

# **PLATFORM HD2010: TOWARDS A PEOPLE'S MULTILATERALISM**

**UN(DP)-civil society consultation: New York, 4-5 June, 2009**

## **Summary of discussion and actions<sup>1</sup>**

### **BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION**

The year 2010 marks a number of key milestones in international development. It is the 20th anniversary of the launch of the UNDP Human Development Report, the ten-year review of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, as well as "Beijing + 15." These reviews take place at a time of multiple global crises and turmoil that have profound implications for the world's poorest and the governance of its institutions. Together they present the United Nations with an important occasion to engage in strategic partnership with civil society to advance the development objectives of these initiatives.

Against this background, UNDP is mobilizing **Platform HD2010** as a space and forum in which it can engage with civil society actors at multiple levels and areas to generate critical debate and actions to advance an inclusive multilateralism. Civil society, whose influence in the global arena has been transformed by the forces and logic of globalization, is integral to the future vision of a revitalized multilateralism, anchored in civic engagement and human development.

This meeting was convened by UNDP to launch Platform HD2010. After a first day of some critical analysis, both historical and current, of the role of the United Nations and global institutions in general in engaging with civil society and addressing the interests of the poor, especially in the current context of global crisis, participants agreed on priority areas and specific actions in which the UN(DP) and civil society could work together to pursue a broad vision people-centred human development, using the year 2010 as a springboard. UNDP commissioned a literature review and synthesis paper in preparation for this meeting.<sup>2</sup>

During a luncheon discussion on June 5, UNDP Administrator Helen Clark said UNDP should prioritize a concept of democratic governance that articulates the voice of the poorest. Climate change cannot be treated as a silo issue and must be brought to heart of everything UNDP does, especially in addressing poverty and the MDGs. She emphasized the need to strongly link responses to climate change, economic recovery, human rights and development. Participants urged UNDP to use its convening powers to create and enlarge unique national spaces to co-convene and co-strategize with civil society to stimulate dialogue and contribute to development solutions. They also said that UNDP should vocally support civil society demands related to the economic and climate crises and take the lead to protect civil society space in countries where it is endangered.

Some key messages from the two-day consultation:

- The current convergence of global crises and rethinking of global governance architecture offers a historic opportunity to advance inclusive forms of governance that are accountable to the world's poorest, and revitalize human development and civic engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> Drafted by Steve Tibbett (consultant) and Bharati Sadasivam, UNDP. We are grateful to Stefano Prato for suggesting a framework to structure this report.

<sup>2</sup> *Towards a Peoples' Multilateralism: The United Nations, Development Networks and Civil Society: A Literature Review and Synthesis Paper*, by Steve Tibbett. UNDP. 15 May 2009. Its conclusions and proposals accompany this report.

- UN(DP), which can reach a multitude of stakeholders and is already playing a unifying role in developing countries for the United Nations, is well positioned to address the impact of the crises on the poor – provided it can work strategically and creatively with civil society and other key non-state actors along with governments. Strengthening partnerships with civil society can help UN(DP) to bridge silo approaches and practices, and reach the poorest fifth of people in countries worldwide.
- Creating and enlarging spaces within the UN at global and national levels, in which civil society and other non-state actors can work towards an inclusive vision of development that articulates the interests of the poor, is fundamental to the relevance of the United Nations in the coming years.
- Civil society – from grassroots to global levels – is critical to this vision and implementation of inclusive development, given the important contributions made by CSOs to crisis management in situations of war, famine, migration and natural disasters. Civil society can bring all its experience and networks to bear on the human impact of the current crises – provided it can address issues of accountability, reach and representation and adopt propositional and not only oppositional stances.
- The climate change process and reform of the international financial architecture are critical challenges to the human development agenda at a global level. The reviews of 2010 offer key markers around which to launch global and regional and, in particular, national initiatives equally led by civil society and UN(DP) to address the human impact of the crises and advance the realization of the MDGs in ways that articulate the interests of the poor, revitalizing human development in concept and practice.

A summary of the discussion and proposed actions follows.

## **1. ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION AND CHALLENGES**

The meeting shared, in the main, a common understanding of the current reality and development challenges and the global and national context in which solutions will have to be found.

### **a. Crises and opportunity**

- There was agreement that the “perfect storm” of the interlocking crises related to **climate change, the economic and financial system, and food** present both a fundamental challenge and exceptional opportunity to transform governance from global to national and local levels
- The climate crisis requires a new way of conceptualizing the environment, economics and human development: it is “the mother of all distributional battles.”
- With the right alliances between state and non-state actors and multilateral institutions, the crises can be a means to reinforce civic engagement and human development, emphasizing equity of outcomes and a focus on the poorest.

### **b. Governance deficits and challenges**

There was general agreement that there are **fundamental governance deficits** including

- Democracy (e.g., in national governments, political parties, parliaments, global financial institutions),
- Compliance (with laws and norms and international agreements)
- Coherence (between development agencies and between rhetoric and delivery)
- Legitimacy (of global institutions, structures and systems)
- Justice (for indigenous peoples, in gender, in trade, in finance, etc)
- Accountability (within countries, global institutions, civil society).

Furthermore:

- New governance arrangements must be accountable to and protect the poorest 20 percent from global crisis and empower them to be part of the solution to global problems.
- Non-state actors are crucial players in the emerging forms of governance at all levels; in large part, CSOs working with local officials are able to reach the poorest 20 per cent and have the legitimacy to be at the table providing or searching for solutions.
- Whether in the aid architecture or in the main global governance pillars (finance and trade, climate, security), thinking and action occurs in **silos**, privileging a few actors, with the fundamental interests of the poorest remaining marginal to these discussions. Inter-sectoral approaches are needed to overcome the powerful and vested interests and link the experts in each of the 'silos' with citizens and communities.
- The term 'new multilateralism' – whether refined as 'people's multilateralism,' 'inclusive multilateralism,' or 'new global governance' - cannot be assumed to be a benign force that will accelerate poverty eradication, gender equality and climate justice for women, indigenous peoples, and the poorest of the poor. The new vision must mean more than the old-style multilateralism transferred to new emergent powers. It must be a new multilateralism based on 'justice not power.'
- A new vision of multilateralism needs fundamental transformation of relationships of power, and not simply tinkering with existing power structures – it must have at its heart new participatory forms of democracy, civic engagement and human rights.

#### **c. Civil society architecture, alliances and accountabilities**

Much of the current global civil society architecture is driven by the aid architecture, too Northern and fundraising-driven, though this is changing.

- Civil society space is closing at the national level, with restrictive laws and policies being put in place by many governments.
- At the national level, civil society space is (and should be) linked with policy space for governments, which is often limited by donors and international financial institutions.
- There are major gaps in knowledge about civil society (e.g Central Asia, links with the media, and lack of internal accountability and self-criticism).
- Secular civil society has yet to resolve the nature of its engagement with faith-based organizations, which are a large and influential part of this sector.
- Civil society capacity for both political mobilization and service delivery has largely overgrown its capacity for policy analysis and elaboration. This contributes to the gap between "political function" and "service delivery."
- Civil society platforms exist in many countries, though they may not always be representative or robust; strengthening national platforms must go alongside promoting the richness and diversity in civil society.
- Civil society tends to be oppositional and not sufficiently propositional – it should lead the way in this process and take the UN with it.

#### **d. UN(DP) role and reputation**

While civil society still looks to the UN and its agencies as a key player / space in which to promote inclusive forms of governance, there are concerns about the extent to which UN(DP) can fulfill expectations.

*Strengths:*

- UNDP has the right mission and holistic mandate to address the development and governance impacts of the crises.
- It has experience in working with civil society at the international level (through its Civil Society Advisory Committee).
- It is present on the ground in most countries (and often leads the UNCT).

- UNDP can disseminate knowledge and good practice.
- Clever and important UN processes have pulled off big achievements (such as HDR) by ‘working in the cracks.’
- There is a new and receptive Administrator, and senior staff who are adept at diplomacy within the UN system.

*Weaknesses:*

- The UN needs to prove its ability to work in crisis situations with civil society in negotiating roles.
- UN(DP) is often indistinguishable from the governments it serves, may not always be able to speak truth to power; it may not always be able to defend civil society space or convene or engage systematically with local/national civil society.
- It is seen to lack financial muscle and clout, vis-à-vis the international financial institutions, emerging ‘southern’ governments and increasingly large and influential CSOs.
- UN reform does not engage successfully with the outside actors (e.g., the system-wide coherence panel, the Cardoso panel report). Mainstream analysis now clearly understands the fact that states are only one part of governance frameworks; the UN is far behind.

## **2. ELEMENTS OF A SHARED VISION AND COMMITMENT**

The meeting was unanimous that it was urgent to confront the critical challenges against a people-centered development agenda (e.g., climate change, economic crisis, food crisis) and that the substance of this intervention is at least as crucial as the process.

### **a. There was a shared commitment:**

- Towards people-centered development, human development and the rights-based approach anchored within a framework geared to promoting gender justice, the empowerment of women and protection of the rights of and justice for indigenous peoples.
- To the goal of equity of outcomes (also implying and linking to climate justice) and the need to measure inequality.
- To frame interventions around gender justice, indigenous peoples’ rights and food sovereignty.
- To a bottom-up approach, to meeting people(s) in their own spaces, respecting their processes and time frames for consultation, and ensuring that language/format (including technical language/digital format) is not a barrier to participation, and to employ local knowledge and solutions.
- To look, with a sense of urgency, for new multi-tier/multi-level governance arrangements that would include the voices of and be accountable to the most marginal 20% of the world’s population.
- To refine our conceptual definition of what a human development/people-centered development agenda entails, contribute to the HDR 2010 process and the human development discourse.

### **b. First principles**

- National / regional UN(DP)-civil society initiatives can be facilitated by (but not necessarily convened by) some global networks with national/local mandates – CIVICUS, ActionAid, Social Watch, for instance – with participation by social movements, indigenous peoples, trade unions, and others who are not represented by large civil society networks.
- Process must be driven by substance – “form follows function” – be context-specific, be geared towards equity of outcome for the bottom 20 per cent, and reflect the urgency of the current situation in relation to the crises.
- Participants at the meeting who represent networks will consult widely but quickly with their constituencies.

### **3. COMMITMENTS TO ENGAGE IN A PARTNERSHIP BUILDING PROCESS**

Governance arrangements to find solutions will be undertaken in multiple arenas, from global to local. How far can UN(DP) empower civil society including indigenous peoples to be part of the solutions in the arenas in which it is active (global and national). Partnerships among CSOs and between them and progressive “groups” within the UN can help to break new ground in intersecting human development and new inclusive forms of governance:

#### **a. Refine the conceptual definition of a human development agenda**

There is a clear opportunity running up to the Human Development Report 2010 and beyond to influence both the 2010 report and reinvigorate the discourse around the concept of human development.

#### On HDR 2010:

- There are a number of emerging themes for HDR 2010, including social spending, consideration of the social economy, economics and gender, and how to better reflect political freedom, recession, conflict, climate change and HIV/AIDS.
- Rather than address issues separately, HDR 2010 can have a framework like: *Governing over Crises to the Reach the Poorest 20 percent* (Social Watch could co-convene; GCAP could campaign on it).
- UNDP should use the process of the Human Development Report 2010 to facilitate focus on the poorest 20 percent, by expanding dialogue beyond development experts to peasant organizations and trade unions, indigenous peoples and other constituencies dramatically affected by the current crises.
- The human development concept, HDR and HDI have been an important counter-balance to simple growth-based measures; a ‘gem’ among UN initiatives, and a key analytical and advocacy tool in the hands of civil society and development practitioners. But the human development index/report could now better reflect the New Multilateralism and begin to embody/measure equity, volatility, workers’ rights, the rights-based approach, the state of food producers and indigenous peoples, gender time-use, the effects of neo-liberalism, the state of civil society and future trends. Other attempts to measure the quality of life and prosperity (e.g., the Sarkozy-Stiglitz Commission) should be taken into account.
- The HDR could be promoted more aggressively and applied more politically and strategically. It has not been transformative because it has not been allowed to be. Political intransigence, cooption and policy incoherence has meant that the measurements of human development have not translated into action in the policy environment. The HDR must also adopt a forward looking posture. In addition to the specific topic focus of each issue, there should be an update section (or boxes) that links to previous issues and challenges; and forecasts the trajectory and likely outcome of existing and newly identified trends or turning points (negative or positive) on identified themes. New factors that both enliven and contextualize the indicators must be tracked and debated. Ultimately, the HDR has to interface more directly with the area of macroeconomic and financial policy. Social issues do not occur in abstraction.

#### On the human development discourse:

- Twenty years ago the HDR and HDI embodied the conceptual redefinition of the development agenda that aimed at generating countervailing conceptual and political power against the mantra of economic growth and infrastructural development. Such conceptual rethinking was led by an alliance between key intellectuals, civil society networks and like-minded people within the UN who tried to work the system. It succeeded and a lot of progress can be reported.
- However, today many multilateral and bilateral agencies embrace a concept of human development that embodies a paradigm of market-centered individual economic empowerment that is far from the people-centered development approach (with its strong emphasis on community self-reliance, gender equity and sustainable livelihoods) that many civil society and community-based organizations struggle to promote. Hence there is a conceptual, strategic and partnership gap within that original political

alliance. This is the space that needs to be rethought and possibly filled. Part of this process will feed into HDR 2010 but the scope of the exercise is much broader in both conceptual and political terms.

### **b. Identify key international processes/opportunities to promote human development**

Some key ongoing political processes were identified as being central to taking forward the 'new multilateralism':

- The climate change global negotiations, as well as the critical adaptation strategies that various societies/communities are (and are not) trying to design or are already implementing; allied to this is the idea for a global climate fund, which already has wide civil society backing. China+G77 are pushing for climate adaptation funding to go through the UN, which is a huge opportunity.
- The rethinking of markets and their governance mechanisms which has been ignited by the economic crisis; allied to this the upcoming UN General Assembly High level Conference on the Economic Crisis, including the proposal for a UN-based Global Economic Coordination Council (although this is a controversial process); follow-up at the General Assembly to the next summit of the G-20 to be held in New York September.
- The reform of the architecture of the multilateral system beginning with some 'low-hanging fruit' such as transparency and merit in the appointment of the heads of the Bretton Woods Institutions.

### **c. Contribute to the opening of spaces**

Facilitate a broad-based engagement by civil society and indigenous peoples in the critical loci where these political processes will unfold or be shaped, these spaces being located at:

- National level: including supporting **sub-regional/regional/sub-national** level activities that may serve unlocking closed national spaces (still to be identified, about 15 countries).<sup>3</sup> UNDP can legitimize civil society in countries where the space is relatively closed by hosting regional or even global discussions in these countries, inviting citizen comments on key global issues and using the power of service delivery agents to open the door.
- Regional level: see, for example, a proposal for Asia below.
- International/global level, including the proposed work on human development and the HDR; connecting those working within silos with one another, and with larger constituencies of civil society, indigenous peoples and social movements at regional and national levels.

## **4. NEXT STEPS**

### **a. Logistics**

- A **working group** was formed to ensure follow-up of the outcomes of the consultation: members include Sunila Abeysekera, Peter Bakvis, Roberto Bissio, John Cavanagh, Kumi Naidoo, Mariama Williams (members of the UNDP Civil Society Advisory Committee), Phil Bloomer, Gigi Francisco, Nigel Martin, Stefano Prato, John Samuel, Ingrid Srinath, Rajesh Tandon and Sam Worthington. (The UNDP Civil Society Division will serve as secretariat, working closely with the Millennium Campaign and the Human Development Report Office.)
- **Ingrid Srinath** has agreed to be a point person in identifying countries and regions for national initiatives.
- Two e-groups will be set up to help facilitate and inform the process (one for the working group on co-convening and one for the wider group).
- There will be a **UNDP project coordinator** for Platform HD2010, and there may also be a need to employ or identify one (or more) people who can connect and cohere the civil society side.

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<sup>3</sup> These could coincide with six countries where civic engagement and MDG planning will be encouraged by UNDP on a pilot basis: Bangladesh, Brazil, Egypt, Ethiopia, the Philippines, and Senegal.

- There was a request to have a **Terms of Reference** for the working group.
- There was a recommendation to set up a **list-serve and/or e-discussion group** as the programme evolves to facilitate exchange among this group and others who may join the Platform, as well as with members of the UNDP Civil Society Advisory Committee.

#### **b. Conceptual frameworks and proposals**

- **John Cavanagh** has drafted a short note on UN-civil society co-convening and co-strategizing at the national level for development dialogue and solutions. A revised version of this note will be circulated soon.
- **Stefano Prato** will propose a conceptual framework on contributing to the re-visioning of the human development concept, with major input from civil society. This will aim to inform a two-track approach – to influence the HDR 2010 process, and contribute to the ongoing human development discourse.
- **Rajesh Tandon** has proposed the following:
  - Prepare a background paper that elaborates the above in the specific Asian context of the next decades.
  - Co-convene a preparatory group (comprising of some of those present in New York, and many others) at the Asian level to frame the purposes of the exercises.
  - Develop a design of seven consultations with the preparatory group; five of these consultations would be national (possible countries could be China, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Viet Nam); two regional consultations, one to kick-start the process, and another to synthesise emerging outcomes and lessons.
  - Promote among policy-makers in the region and globally these outputs of new meanings of human development, new alliances for new forms of governance, and new spaces for national and regional dialogues.