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Best Wishes for the Holiday Season and a very Happy New Year!

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➢ **The Post-MDG 2015 UN Development Policy: From the Global Politics of Poverty Alleviation to the Global Politics of Solidarity.**

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The process of thinking through the post-2015 Development Agenda within the UN system started with the first step being given to the internal UN Task Team made up of representatives from over fifty UN agencies. It began its work in January 2012 with a zero draft prepared by the staff of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and United Nations Development Programme, drawing on a number of papers that had been critical of the MDGs. Presenting a balanced review of the perceived positive and negative aspects of the MDG goals, it noted among the shortcomings of the MDG agenda that it was "not explicit as what are to be seen as the *structural causes of poverty and social exclusion,* [my emphasis], nor regarding the strategies and policy actions to be taken to address the structural causes so as to facilitate the achievement of the MDGs" (UN 2012; 4). It went on to suggest that "critics have suggested that the MDGs have introduced an undue and mechanistic association of poverty reduction with economic growth with no reference to the structural causes of poverty and deprivation" (ibid:7). The Task Team submitted its report in May 2012 (UN 2012b). Its Executive Summary was

predictably bland but did suggest a future development agenda centred on "four key dimensions of a more holistic approach: (1) *inclusive social development*; [my emphasis] (2) inclusive economic development; (3) environmental sustainability; and (4) peace and security" (ibid: 2). The baton then passed to the High Level Panel (HLP) on Post 2015 Development Agenda, whose membership and terms of reference was announced on July 15th 2012. The beginnings of the post 2015 discussions therefore do open up for debate the issue of *inequality and equity* rather than just poverty and do open up a space for engaging in *policy recommendations* and not just targets and do permit of a *reordering of priorities* other than economic growth. So what should be the emphasis of this new approach after 2015?

The UN post-2015 development agenda must leave behind the *global politics of poverty alleviation* and focus instead on shaping a new *global politics of social solidarity*. For the past 30 years the dominant discourse in international development has been the 'global politics of poverty alleviation', which focuses on the poor and seeks policies that lift populations out of poverty or protect others from falling into it. Subsequently, global policies have pursued the elimination of the indirect causes of poverty, such as disease and poor education, and compensation for lack of income, whether through cash transfers, micro-credit, or low-wage employment.

It is suggested here that the difficulties with this approach not only point to the general need for a new direction but also call for the more specific engagement of other social groups normally excluded from global policy interest. This would mean replacing the strategy of targeting the most vulnerable populations with support for a 'global politics of solidarity' based on inclusion of the 'middle class' in development policy. It would include a focus as much on the welfare needs of middle class state builders as on the poor in order to create those solidarities. The new strategy would promote alliances between the poor and non-poor, especially the middle class, while making services and opportunities more available and more effective for all. Middle class here signifies educated men and women working in professions, small and medium-sized enterprises, management, public sector administration and skilled vocations. Based on the development of welfare states in the 20th century, *social policy and social development science* tells us that the better way to reduce poverty is fairly consistent and involves middle-class buy-in to inclusive state welfare provision.

There is increasing support for this position. Nancy Birdsall has argued that "A focus on the middle class does not imply a lack of concern for the poor. To the contrary; in the advanced economies the poor have probably benefited from the rule of law, legal protections, and in general the greater accountability of government that a large and politically independent middle class demands, and from the universal and adequately funded education, health and social insurance programs a middle class wants and finances through the tax system. (Birdsall, 2010: 159). Such arguments have been reproduced recently in a research report of the African Development Bank: "The middle class is also helping to improve accountability in public services through more vocal demands for better services. The middle class is better educated, better informed and has greater awareness of human rights. It is the main source of the leadership and activism that create and operate many of the nongovernmental organizations that push for greater accountability

and better governance in public affairs. . . . policies that include the promotion of middle class growth are more cost-effective and generate more long-term poverty reducing benefits than policies that focus solely on addressing problems of the poor. (AfDB, 2011: 15). Also the new ILO Recommendation on Social Protection Floors says as much about the need to extend social protection vertically (to ensure better contributory benefits) as it does about the need to extend it horizontally (to provide a tax-based floor for the poor). Michael Cichon and his colleagues assert that "a social protection system that does not support higher benefit levels to a significant proportion of its population can lose the support of its own beneficiaries and contributors" (Cichon M., Behrendt C., Wodsak V. 2011: 8).

The Post-2015 UN Development Agenda should, in my view, take these considerations on board.

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The opinions expressed in the article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the ICSW Management Committee

➢ Moving towards a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons: the UN takes an important step forward

On 20 December 2012 the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 67/139 entitled "Towards a comprehensive and integral international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons". Despite the absence of consensus (it was adopted with 54 votes in favour, 5 against and with 118 abstentions), the adoption of the resolution signifies a very important step in the context of efforts undertaken at the intergovernmental level to strengthen the protection of the rights of older persons worldwide, paving the way to further steps in this direction, including the elaboration of a binding international legal instrument such as a Convention on the rights of older persons.

Member States renewed the mandate of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG) established in 2010, and requested that, at its fourth session to be held in 2013, the OEWG will consider proposals for a new international legal instrument on older persons aimed at promoting and protecting the rights and dignity of this growing yet extremely vulnerable population group. The resolution also requests the OEWG to present the General Assembly with proposals as soon as possible, which are to contain the main elements that may be included into such an international legal instrument. The Secretary-General was requested to submit a compilation of existing international legal instruments that directly or indirectly address the situation of older persons.

The number of countries that abstained during the vote speaks volumes about potential difficulties on the road towards the elaboration of a comprehensive legal instrument that could satisfy all Member States and eventually be adopted by consensus; it is obvious that the forthcoming negotiations cannot be easy. Much diplomatic work still needs to be done behind the scenes to secure political support and convince skeptics among Member States, particularly from Europe and North America, but also from Asia that such a binding legal instrument is feasible and represents the best way to address the issues of ageing and older persons. This proactive diplomatic effort is being led by a group of Latin American countries, which consistently speak in favour of a legally binding international instrument on older persons, presenting solid arguments for the Convention and the need to plug the " normative gap" as well as the "implementation gap" in pertinent international and national legislations, thus facilitating the fight against wide-spread discrimination in old age and securing effective protection and promotion of the rights of older persons.

➢ **In pursuit of innovative development financing.**

The high-level meeting on innovative financing for development was convened on 17 December in New York. The event, jointly organized by Finland and United Nations Development Programme, took place in the context of activities undertaken by the Leading Group on Innovative Financing for Development-- a voluntary group, established in 2006 that aims at reviewing and sharing experiences and best practices as well as promoting the adoption of innovative financing mechanisms. The group is an open forum for international organizations such as the UN, the European Commission, numerous NGOs and 63 countries. The participants of the meeting explored how both new and old financing instruments could be leveraged to support a post-2015 development framework, as well as ensure that funds are allocated in the most effective and efficient way. The key idea is not to replace the development aid provided by donor countries through official channels, but to identify more development financing sources, diversifying the set of available instruments. The range of such sources could be broad, embracing already tested levies and voluntary solidarity contributions on airline tickets, the financing of life-saving immunization programmes through the issuing of floating bonds on the international capital markets and numerous other means.

Useful resources and links

> ### Strengthening older people's rights: Towards a UN Convention, HelpAge International, 2012.

This publication prepared by several international NGOs working in the area of ageing, examines the current rights situation with regard to older persons and advocates a rights-based approach to ageing and older persons. It aims at strengthening understanding and awareness of the need for a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons, providing an overview of current international law, as well as a summary of laws and rights in different countries, looking also at pertinent UN documents and processes in the area.
It also presents some arguments and tools for engaging stakeholders around the world in debate about the rights of older persons and outlines the role a convention would play in their lives.

For further information go to:
http://www.helpage.org/download/4d34303582ac4

> ### Improving International Support to Peace Processes. The Missing Piece, OECD, 2012

Improving international support to peace processes considered vital in this publication prepared by the OECD. Such processes hold the promise of re-starting non-violent efforts aimed at creating more equitable, resilient and developed societies. Yet, such courses of action are politically and psychologically complex, as well as high-risk. Many fail and such failure is harmful, as it reduces confidence and increases cynicism among parties to a conflict, citizens and international partners alike. International support can help a peace process to succeed but its nature and quality matter greatly.

The publication identifies seven recommendations to improve the quality of support that states and international organizations provide to peace processes. It does this through a thorough analysis of: the characteristics of today's violent conflicts, the factors that influence the success and failure of a peace process and the current strengths & weaknesses of international support. For further information go to:
www.oecd.org/dataoecd/27/34/49071359.pdf

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