

Declaration of Civil Society Organizations from the Arab Region on the Post 2015 framework

Regional Consultation on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda
(Beirut, 14 March 2013)

General Background

In the year 2000, the Millennium Declaration (MD) put forward a set of challenges to global development efforts and that outlined a "collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level". The Millennium Declaration called for global policies and measures, to address the needs of developing countries and economies in transition so that all can benefit from the positive effects of globalization. It contained a statement of values, principles and objectives for the international development agenda for the 21st century. Most importantly, the MD established a strong link between Peace, Security, Democracy, respect of Human Rights and development efforts seeking to achieve social justice, eradicate poverty and create employment.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that followed were a set of negotiated, specific and measurable targets that focused on poverty, hunger, unemployment, education, health and infectious diseases, the status of women and the environment. The goals were mainly addressed to developing countries, while they included one goal (Goal 8) that addressed global collective cooperation to achieve the first seven goals. This 8th goal focused on global partnerships for development and aimed to advance an open and rule-based trading and financial system, address the needs of least developed countries, and deal comprehensively with the debt of developing countries. Furthermore, it entailed cooperation with pharmaceutical companies and the private sector so as to provide access to affordable and essential drugs and to make available the benefits of new technologies to developing countries¹.

The MDGs include quantitative targets and objectives that are easy to comprehend. The good intentions of the MDGs are hard to disagree with. However, the accountability of the international community and national governments in their implementation has been limited. As a result, the MDGs did not serve the larger strategic purpose of achieving sustainable development and addressing interlinked global challenges such as "eradicating poverty, ensuring environmental sustainability, achieving economic equity, ensuring gender equality, tackling climate change, building resilience, managing equitable distribution of natural resources, realizing human rights, and reducing inequality between and within populations²."

Conceptually, the MDGs present a desired outcome but do not outline the policy and process needed to achieve such outcomes. The MDGs do not fully consider the diverse positions that different countries are starting from in their developmental pathways. Moreover, the MDGs are laid out in terms of aggregates and averages that often conceal distributional outcomes. This poses a number of questions about the different goals including the effectiveness of the role of global partnership for development (Goal 8). For example, the intentions of this goal to provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries is undermined by the specificities of cooperating with pharmaceutical companies, precisely those that prohibit anyone from calling their abusive monopoly into question. Similarly, the intention to make available the benefits of new technologies in developing countries is conditioned by cooperation with the private sector that is often not interested in less than competitive pricing. Last but not least, Goal 8 calls for dealing comprehensively with the mounting debts of developing countries³, yet there is no guidance on the

¹We Can End Poverty 2015, Millennium Development Goals. Available at: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/global.shtml>

²Beyond 2015, Sustainable Development Goals and the relationship to a post 2015 global development framework: a Beyond 2015 discussion paper. Available at: <http://www.stakeholderforum.org/fileadmin/files/Beyond%202015%20MDG-SDG%20relationship.pdf>

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tools with which to go about such a process and within what framework³.

The MDGs are also set out in proportions, such as “half the number of people,” and they address a number of critical human development issues such as literacy and the preservation of biodiversity. However, some of the indicators are inappropriate or misleading, and their formulation reveals the ways in which the MDGs have been misunderstood, misused and misappropriated. For instance, goal 3 in the MDGs, “Promote gender equality and empower women”, does not include indicators signifying progress. Economic empowerment without reproductive rights and the corresponding health care will leave women as less than **full** citizens. Furthermore, educating females without protecting them from **sexual harassment** and gender based **violence** will hinder girls and women from fully utilizing their educational qualifications⁴. Similarly the MDGs emphasize increases in the rate of economic growth yet do not include policies or measures for redistribution of assets that would ensure that the poor can benefit from such growth.

The outbreak of the global crisis, in its multiple dimensions, financial, economic, climate, energy and food prices, revealed the imbalance in the nature of the existing global trading and financial system. It became clear the extent to which the available systems were geared toward the enrichment of a select few on the global market at the expense of the larger portion of the population. More critically, it highlighted once more that achieving the goals is not just a matter of funding and commitments rather, it is an issue of patterns and policies at the macro-economic, financial and social development levels. In this sense it emphasized the need to return to the underlying principles of the Millenium Decleration as a conceptual framework of analysis that sought to identify the linkages between different sets of challenges and their impact on development.

The Developmental Picture in the Arab Region

As for the Arab Region, whilst the global development agenda was focused on the remaining five years of the MDGs, citizens in Arab countries took to the streets to say that the current economic and political systems had failed them. Popularly labeled the “Arab Spring,” these uprisings deposed a number of presidents in some countries and led to civil conflict in others. Demands by Arab citizens focused on **dignity, participation and social justice**. In other words Arab citizens were calling for an end to all forms of exclusion; be it economic, political, social or cultural. Development, they stated, cannot take place without freedom of individuals and of nations particularly in a region that is still suffering from the longest occupation in modern history. The continued Israeli occupation of Palestine and its expansionist settler policies has had tremendous and devastating impact on peace, stability and development in Palestine and surrounding countries.

These demands also demonstrated the extent to which the neo liberal development models implemented under the undemocratic regimes of the Arab region had effectively produced poverty, inequality and unemployment; this despite some promising indicators in some of those same countries in rates of economic growth and the achievement of the MDGs. Indeed, the economies of Arab countries’ adopted models of growth that neglected developmental objectives and peoples’ economic and social rights. Policy makers prioritized integration in the global economy through

³Amin, S. 2013. ‘The Millennium Development Goals: A Critique from the South’. Monthly Review. Available at: <http://monthlyreview.org/2006/03/01/the-millennium-development-goals-a-critique-from-the-south>

⁴Ariffin, J. 2004. ‘Gender Critiques of the Millennium Development Goals : An Overview and an Assessment.

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trade and investment liberalization, borrowing, expansion of privatization deals and public-private partnerships, and overall economic deregulation. Most countries achieved economic growth; however poverty, unemployment, and inequities grew dramatically. Markets were not working the way they should and the relevant political system was not correcting these failures.

Most of the countries in the region are facing multifaceted challenges particularly the imperative to move from a rentier model of governance toward a democratic and productive state. This can only take place if governance is based on the respect of Human Rights, the rule of law, transparency, accountability, integrity and responsibility. The transition toward such a state needs to consider the rights and responsibilities of citizenship a key pillar and focus on the empowerment of citizens, by enhancing knowledge as one of the top priorities, gender equality, equity and justice.

Finally, such a state would by necessity be based on a new social contract promoting participation, enhancing competitiveness, adopting policies for fair redistribution of wealth and resources and providing all the necessary public services with a good quality.

In this regard, this statement, issued during the regional Arab CSO consultation, outlines the priorities they have identified for the post-2015 development framework. These build on the new emerging challenges mentioned above and the lessons learnt from the initial MDGs process' failures and gaps.

Recommendations by Civil Society Organizations in the Arab Region to the post-2015 Framework

1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- **The post 2015 development framework should be based on the main overview suggested by the Millennium Declaration; the MD** underlined the positive link between peace and security and democratic governance at all levels, including the global, regional, national and local, with efforts to realize social justice. As such it is imperative to reiterate this link in the post 2015 agenda as a key element of its conceptual framework and adopt the necessary themes, goals and plans for implementation.
- **The Post-2015 development framework must be based on a comprehensive approach to development that takes political, social, economic, environmental and cultural rights into account.** Over the past few decades, economic growth has been taken by some as an indicator of development. As the Arab uprisings and the Occupy Wall Street movements have shown, economic growth does not by necessity lead to development. A more comprehensive approach to growth is needed; one that is inclusive and re-distributional and ensures that the elements of this growth benefit all of society.
- **Following from the above, the Post 2015 Agenda should be based on a new citizen-centered development paradigm:** The central role given to economic growth within development must be set aside. The post-2015 agenda must adopt a multidimensional and comprehensive approach. In this regard, we need new economic priorities based on productive sectors that **generate sustainable and decent jobs** and a **reconsideration of the regulatory role of the State**, which is mainly entitled to protect the rights of citizens, shaping policies focused on fair redistribution, including through taxation and the provision of services. The post-2015 framework must adopt a **new social contract between citizens**

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and the State based on the human rights framework and protection of citizenship. Furthermore, the development agenda should promote different objectives of national economics and a move away from growth-led policies and export-led growth towards the creation of sustainable productive sectors with an added value and jobs in agriculture, services, tourism, manufacturing, etc... in order to build productive societies. This necessitates the protection of the needed “policy space” that allows for the elaboration of national strategies, the adoption of macro-economic choices and provides the possibility of implementing them according to national needs and priorities.

- **The post 2015 agenda must create coherence between the implemented policies and the principles of Human Rights and Democracy:** the respect of Human rights and democracy is key for the success of the developmental efforts and to reach the goals; it is thus imperative that the framework, agenda, policies and goals of the post 2015 agenda are fully coherent with the human rights framework.
- **The post-2015 agenda must tackle governance at the global level: As the most recent financial crisis indicated,** the challenges faced in global governance must be prioritized in the post-2015 framework in order to make it more transparent, democratic and participatory. This requires revising the global macroeconomic policy framework, including those of “Bretton Woods Institution”; the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Moreover, the current global financial architecture ought to be reformed towards more fiscal regulations securing control over capital volatility and mobility. Democratization of global governance must aim at enhancing the participation of developing countries in the decision making and the promotion of the mutual accountability with efficient and effective access to information. Democratic global governance should be based on the core principles of equal participation and common and differential responsibility.
- **The main focus of the debate should shift from merely setting new goals and targets for post-2015 towards the analysis of key issues and means of implementation to tackle them:** The MDGs over-simplified the discussion on development framework as the goals and targets set were not incorporated within a broader development framework. Therefore, we need to shift focus from thinking of new sets of numerical targets towards designing the goals and objectives to capture the various critical conditions and different enabling environments. Now that **the need to shift from goal-focused development** is clear, tracking quantitative trends accompanied by qualitative analysis is also essential. Furthermore, the priority issues selected for post-2015 should entail a clear statement of the problem with thorough analysis of its root causes from a multi-dimensional perspective, as well as addressing related challenges. This should be further strengthened with clear and time-lined action plans and means of implementation.

2. PROCESS TO THE POST 2015

- **The implementation of the post-2015 agenda should be much more inclusive while adopting a bottom-up approach to development:** The post-2015 process should be participatory, multilateral and inclusive of all involved in promoting development. Developing countries of the South should have a similar proactive engagement as that of industrial countries. The process should be inter-governmental, involve all stakeholders and

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address the demands of civil society in a sound and comprehensive manner, whereby the mechanisms should be transparent, consultative and take into account the aspirations and needs of the all citizens including those who suffer from poverty, unemployment and climate change.

3. THE STRUCTURE OF THE FRAMEWORK

- **The post 2015 agenda should focus on the need to elaborate and adopt national agendas based on the national priorities and the protection of the basic rights of the citizens:** the national agenda defining the priorities and the strategies to protect Human rights must be the result of an inclusive national dialogue including the different groups namely the business sectors , trade, labor, farmer and professional unions, civil society organizations, think tanks, research centers, academia, women and youth movements besides others
- **The post-2015 agenda should promote and enhance the efforts leading to the regional cooperation and coordination;** the regional cooperation is prerequisite to face the challenges of the integration in the global economies; it ought to establish sound mechanisms for conflict resolution and peace keeping, it should create the efficient system for the fair redistribution of wealth and natural resources, namely water, oil and gaz. Last but not least the regional coordination must establish the relevant rules and regulations for the economic cooperation
- The post 2015 goals should allow for **structural flexibility at the national level.** There is some interdependence among objectives. Thus, the new framework should consider **development objectives are a norm rather than floor or a ceiling.**
- It must also be explicitly stated that the Post-2015 development framework represents **objectives for the world as a whole**, which are not a scale to measure progress in every country because **national goals must be formulated domestically**, with the use of global norms as a point of reference.
- **Inequalities must be analyzed in any assessment of outcomes.** Within the post-2015 framework, it is necessary to monitor progress by introducing some weights that reflect the distribution among people. Despite the promising achievements of the MDGs, it is clear that the progress is uneven within and across countries on the geographic, social, economic and gender levels. **Combating chronic inequalities within and between countries** must be a priority in the agenda through the promotion of economic systems built on equitable redistribution.

The post-2015 agenda must capture the linkages between achieving development nationally and addressing systemic failures globally and must ensure policy coherence for development: This necessitates the implementation of the targets included in the Goal 8 whilst taking into account their respect for internationally accepted instruments of human rights, which is the clear expression of the global partnership. Achieving the developmental goals goes beyond focusing on development aid to also look at the impacts of key policy areas such as trade, agriculture, fisheries, security on development prospects.

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- **Ground the framework in the intergovernmental processes and mechanisms of monitoring and accountability of the existing international human rights instruments:** One of the vital issues that must be addressed in the post-2015 process is the question of accountability. The lack of accountability mechanisms in the MDGs framework necessitates grounding this framework within the existing international human rights instruments such as UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, core human rights treaties including International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and human rights monitoring mechanisms including Universal Periodic Review to ensure accountability. The post 2015 development agenda should include mechanisms for monitoring the commitment and implementation of the said development agenda.

4. THEMATIC ISSUES/GOALS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE POST 2015 AGENDA

- **From Rentier toward a Developmental State:** States must be held accountable for their systems of governance. The post 2015 agenda should allow for clear targets for the move toward developmental and democratic states. This is particularly important for the Arab region where international support for previous dictatorships critically undermined development initiatives. For the post 2015 agenda, this could include revisiting existing social contracts and rethinking the roles and responsibilities of states and citizens alike.
- **An End of Occupation should be a distinct goal of the Post 2015 agenda.** The Arab region is suffering from the longest foreign occupation in modern history where a clear system of racial and religious discrimination has been put in place. This is not only a clear violation of the international law and of covenants on peace, security and human rights but it also a violation of the right to development. The post 2015 development agenda should include a clear goal with regards to the "right to self determination" as outlined in the MD and the end to occupation that includes a time bound agenda and targets for its achievement.
- **Freedom of individuals and of nations on the political and socioeconomic fronts to realize their aspirations and potential should be a clear goal of the post 2015 agenda.** Without freedom there can be no development as the Arab uprisings have shown. The realization of such freedom requires a number of measures on the political and economic front. On the political front, it includes the enjoyment of all political, economic, social and cultural rights. Policies, benchmarks and goal posts for the realization of such rights should be formulated with a time bound agenda for their achievement.
- On the economic front, this implies having a supportive financial system (financial stability, oriented to real economy, serve needs of small producers and consumers), global macro-economic coordination and policies supportive of development, non-speculative commodity market, a development-oriented trading system, sharing of and affordable access to technology and knowledge, and a fair and participatory global economic governance.

With regards to trade, the global trading system should become development-oriented. The development agenda ought to consider the country-specificities of developing countries and their right to develop as well as to follow the suit of developed countries in the path taken and tools implemented to reach the levels of development they have reached today. Furthermore, the demands of developed country for increasing trade competitiveness and further trade integration should be aligned with a periodic assessment of the implications of

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existing trade agreements and upcoming ones on the economic and social fronts. Finally, it is essential that trade agreements between developed and developing countries include as a benchmark the right of “policy space”⁵. Through this policy space, developing countries can create policies that support the revival of their economies in terms of producing employment and development as well as minimizing potential negative spillovers that may result from further liberalization.

- **The Post 2015 Agenda should promote participatory frameworks of governance.** As the popular unrest that has swept cities globally indicates, citizens and civil society organizations are demanding their right to participate at all levels of decision making. This entails the recognition of civil society as a key partner in identifying issues, policies and goals and in the implementation of the agendas; that is mainstreaming participatory processes at various levels of policy making including the provision of access to information and other channels. In turn this implies an overhaul of current systems of governance. Clear mechanisms for implementing such policies with bench marks for their measurement and achievement must be part of the new development framework.
- **Equity and social justice rather than the reduction of poverty should be a central goal for the Post 2015 Agenda.** Focus on poverty reduction has shifted attention from larger questions of equity and justice while economic growth has been used as an indicator of development. At the same time, numerous studies are now pointing to the fact that the richest 20 percent of individuals are benefiting from 70 percent of world income while the poorest 20 percent benefit less than 1 percent of world income. As such, the post 2015 development agenda should focus on growth with distributional mechanisms that ensure that the benefits of such growth reach all levels of society. Furthermore, patterns of inequity are not limited to income, but also include geographic, ethnic, religious and gender based biases that present a clear hindrance to development. The post-2015 agenda should present an in-depth analysis of such multidimensional inequities and include policies, goals and benchmarks for eradicating them.
- **Maintaining Social Cohesion: Many countries across the world are facing considerable social instability whether as a result of economic inequities, transitions to democracy or historic injustices.** The post 2015 agenda should include clear policy prescriptions for the maintenance of social cohesion including the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms where needed.
- **The specific conditions of LDC’s many of which are suffering from considerable challenges in terms of governance, underdevelopment, acute levels of poverty and food insecurity, internal and external conflicts and widespread corruption among other issues should be addressed in a systematic manner.** This includes a commitment to institution building, facilitation of trade agreements, debt forgiveness and commitment to support peaceful dialogues and to not arm warring factions.
- **The rights of refugees and displaced should be clarified and upheld.** This includes the rights of Palestinian refugees; the largest population to be in refugee status in contemporary

⁵ The policy space is the ability of the national governments to protect their policy decision making processes within the framework of the multilateral and bilateral trade agreements

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history as well as the rights of those displaced a result of wars and economic hardships. The post 2015 agenda should include clear benchmarks for governments in terms of the just treatment of both refugees and internally displaced populations. It should also encourage countries of origin to facilitate the return of refugees and the displaced to their areas of origin.

- **The post-2015 agenda should address gender inequality within the transformation of the development model itself:** The MDGs framework reduced gender inequalities to simplistic targets without taking into account the larger policy nexus to eradicate such discrimination. Thus, the post-2015 agenda needs to move from the mere mainstreaming of gender equality, to gender equity as central to any new development paradigm and not a mere byproduct of certain policies focused on numerical goals.

The post 2015 agenda should be an opportunity to address the deficits in knowledge acquired or a move from quantitative to qualitative measures. Current efforts to improve education are focusing on quantitative and numeric goals while the challenge is to improve knowledge including reforming the educational systems and curricula, promoting research and development skills and initiatives at different levels and in both the humanities and the sciences. It also should include concerted efforts to close the digital gap within and between countries and regions.

Clear and solid commitment to ensure sources of finance for development must be ensured within the post-2015 framework: Although the global recession and economic crisis affect both developed and developing countries, the real commitment of the developed countries to ensuring sufficient sources of finances, including 0.7% of GNI as Official Development Assistance is critical within post-2015 framework. This should be accompanied with genuine respect to commitments agreed in Accra and Bussan.

Finally, Arab civil society organizations, through ANND, will continue to coordinate and work together with ESCWA on the road to Post-2015 to ensure a genuine participatory process and engage Arab civil society effectively in its consultations.