



Remarks

by

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Vice-President

on behalf of

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President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

General Assembly

High Level Meeting on ‘Achieving Poverty Eradication through Full Employment
and Decent Work for All in the Post-2015 Development Agenda’, part of the
Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)

Opening Session

New York

23 May 2014

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This morning, it is my distinct pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, who very much regrets that he is not able to be with us.

Poverty eradication has been at the heart of the United Nations development agenda since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration in 2000. This paramount goal will continue to guide us as we craft a new agenda for the post 2015 era. Therefore it is both fitting, and indeed necessary, that today we gather for this High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on ‘Achieving Poverty Eradication through Full Employment and Decent Work for All in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.’

Our meeting today contributes to the Second Decade for the Eradication of poverty (2008-2017), as mandated by General Assembly resolution 68/226. This resolution repeatedly reminds us that poverty eradication is a matter of urgency and I quote “an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind” [end quote]. There is no greater task, nor immediate priority before the global community.

During this one day session, we will both look back and forward. We will aim to assess and share best practices from past and ongoing work and, at the same time, we will look towards future expectations and opportunities, related to the post-2015 development agenda.

Excellencies,

Collectively mobilizing around the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has focused our efforts on reducing poverty worldwide, and has shown commendable and noteworthy progress. The most recent World Bank estimates confirm that the MDG target on poverty

was achieved at the global level in 2010, five years before the target date. Since 1990, 700 million people have been lifted out of extreme poverty. However, not all have benefited from this progress, which has been uneven, both within and among countries. Poverty remains high and persistent in many parts of the world with about 1.2 billion people still living on less than \$1.25 a day, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

With the deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals just around the corner, and Member States in the process of shaping a strong post-2015 development agenda, our efforts toward poverty eradication are at a critical juncture. We must focus on completing the unfinished business of the MDGs and addressing new and emerging challenges.

Yet the work we do will only be lasting and irreversible if the agenda is crafted and implemented in a holistic manner, incorporating economic, social, and environmental dimensions. If post 2015 development is to be sustainable, we have to address a number of critical issues, many of which you will discuss today.

As recognized by the theme of today's event, some of the greatest challenges to poverty eradication are related to high unemployment, rampant underemployment and informality, as well as rising inequality in many countries. There is widespread recognition that sustained, inclusive and job-rich growth is a prerequisite for reducing poverty. Given the lasting impacts of the global financial and economic crisis, and the largely jobless recovery, inclusive growth and employment should be at the centre of the new development framework.

Distinguished Guests,

Promoting industrial development and economic diversification, as well as growth in agricultural productivity and investments in infrastructure development can help create

more and better jobs, and ultimately reduce poverty. Greater coherence among macroeconomic, trade, and social policies is another important element.

For people living in poverty labour is often their main asset. Engaging in productive employment and decent work empowers them with the means to improve their lives. Workers holding a decent job are not only personally empowered but also socially, giving them a voice that enables actively participating in decisions that affect their well-being. Young people in particular are increasingly struggling to enter the labour market and youth unemployment rates are at an all-time high.

The burdens of poverty also carry certain prejudices and biases with them. We hear about the feminization of poverty, we know certain groups are more vulnerable to falling into poverty and that specific circumstances are more likely to foster it. Ongoing discussions on the post-2015 agenda have recognised the damaging consequences of increasing inequality between and within countries, and that future strategies must strive to include all members of society and contribute towards shared prosperity.

Growing inequality between rural and urban areas and among social groups undermines growth, social cohesion, and makes it harder for people and families to break the cycle of poverty. It compromises the health, nutrition, and education of large sections of society, as well as limiting job prospects and participation in social, political, and economic life for persons and communities in disadvantaged situations. It has also led to the consistent exclusion of women, persons with disabilities, older persons, youth and indigenous peoples, among others.

Consultations to elaborate the post-2015 development agenda have therefore emphasized the importance of implementing social protection measures with a focus on the most marginalized groups. Ensuring equality of economic opportunity, as well as building the resilience of the poor from natural disasters, have also featured prominently.

However, for such transformations to take root, social, economic and political institutions must be inclusive, accountable, and promote transparent and participatory decision-making.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The multi-faceted nature of poverty is complex and intricate, but I hope I have given you some ideas for consideration today. I'm sure you will have many of your own to add.

Before concluding, let me highlight the format of today's meeting. The morning is reserved for the General Assembly formal meeting and you'll have the opportunity to express your views and comments. In the afternoon, you are invited to participate in an interactive, multi-stakeholder panel discussion, followed by a brief closing segment.

Your valuable ideas, your out-of-the-box thinking, and your shared experiences will all bring us closer to resolving an urgent and pressing problem. The burdens of poverty must not be borne by the poor alone.

Thank you.
