

Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane's address

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Excellency, Former President of Germany and member of the UN High Level Panel Horst Köhler;

Honourable Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Dirk Niebel;

Honourable guests and dignitaries present here today, including representatives of the UN System, members of the UN High Level Panel of Eminent Persons, representatives of governments and their development institutions, fellow activists, members of civil society, academia, and members of the business community.

I am delighted to be here with you today.

The post 2015 process is possibly one of the most important global engagements currently taking place alongside the UN conference on climate change and sustainable development. I believe that these global dialogues have potential to redefine the destiny of humanity and indeed lead us to a better equitable world. When the UN Secretary General issued the clarion call for broad-based participation, one of our first intentions was to ensure that grassroots citizens all over the world play a significant role in determining the post-2015 world – not simply as window dressing; but because the last few decades have shown that any attempts to address the world's development challenges, including eradicating poverty, have little or no impact if citizens are not an integral part of the solution. Citizens are the central ingredient to any transformative agenda.

African civil society have conducted extensive consultations with grassroots communities, through the work of African Monitor, ACORD, GCAP, OXFAM Africa, National NGO Coalitions and over 100 other partners that belong to the Africa CSO Working Group on Post-2015. My only intention today is to share with you emerging results from these consultations – so that you understand what a relevant and effective post-2015 development agenda must entail from the perspectives of ordinary citizens. I cannot over-state the critical importance of listening to the wisdom that emerges when the poor begin to define the future they want to see. Five things stand out for me:-

The Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda must decisively address inequality

Sustainable development in the post-2015 world must concern itself with one primary objective, i.e. the need to drastically shift from an unjust, unequal world towards an equal world – where global resources are shared by all, and benefit all. There is plenty of evidence to show that we live in grossly unequal societies, and that the cost of this to humanity and the sustainability of world resources is significantly high. This cost is not only in terms of resources being plundered by conglomerates; or war and famine that results from resource scarcity for the majority and excess for the privileged; there is also a significant cost in the loss of morality, spirituality and dignity in our societies. Unequal societies promote excessive binging by a few at the cost of the many – thus resulting in the perpetuation of greed, disregard for human life, disregard for the environment we live in, and institutionalised disregard for human dignity.

The Post-2015 Declaration of the Africa CSO Working Group calls for the elimination of inequality and discrimination in all its forms - including gender-based discrimination. The particular multiple burdens faced by women and girls (including sexual violence, limited access to education and skills) should be an urgent priority for our world.

If we are to significantly and seriously address inequality, then a number of things need to be transformed in the current world order, including economic systems, governance systems and social systems. This leads me to my second point.

The Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda must promote a transformative economic agenda that provides economic opportunities for the poor, ensuring integration of ordinary citizens and marginalized communities in the production and growth process

This principle is best explained using an anecdote from one of the most effective citizen consultation methodologies African Monitor uses, called Poverty Hearings. As we travelled the African continent seeking to understand what works in communities and what does not work, it became clear that one specific thread was emerging. This was a voice throughout the continent which was saying; “We do not want handouts. We want access to opportunities, and an enabling environment where we can generate sustainable livelihoods”. What does this mean in real terms? It means that investments must be made in productive sectors that absorb the skills of the poor. It means that education systems must be geared towards promoting the capacity of the poor to function as integrated contributors to economic productivity. It means increasing access to productive assets and productive infrastructure for the poor. In short, it means making the poor active contributors of economic development and growth. It is also important to increase economic and social resilience of communities. This would deal with building citizens’ capabilities to adapt to external and internal shocks in the social and economic systems.

The CSO Declaration from Monrovia during the last HLP meeting urged the High Level Panel to “promote an inclusive and sustainable growth and human development paradigm, underpinned by a rights-based approach that strengthens citizenship, participation and empowerment, and guarantees decent employment and universal social protection”.

Third, the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda must give power back to citizens to effect decisions in their own lives

A citizen-driven democratic governance system must be the foundation of the post-2015 governance system if it is to be truly transformative and sustainable. I am not simply talking here about consulting citizens or some other superficial process like that. Evidence from the work African Monitor has done over the years shows that ordinary citizens want to be able to effect decisions that affect their lives. They want meaningful engagement about how their monies are spent by those they have placed in government; they want to inform strategic and planning decisions about the development path in their countries. They want to share the power they have bestowed upon those elected, especially because those in government have been found wanting when it comes to making decisions that benefit the majority.

Fourth, the Post-2015 development agenda must target the elimination of all forms of corruption as a critical enabler to the responsible use of the world’s resources

The post-2015 governance agenda must deal decisively with corruption, and the inefficient use of resources by the political and business elites. African Monitor is currently running a mobile campaign with young people in ten African countries, i.e. Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Botswana, and South Africa. This campaign is meant to seek-out the aspirations of this generation for post-2015. The results coming out from this work are astounding. The strongest and most frequent message is that democratic governance is the area that concerns young people the most. Within this, these young people are calling for an end to corruption and corrupt governments. They express frustration about the betrayal by African leaders who have chosen to care more about their stomachs, pockets and bank accounts than they care about citizens. One young lady from Kenya stated in her sms “*I dream of an Africa devoid of prejudices, an Africa that fully embraces democracy and shuns selfishness, an Africa free of debt and where no one lacks food, homes are safe, children go to school instead of toiling in the fields. I dream of Africa where the libraries are full and the slums are empty. An Africa where education is a right that everyone attains with or without money. I want an Africa that gives birth to the greatest innovators.*” Another one from Uganda stated, “*I hope Africa will be free of corruption by 2016*”. This trend of fatigue with corruption is one we hear in grassroots conversations throughout the world. The architects of the post-2015 agenda need to understand that citizens of the world are speaking strongly and clearly about this issue; and accountability systems put in place to ensure implementation of the post-2015 must provide a strong deterrent to corruption – including rampant corruption found in global business.

Last, but not least, the development partnership framework that will be advanced by the Post-2015 development agenda must be one that recognises the collective and joint responsibility of world governments to provide financing towards an equitable world

Our own work tracking the delivery of development commitments by African governments and their development partners shows that commitments have largely not been met by all role players. The need for shared responsibility in financing for development also requires that we look to new and additional forms of financing – including strengthening taxation systems. I have been championing the Financial Transactions Tax, as well as the Natural Resources Tax as two key innovative taxation systems that could add billions to the development financing envelop. Once these finances are secured, then the question goes back to whether development financiers can use citizens’ knowledge to inform decisions about what should be financed. This means that donors and governments cannot do budget planning, implementation and monitoring without the citizens they aim to benefit.

In my own understanding, having interacted with the grassroots, it seems that the future they want is simple:- Citizens have a deep desire to have the capability to function. Such a capability to function is defined as:-

- The ability to reclaim the power to effect decisions that affect their lives, which requires a certain kind of democratic governance and accountability;
- Have access to equal opportunities across class, gender, religion, taking into consideration vulnerable and excluded groups; and
- Enjoy an enabling environment to sustain their livelihoods.

Since these consultations, it is my hope that rich and profound concepts and ideas will continue to emerge across the globe that will lead humanity to brighter future.

I particularly like the “Zero Goal” approach to setting targets that my colleagues from Oxfam are promoting. I agree that we cannot say we are reducing poverty; we cannot say that we will reduce violence against women and children; we cannot say we will reduce hunger - when we have the means and capability to eliminate it. We must have the audacity to say we will eliminate poverty and hunger from the face of the earth. If you ask me what is the future I want? The future I want is for our children to read about poverty and hunger in history books only, let’s make poverty and human deprivation history!!

THE END.

Additional points during discussion:

A challenge to members of the High Level Panel - ensure that in their report to the Secretary General, the final text is traceable to people’s voices and not exclusively to voices of experts and / or interest groups. In that context, turning the tide in terms of the popular development model that sees citizens as recipients only; to active agents and contributors towards progress.

The final push towards 2015 - we still have two years to 2015. Something has to be done to accelerate the commitments we have already made on current MDGs, including commitments made to resources efforts to meet the MDGs. “ I strongly believe that it is our resolve to honor commitments made and be accountable that will make or break any MDG pact whether current or post 2015.”

Let not forget the positives from the MDGs - The current Millennium Development Goals has been a useful instrument in directing attention towards the most vulnerable amongst us at a time when our economies were excluding more and more of our people due to the obsession with markets. They also provided an internationally acclaimed framework for not just talking about poverty reduction, but actually doing something about it. Even though the results of the current MDG phase have been mixed, the importance of an international consensus is not contestable. Programmes designed around the MDGs have benefitted millions of people across the globe:

- 40 million of African children access to education,
- Moderate reduction in poverty ,
- Progress in controlling infectious disease such malaria, HIV and TB

About African Monitor - African Monitor is a continental organization that came into being in 2005, what was termed the year for Africa then. Its focus is on monitoring development commitments and impact on the grassroots communities. Its work is rooted in the MDG framework in general and goal 8 in particular. African Monitor is the Secretariat for the Africa CSO Working Group on Post-2015.