constitution allows many areas to be "regulated by law," giving the Government broad powers in many areas. Thus the Ministry of Defense and the army

are given a special role in public life and the Ministry of Interior and the security apparatuses have the right to cancel demonstrations in the name of safeguarding "peace and security," while peaceful demonstrators can be jailed up to seven years. The same is true for the right to strike: article 15 states that "peaceful strikes are a right regulated by law," opening the door for legislation that effectively criminalizes strikes.

In **Tunisia**, after the security void that followed the revolution in 2011, the democratically elected transitional council failed to draft a new constitution and organized public elections to reconstitute the state's institutions within one year. Since then, successive transitional governments have failed to address the security issues: jihadi attacks are on the rise, casting a dark shadow on the country's future. Leftist opposition figures like Chokri Belaid and Mohammed Brahmi, along with several security and army officials were assassinated in the spring of 2014. Borders are highly permeable, allowing hard drugs, military equipment and small arms to be smuggled in from Libya. The security issue is taken up by political parties and used to political ends, making it difficult to address the problem effectively, and thereby fostering what is called "islamogangsterism" in Tunisia. While the latest version of the constitution and the appointment of a new electoral commission are positively perceived, in the long run only inclusivity and respect for diversity among the parties and political institutions will break the political impasse and other questions related to security threats and borders.

In **Bahrain**, despite the findings and recommendations of the famous "Bassiouni report" by an independent commission of inquiry, the Government continues to deny its human rights violations and the crimes it is perpetrating against its people. Freedom

of expression and opinion are being trampled daily and human rights activists are jailed for peaceful activities. With an increasingly difficult social and economic situation, resulting from years of inadequate policy that failed to guarantee equality and rights, peaceful demonstrations were met with more repressive laws, including the banning of protests in the capital Manama and tougher anti-terrorism laws, imposing longer prison terms and revoking citizenship.

Neocolonialist economic and trade approaches

One of the main questions raised by the uprisings is the appropriateness of the economic choices and development models adopted by Arab countries over decades. Over the last 10 years, the Arab region has experienced a decline in productive capacities, along with a decline in decent job-generating activities, despite high economic growth rates in the past few years in countries such as Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. Structural Adjustment Programmes were coupled with reduced social spending and the marginalization of developmental projects, while the dominant macroeconomic model prioritized trade and investment liberalization and deregulation, as well as the dismantling of state-owned enterprises. In this context, Arab countries have struggled with balance of payment problems and debts incurred through borrowing from international institutions under undemocratic regimes. This necessitated a higher share of gross domestic product (GDP) allocated to debt servicing which in turn affects the reallocation of national resources and funds away from projects that support citizens and protect their social and economic rights. Moreover, weak redistributive mechanisms, including inadequate

tax policy and inefficient service provision, have increased social and geographical inequalities.

Although for decades, countries in the Arab region have relied heavily on food and fuel price subsidies as a form of social protection, the austerity-related policy proposals of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) include unwinding subsidies on food and fuel products coupled with better poor-household targeting schemes, described as a doorway to “economic recovery.” At the same time, the Deauville partnership, launched by the EU in 2011, reportedly to support countries in transition, is pushing for more trade liberalization and the signing of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade agreements (DCFTAs) in four countries: Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan. The negotiations in Morocco will include an expansion of the existing EU trade agreement to include, in addition to tariff reduction, regulations on services, trade, a new investment framework to protect foreign investors, liberalization of public procurement, competition and intellectual property protection. They will address areas that are at the heart of the macroeconomic structure and may directly affect the state’s policy space in terms of regulating the economy in line with national development goals. Negotiations are being done without assessing the social and environmental impact of the existing free trade agreement between the EU and Morocco, or of the potential effects of the proposed regulations in different areas. Civil society actors have already warned against potential negative effects on sustainability, development, human rights, and the future of productive sectors and have demanded full transparency in the negotiations course, which are yet to be disclosed.

In **Egypt**, revenues dropped dramatically after the revolution in 2011 and the budget deficit aggressively increased. Negotiations with the IMF over a USD 3.2 billion loan (later raised to USD 4.8

billion) reached a deadlock over proposals to reduce public expenditures by lifting subsidies on energy among other things. Moreover, no country has heeded the call of CSOs in Egypt in demanding fair and transparent debt audit mechanisms and an eventual cancellation of the country’s odious debts, all incurred under the previous regime. As the country has a total of USD 35 billion in foreign debt and debt servicing has a larger share of the budget than social expenditure, such steps are much needed to ensure a viable transition and the realization of people’s social and economic rights.

In **Sudan**, the Government adopted an IMF austerity package in June 2012, but resisted pressure to totally cut subsidies until September 2013, after which inflation rose to 44 percent and unrest was widespread, leading to the death of 50 demonstrators, according to Amnesty International. Fuel subsidies cost around USD 1.7 billion per year, which might not be very sustainable but given that 40 percent of the Sudanese people live below the poverty line and the country’s foreign debt amounts to USD 40 billion (82.2 % of GDP in 2012), abruptly cutting them is also not economically viable. In fact, since around 75 percent of debt is owed to the Paris Club of creditor nations, what is needed is a transparent and fair audit that would finally result in the partial or total cancellation of the debt. But IMF Mission Chief for Sudan Edward Gemayel noted that “it will be near impossible for Sudan to secure debt relief even if it satisfied technical and economic requirements,” given the political complications. In other words, any debt relief deal with Sudan would require the unanimous consent of all 55 countries in Paris Club, which is highly improbable.

Inadequate development efforts and means for reshaping them

The Arab 2013 Development Report states that “The Arab region has made impressive progress towards many Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs), particularly in education,” adding that some of the countries that experienced upheaval were considered “best students” in liberalization efforts and progress towards the MDGs, especially Tunisia. The challenges it identified are “good governance, quality and not just quantity of development, empowering women and reducing inequalities.” The report was intended to assess progress towards the MDGs, learn from mistakes and not repeat them in the future. However, its approach is identical to the previous one, and it is also fragmented and goal oriented. As the UN-NGLS organized CSO regional consultation noted, fragmentation was one of the inherent problems of the MDGs approach; checking progress “in silos” masked true social and economic problems. Yet the 2013 report still handles the different development sectors as separate, making no mention of a comprehensive framework linking them within a new development paradigm.

Some recommendations for the new paradigm were suggested during the two CSO regional consultations in March 2013 and July 2013, primarily: 1) rebalancing power relations for more justice, 2) ensuring the fulfillment of human rights and overcoming exclusion, 3) ensuring equitable distribution and safe use of natural resources, and 4) establishing participatory governance, accountability and transparency.

- **Rebalancing power relations** highlights the need to move from undemocratic “rentier” economies to “Democratic Developmental States.” This transition would then need to empower productive capacities, reform the trade and investment architecture, along with the financial architecture and macroeconomic model, enact redistributive policies for equity and social justice, enhance transparency, accountability and civic engagement in public policymaking, and establish peace and security. Making this transition possible requires

fundamental changes at the international level as well as the national one. Thus trade partners and agreements should be reevaluated based on their contribution to development objectives and their respect for human rights. Moreover, imbalances in global trade relations and the financial architecture should be reformed based on the suggestions of the 2013 UNCTAD report on trade and development, whereby IMF imposed policy conditionality should be lifted. Moreover the increasing amount of odious debts that impede on a state's policy space and nurtures injustice should be relieved or restructured.

- **Adopting an unalienable rights-based approach** is essential for achieving the well-being and dignity of all people, which must be the ultimate objective of sustainable development. States must be urged to abide by international standards and fulfill economic, social, cultural, political and civil rights for all. In the Arab region, meeting these goals requires: ending foreign occupation, reforming security policies to respect civil and political rights, fulfilling human rights toward equitable empowerment for all, and obligating the private sector to respect human rights. Comprehensive development policies and programmes are essential in order to realize human rights, including education, health care, decent work, social protection, based on equality and non-discrimination. Reforms are needed in the Arab region to empower people equitably, with particular attention to women, youth and people with disability, ensuring their adequate inclusion.
- **Regulating the use of natural resources**, the lack of which underlies many of the tremendous environmental challenges facing the Arab region, such as agricultural sustainability and sovereignty, extractive industries, energy and water

shortages. Food sovereignty is the cornerstone of agricultural sustainability in the region. To achieve sustainable agriculture, small-scale farming must be supported through the model of food sovereignty. Organic and agro-ecological practices must be promoted, and food production should be oriented to serve local consumption needs before export markets. Moreover, natural resources, especially water, are unevenly distributed in Arab countries with some rural areas lacking access to water services and clean drinking water; the same goes for energy, with some areas lacking electricity installations. The root causes of these issues are mainly structural problems characteristic of Arab states: corruption, bureaucratic obstacles, inefficient planning, and poor infrastructure.

- **Establishing participatory governance, accountability and transparency** is essential in order to craft this new social contract. The responsibility to respect these conditions is not limited to states but also falls on international institutions embroiled in the region. Consequently, it is imperative to focus on the following priorities: Mutual accountability based on human rights mechanisms and standards, accountability in global economic and financial governance, accountability to extra-territorial obligations, binding corporate obligations, participatory and accountable national governance, defining post-2015 priorities and benchmarks through a bottom-up process.

Social justice and developmental objectives cannot be realized without adopting a “new social contract between citizens and the State based on the human rights framework and protection of citizenship” in the post-2015 agenda. However, such a transformation would be taking place in a climate of increasing violence and insecurity and

rising exclusion and extremism. Furthermore, economic difficulties increase impatience among populations and thus political instability. Finally, the above-mentioned specificities of a renewed social contract do not carry short-term economic benefits.

These issues were at the heart of the debate on the nature of the transition; whether it should be limited to setting a new political framework for the state or should also include economic choices and development models. From a civil society perspective, the main reasons behind inequalities are related to the decrease in productivity and thus in employability, as well as the unfair redistribution of wealth. It is therefore imperative to take into account economic transition in the agenda of change while discussing the new social contract and the role of the state. This requires a rights-based development agenda and new economic and social choices based on the result of an inclusive, open and democratic national dialogue. ■

Women's Political Participation in Latin America

The 2013 UN MDG report shows that while globally, gender parity has almost been achieved in primary education, only 2 of 130 countries have reached this goal in all three levels of education. It also shows that women are employed in some 40 percent of paid non-agricultural jobs, but their work tends to be badly paid with little social protection. This is accompanied by persistent inequality in decision-making in the home, in the public sector and at the top levels of government, which means women do not participate in a real or effective way in the decisions that affect their lives.

At the end of 2013 the share of women in parliaments worldwide was just over 20 percent. From 2000 to 2013, progress was greatest in Northern Africa, where it increased from 3 percent to 17 percent; South Asia where it rose from 7 percent to 18.5 percent and the Caucasus and Central Asia where it went from 7 percent to 17.7 percent. Latin America and the Caribbean came nearest to the 30 percent target with 24.5 percent, putting it ahead of the developed world, where it averaged 23.8 percent.

A look at this progress as a whole suggests that the use of quantitative indicators themselves may be hampering further progress in this and other decision making spaces in the State and private spheres, and contributes very little to the struggle for equality. While some countries used the MDG targets to set minimal goals, these have gradually become established as a maximum and thus amount to a new glass ceiling for women.

Latin America and the Caribbean is the region where progress is the greatest, as evidenced by the current presidencies of Dilma Rousseff in Brazil, Cristina Fernández

in Argentina and Michelle Bachelet in Chile, while the governments of Jamaica and Trinidad-Tobago are headed by Portia Simpson-Miller and Kamla Persad-Bissessar. Since 1991, 14 countries have implemented affirmative measures in the form of quota laws, designed to foster greater equality in the distribution of elective and representative positions. Although the results of these laws have rarely come up to expectations and their effectiveness has varied in different institutional and socio-cultural contexts and different political climates, they constituted the first step in the struggle to establish parity.

However, in terms of gender parity, only a few countries in Latin America have implemented regulations geared to achieve this. Venezuela was the first, starting in 2005, followed by Ecuador and Bolivia in 2008 and 2009 and a 2009 electoral code in Costa Rica established parity both on ballot papers and in the internal structure of political parties.

In Bolivia, which has had a 30 percent quota for women in national and municipal elections since 1999, the proportion of women in the lower house increased from 3 percent in 1985 to 18 percent in 2002, and then, due to a 2004 law making it compulsory for 50 percent of candidates on party lists to be women, climbed to 23 percent in the 2009 elections. In the upper house, women's participation went from 0 percent in 1985 to 15 percent in 2002, and then to 47 percent in 2009. This increase is reflected at other levels such as municipal councils (where the proportion of women is now 43%), department councils (28%), the Judicial Body (43%), the Supreme Electoral Court (43%), and the cabinet of ministers (35%). However, the proportion of women is still very low in the main executive

positions in the country like department governors (0%), mayors (7%) and the presidency and vice presidency (0%).

Yet even though women's share of public positions has increased greatly, full parity has not been achieved, owing largely to the winner-take-all electoral system, and to the political parties' manoeuvres to evade the terms of parity legislation. In the last analysis this resistance is based on discriminatory social norms that underlie candidate selection procedures and guide voters to support male candidates, particularly for higher executive office.

Throughout Latin America, factors such as *presidentialism*, *caudillismo* (the big boss culture), cronyism and party heritage work to ensure that increases in political representation do not translate into real decision making power. This is partly due to the fact that women's presence is symbolic only as they are subordinate to male leadership but is also used as a way to legitimize male dominance. In some cases, women who exercise power in patriarchal and authoritarian ways do accede to decision making spaces.

This suggests that the new development framework indicators should not merely aim at establishing quantitative parity but also be geared to tackling the barriers that the political culture has raised against women's effective participation. This should include far reaching reforms in political institutions, political culture and in how power is exercised.

The phenomenon of political harassment, a recurring manifestation of the structural violence against women that restricts their participation in the public sphere, while not new, has come increasingly to the surface in recent years as more women, aided

by quotas and parity policies, have moved into public representative spaces. Political harassment can be defined as a collection of acts of pressure, persecution, harrasing or threats committed against women or their families with the aim of reducing, suspending, impeding or restricting the functions inherent in their position, or inducing or forcing them to act or refrain from acting in the discharge of their functions or exercise of their rights.

While countries such as Costa Rica and Peru are discussing measures to tackle this problem, Bolivia is the only country in the region that has promulgated a specific law against political violence and harassment (Law 243 of May 2012). This law, which came about thanks to the efforts of the Association of Councillors of Bolivia (ACOBOL) and other civil society organizations, establishes a range of legal or administrative procedures to process and punish offenders, depending on the acts committed, and thus makes harassment and political violence new legal offences. However, two years after the law came into force and even after two female councillors were killed apparently for reporting acts of corruption in their municipalities, only one case has been resolved out of the 154 that were reported in 2013.

The law is weak in that it does not provide mechanisms to protect the person who reports harassment and/or political violence cases, and because it lacks legal

dispositions to provide effective access to justice. It also requires greater conceptual precision so as to be able to cover women in the sphere of social, union and neighbourhood organizations, and in peasant or indigenous peoples institutions. This is particularly important where there are dense social networks because these have great capacity to mobilize, which is essential for exerting influence in the political system. Social mobilization has become a relatively stable characteristic of the political culture and a way to understand and live “democracy” in the region.

These social organizations are spaces where social demands can be aggregated and from which people can make the transition into public and political life. However, they are also where women may first experience harassment and political violence. In them, discrimination is perpetuated and “socialized” in social representations of the ideal of “man” and “woman,” which have hardly been questioned in either rural or urban settings. Sex stereotypes often relegated women to secondary functions, which distances them from decision making and can cut short their careers in positions of responsibility.

Thus a new global framework for equity in participation should establish clear indicators that register rules and policies to prevent and punish acts of violence and political harassment against women in the broadly defined public realm, and should

cover not only spaces of State representation but also civil society and grassroots organizations. In line with this, there need to be more demanding and specific indicators, geared not just to the promulgation of legal regulations in pursuit of parity but also to transforming discriminatory social norms and practices of the *caudillo*-related political culture. The indicators should include for example the amount of financial and institutional resources allocated to ensuring effective implementation of the regulations, and should also cover education and training for participation and the prevention of violence against women in all its forms and in all spaces.

As long as women are kept away from decision making about key aspects of their lives, their presence is merely symbolic and they are assimilated into the patriarchal mind-set or hounded with political harassment, inadequate decision making structures and policies will continue to prevail. Unless they take account of women’s socio-cultural contexts or particular vision of the world and the exercise of power, these policies will negatively influence other aspects of life such as health, education and working conditions. ■

Social Watch: promoting accountability

This is the 17th global report published by Social Watch since 1995 on the implementation of international commitments to eradicate poverty and achieve gender justice. In this effort to voice independent assessments, the Social Watch reports have compiled and published 782 original country reports from civil society organizations.

The present issue, featuring contributions from 44 national Social Watch coalitions, carries forward the idea that brought the network into existence in 1995: the need to generate tools and strategies to rectify the lack of accountability mechanisms and ensure compliance with aspirational international commitments.

In 1995, the Social Summit (Copenhagen) and the Women's Conference (Beijing) defined, for the first time, gender equality and the eradication of poverty as common universal objectives, setting concrete targets and timelines to achieve that goal, which was already implicit in the 1946 UN Charter promise to achieve "dignity for all." To promote the political will needed for those promises to become a reality, Social Watch was created as a "meeting place for non-governmental organizations concerned with social development and gender discrimination."

The *Social Watch reports* were formulated as tools for reporting on qualitative aspects of the issues addressed by social organizations working at a national level. The reports add an international dimension to local efforts and campaigns and they became the first sustained monitoring initiative on social development and gender equity at a national level, and the first to combine both in one international overview.

The first report featured contributions from 13 organizations in 1996; since then, the network has been growing steadily and currently, Social Watch has members ("watchers") in over 70 countries around the world.

The local, the global and the report

Every Social Watch report proposes issues under discussion on the international agenda that can be addressed from a local perspective. Through national and regional reports member organizations contribute their perspectives. The global report, in turn, supports their advocacy work.

On several occasions, Social Watch spokespersons have addressed the UN General Assembly and other intergovernmental bodies on behalf of the network or wider civil society constituencies. The network has kept national coalitions informed about global decision making processes and enabled members to participate in these developments.

As the "meeting place" has grown, several aspects of it have evolved, but the founding ideas and objectives remain. In preparing for their participation in the Copenhagen Social Summit, civil society organizations adopted flexible and ad hoc ways of organizing as a network. No formal governing structure or steering committee was created and no stable coordinating group was established. Non-governmental organizations

(NGOs) preferred to inform each other and coordinate activities in horizontal open spaces, an approach that some analysts regard as a forerunner of the organizational format later adopted by the World Social Forum. Many of the NGOs that took part in the Social Summit later formed the backbone of Social Watch. As a result, the structure and functioning of the network preserves much of the original flexibility and openness.

In addition to national coalitions, the network is structured around three bodies: the General Assembly, the Coordinating Committee and the International Secretariat. In recent years, regional and sub-regional coordination structures were established as needed. In big countries like India, sub-national reports provide participation spaces at state level.





The Social Watch network is not an incorporated entity and it did not start by drafting its governing bylaws. Instead, a short Memorandum of Understanding between national groups and the network became the basic framework establishing mutual expectations, respecting both the autonomy of national coalitions and democratic, horizontal decision-making.

National coalitions organize the way they want – or can – according to the conditions in each country. The membership of Social Watch coalitions is very diverse, including research institutes or centres, NGOs, grassroots organizations, trade unions, women’s groups, rural organizations and others.

Global Assembly

The Global Assembly is the Social Watch network’s highest directive body. Policy discussion and medium- to long-term strategic planning happens in its realm, which serves as a decision-making forum. It is also a space for reinforcing the sense of

belonging and strengthening the network’s identity and unity. In addition to setting medium- and long-term priorities and identifying potential alliances in advocacy strategy, the Assembly elects members of the Coordinating Committee to whom coordination and political leadership between assemblies are delegated. It has been held five times: in Rome 2000, Beirut 2003, Sofia 2006, Accra 2009, and Manila in 2011.

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee (CC) ensures the political visibility and participation of the network in relevant spaces and processes. Its composition endeavours to represent a geographical and gender balance, as well as considering the contribution, in terms of experience and capabilities, that members can provide to the whole network. In general, the CC’s decisions are adopted by consensus.

International Secretariat

The Secretariat is the main executive body of Social Watch. Its function was originally

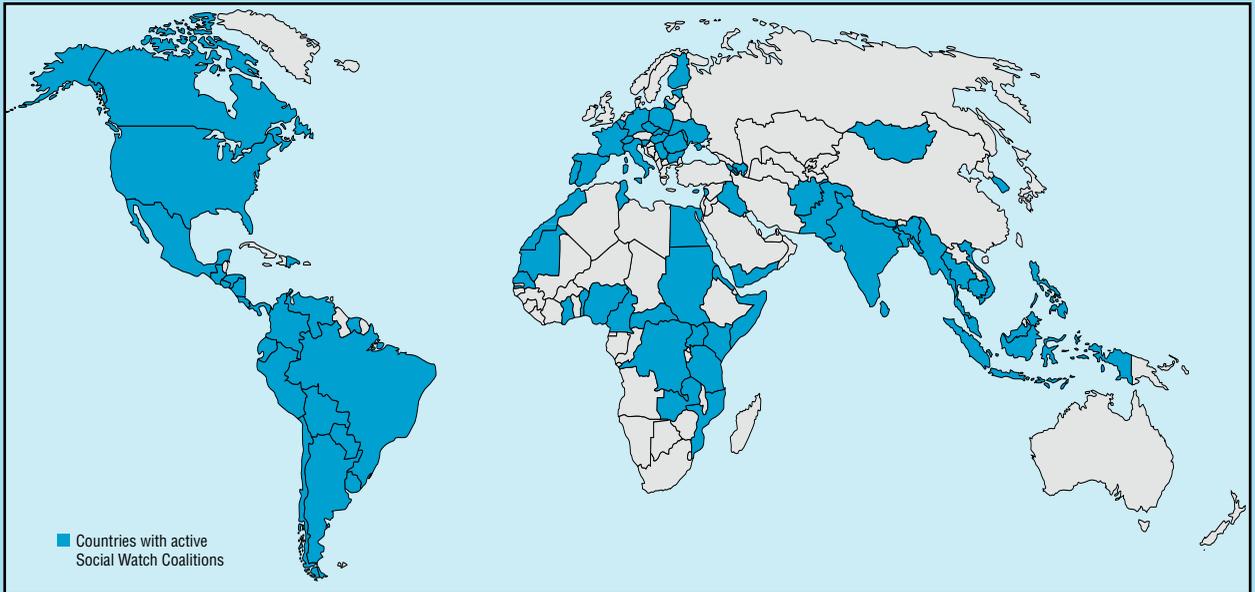
limited to the production of the Report, but as the network’s grew it incorporated new functions, including research, capacity building, campaigning, promotion of the network and its representation in international forums. In turn, as regional coordinations strengthen, they share these tasks.

Promoting accountability

The Accra Assembly, held in October 2009, endorsed the concept of “mutual accountability” among members and among the different bodies of the network (Secretariat, CC, members). Social Watch believes that the key action to achieve poverty eradication, gender equality and social justice happen primarily at the local and national level and, therefore, its international activities and structures should be accountable and at the service of national and local constituencies, and not the other way around. ■



Social Watch in the world



SOCIAL WATCH

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SODNET, the Kenyan Social Watch chapter, developed Uchaguzi to monitor elections and then adapted the mechanisms to create Huduma, a tool to monitor service delivery.



Over one hundred thousand people marched in the Philippines in anti-corruption demonstrations convened by Social Watch to protest "pork barrels", a form of corruption stimulated by flawed budget procedures.



Sub-national Social Watch reports address governance issues at state level in India.



The findings of Social Watch highlighted by Czech TV.



The aspirations of the Arab Spring are reflected in the first Arab Watch report.

Social Watch is an international network of citizens' organizations in the struggle to eradicate poverty and the causes of poverty, to end all forms of discrimination and racism, to ensure an equitable distribution of wealth and the realization of human rights. We are committed to peace, social, economic, environment and gender justice, and we emphasize the right of all people not to be poor.

Social Watch holds governments, the UN system and international organizations accountable for the fulfilment of national, regional and international commitments to eradicate poverty.

Download the full version of this report from www.socialwatch.org

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