Sameer Dossani, ActionAid International, comments on FfD Informal CSO Interactive Hearing

"The disposition to admire, and almost to worship, the rich and the powerful, and to despise, or, at least, to neglect persons of poor and mean condition is the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments." – Adam Smith.

Given the level of inequality global and the tenure of some of the conversations leading up to this meeting, we would do well to pay heed to Smith's warning.

The promise of the end of the colonial era was that countries of the South would be free to develop economic systems that would serve the needs of the entire population and not only those of a handful of super-elites. But this has not been the case. Cold war and neocolonial politics, including "hot" wars in many parts of Asia, Latin America and Africa, locked most Southern countries into a model of development which has and continues to be a failure. Neoliberalism, prevalent since the 1990s, has made the situation worse, with inequality going to extremes.

The result is a system that echoes the old colonial order. Commodities are extracted, sold cheaply and often without being taxed to international markets for processing and then resold, sometimes to the same country in which the raw materials originated. This is nearly exactly the pattern that allowed 19th century British industries to become so powerful while the Indian farmers who provided them with cotton starved. The exploitation of cheap natural resources and labour combined with the particular exploitation of women, who continue to bear a disproportionate burden of poverty and rights violations.

The solution for the commodities trap is clear – invest in manufacturing to create more jobs and, not coincidentally, more consumers, and provide social protections so people can realize their right to health, education, food, and housing.

Where will the money come from? There are many answers of course, but one of them must surely be to go after the money that is already there, namely the companies that are already operating in our countries, often in the extractive industries, and often not paying their fair share of tax. Estimates vary, but it seems likely that ending tax avoidance and harmful incentive schemes could generate $300 billion a year for developing countries. That's roughly double OECD estimates of global aid to developing countries. Twice as much as aid, and without the conditions often attached to aid. And because of loopholes and pervasive secrecy, even those countries that have the temerity to seek to collect taxes from transnational companies find they lack the power to do so.

And it is here that we get to the question of what agreements would be most likely to bear fruit for the Addis conference. Transparency and public reporting on tax matters are a start, and double taxation treaties need to be written and implemented so as not to allow loopholes for getting money out untaxed, but rather to provide sustainable revenues of funding high-quality investment for poor people.

The last 30 years have shown that it is the height of naivety to expect that all companies will voluntarily do anything that might limit their ability to extract profit in the short term. So the solution does not lie in new voluntary guidelines or developing best practice, it lies in changing the legal and regulatory framework.

While other processes, including the OECD/BEPS process, might be part of the solution, the UN system has to play a central role as other processes are explicitly driven by richer countries. 'Upgrading' the UN tax committee to an intergovernmental committee is a step in right direction, but not enough. We need a new agreement or a convention that both mandates and provides funding for sustainable development that favors the poorest women, children and men. And we need a new mechanism to go after corporate tax dodgers. If we do not tackle this question of taxing international capital in developing countries, we have no business talking about domestic resource mobilization.