

## Building National, Regional and International Consensus on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

29 January 2015, Pretoria

### Executive Summary

This workshop was hosted against the background of the first round of Post-2015 Intergovernmental Negotiations held from 19 – 21 January 2015. These were the first of a series of negotiations building up to the September 2015 UN General Assembly Meeting to adopt the Post-2015 Developmental Framework as successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). SALO brought together a diverse set of stakeholders from governments, diplomatic corps, civil society organisations and business, among others, to reflect on the Post-2015 processes thus far. The aim was to influence momentum towards a successful African position in the final stage of the Post-2015 process. The workshop was chaired by Dr Showers Mawowa (SALO), and Mr Richard Smith (Action Support Centre). Speakers included Ms Carmen Smidt (ANC International Relations Committee), Dr Garth Le Pere (University of Pretoria) and Ms Bella Matambanadzo (SALO). Led by Ambassador George Nene, the workshop began with a moment of silence in honour of ANC Comrade and former Ambassador and police commissioner Jackie Selebi. The purpose of this report is to summarize the main points made during the discussion.

### Summary of Presentations

**Moderator: Dr Showers Mawowa, SALO Research, Development & Coordination Manager:**



Beginning with welcoming remarks, Dr Showers Mawowa, explained SALO's deliberate decision to host a workshop on the Post-2015 Developmental Framework in light of the Inter-Governmental Negotiations on that Framework from the 19th to the 21st of January, 2015. Dr Mawowa set the scene for the workshop with a brief overview of the Post-2015 timeline, noting the intermediate compilation of the United Nations Secretary-General's Synthesis Report in December 2014 and the following current series of intergovernmental negotiations before the final adoption of a Post-2015 document in September 2015. Placing the

African continent in the centre of discussion under SALO's peace and security mandate, Dr Mawowa highlighted two concurrent processes in the Post-2015 Agenda for this year. These included the Peace-keeping Review as well as the review of the UN Peace-building Architecture. He recognised that dialogue in this workshop is distinct from that in previous workshops, with the expectation that the panel and participants go beyond the identification of African nuances in the Post-2015 Developmental Framework and towards convergence on a radical and transformative Post-2015 Framework to emerge from the African continent.

### **Ms Carmen Smidt, ANC International Relations Committee Manager**



Ms Smidt sought to first provide an overview of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a way to introduce the engagement with the Post-2015 Framework. She highlighted three major sources of criticism of the MDGs. These included, firstly, the lack of analysis and justification of the chosen MDGs and also the poor global measurement facilities that contributed towards the uneven progress of the MDGs. Secondly, a further reason thought to reduce the success of the MDGs was to the redirection of aid from developed states towards debt relief, natural disaster relief and military aid over other human well-being priorities. Ms Smidt believed the impediment to developmental aspirations that arose was the lack of awareness regarding MDGs within the broader public domain, particularly at grass roots level. Thirdly, the prevalence of conflict on the African continent has been an issue preventing development and yet this found little redress in the MDGs. The UN Conference in the September 2010 Review of progress on the MDGs therefore formed a significant point in international negotiation for recognising some of these inadequacies in the MDGs and for feeding into the Post-2015 Agenda. Reflecting on South Africa's approach, Ms Smidt spoke of the government's position in the G77 to support all the seventeen proposed Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs], though she acknowledged the existence of very different country stances in that body. Ms Smidt therefore expressed her concern for any proposal using a 'one shoe fits all' approach to development and stated her personal support for the 'no standards' position at national and international levels in order to allow for the context of the specific countries.

### **Dr Garth Le Pere: Senior Associate at Gabriel and Associates and Visiting Professor at the University of Pretoria**

Recognizing the complexity of the Post-2015 dialogue terrain, Dr Le Pere sought to reposition the conversation on any expected global partnership. He therefore began his presentation by pointing out three principle areas of contestation around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), arising from their very broad and ambitious nature compared to the MDGs. He then looked at the issue of financing the Post-2015 Agenda.



The first area of contestation in the SDGs concerns is how absolute poverty is to be dealt with. Halving poverty in Africa has been an uneven success according to Dr Le Pere and he argued therefore that there is need for a new 'zero-target' by 2030. Such a target would be able to use \$1.25 daily income as a measure. Despite this, Dr Le Pere was wary of the changing context of poverty. The poor have become concentrated in so-called fragile and weak states, especially in Africa. In addition, 'stubborn poverty tales' exist in the context of economic and political marginalisation. Dr Le Pere felt that the 'business-as-usual' trajectory would therefore not be sufficient to eradicate absolute poverty without a strong political will to embrace a transformative approach.

The second area of contestation relates to the issue of insecurity and inequality. Dr Le Pere sketched the issue of insecurity, highlighting the problem that employment tends to be low-paid and insecure, compounding the problem of jobless growth. This is a situation that particularly affects youth and women, exacerbated by crumbling infrastructures facing growing demand. On the African continent, there's a general lack of social safety nets and social security systems across many of its developing countries and their political institutions, while ruling elites remain weak, unresponsive and unaccountable. Furthermore, trans-boundary shocks pose serious threats to the success of developmental goals in all their forms. He said,

*These opportunities (security and equality) are highly tenuous, highly tenuous in a high-stakes game of snakes and ladders, such that the beneficiaries, the very beneficiaries of that break-out generation, could easily slide back into poverty.*

In what Dr Le Pere called a demographic and Malthusian dilemma, the third area of contestation refers to the problem of providing global public goods in light of climate change. Within the nexus of sustainability, with rising greenhouse gas levels, the concentration of the population in the global south and a growing middle class, Dr Le Pere believed the world is likely to need fifty percent more food and thirty percent more water by 2030. He said,

*. . . and this demand is taking place in the context of increasing competition for land, water stresses and shortages, and this is compounded by the effects of climate change, as we know, and critical environment risk thresholds, such as the irreversible loss of natural capital and the degradation of ecosystems, which cause poor people to suffer disproportionately.*

Dr Le Pere argued therefore that the provision of public goods in a new global green economy must be an integral aspect of the Post-2015 Agenda in order to maintain planetary stability. However, given the cleavages in the COP, this is likely to be infinitely more difficult than eliminating poverty. Consequently, dramatic changes in production and consumption patterns are to be expected, particularly among rich and developed countries, which remain the highest consumers of natural resources and carbon space in the atmosphere. He said,

*We also cannot ignore, I'd argue, as part of the changing landscape, the Post-2015 Agenda and how it will be shaped, and by whom. We cannot ignore that that process will be subject to, probably very acrimonious, political contest. As challenging as it is, it will also be subject to very acrimonious political contest - that is what I would like to suggest.*

Dr Le Pere also pointed to the divisions emerging between the thirty-four countries of the OECD and the one hundred and thirty-four developing countries of the G77 plus China, with regard to the aspirational Post-2015 Goals embedded in the SDGs and the problem of how those goals will be defined with regard to delivery and commitment. Central to these divisions is the concept of

'common but differentiated responsibilities', forming a *leitmotiv* in international development negotiations. Dr Le Pere sought therefore to set out the political roles of the different country groupings, beginning with the developed countries. Developed countries have significantly reduced their aid levels over the last two years. In terms of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) – of which the majority are in Africa - there is a call for a stronger emphasis on poverty, especially achieving the 'zero-target' ambition. A zero poverty target requires a new paradigm for inclusive economic growth and a much more meaningful special and differential treatment to enhance LDC trade and market access prospects. Such was the expectation for the Doha Development Round.

LDCs are also concerned about financing the Post-2015 Agenda, given the decline in OECD aid levels. The stalled Doha Round in turn has unlocked duty-free market access and lower tariffs, but LDCs are increasingly subjected to non-tariff barriers that are much more difficult to manage. Thirdly, Dr Le Pere stated, there has been some progress on access to medicines but less movement on making essential medicines available and affordable; he referred to the new threat of Ebola to explain his argument. With regards to the set of states in the middle income category, Dr Le Pere believed they struggle to define their role in the Post-2015 Agenda: some have emphasised climate change, sustainable natural resource management and new approaches to financing for development, while others, especially in the BRICS group, have yet to point their direction. There is also fear that middle-income countries might also wish to contribute less, like developed nations, to global development. Nevertheless, this does not negate the critical role middle-income countries play in global negotiations.

In respect of the challenges of financing sustainable development, Dr Le Pere felt there is much scope for debate in the Post-2015 Agenda. A broad framework was set in Monterey followed by a review and elaboration in Doha in 2008. The biggest story of the MDG period was the significance of private sector flows as a source of development finance. According to World Bank studies, the total private sector flows to developing countries came to US\$ 1.265 trillion; compared to the US\$190 billion that was provided in aid from both the OECD countries as well as the new donors. In the terrain that Dr Le Pere set out, SDG financing relies firstly on domestic sources of mobilisation, a current lacuna for many states. According to Dr Le Pere, tackling illicit flows and international tax avoidance through standardized forms of reporting by multinational corporations, as well as bringing down the costs of remittances, are parts of this imperative to mobilise sources of finance domestically. The second source of additional sustainable development finance is through international capital markets and currently there is no shortage of capital that is looking for outlets. The third and final area is using innovative sources of finance as catalysts for financing global public goods, and this includes transportation levies, taxes on currency and financial transactions, and the mobilisation and capitalisation of the IMF's gold holdings, *etc.*

In his concluding remarks, Dr Le Pere acknowledged there were many other important systemic issues that can affect the Post-2015 Agenda. However, he hoped that the growing risk and probability of ongoing systemic and structural economic, social and environmental crises will provide the impetus for countries, regions and the world to be more serious about cooperating to define a Post-2015 Agenda that is both sensitive to the world's poorest people, as well as a troubled and unstable global commerce.

## Ms Bella Matambanadzo: SALO Board Member

Ms Matambanadzo sought to map tensions in various issues in the Post-2015 Agenda, drawing from the themes in the other panellists' presentations and the Common African Position. Overall the Post-2015 Developmental Agenda is under significant pressure to perform, given that it is meant to serve all human beings equally. Nevertheless Ms Matambanadzo felt the aim of ending poverty and transforming all lives has been encapsulated in the Post-2015 process with a clear sense of inclusivity.



The year 2015 is twenty years since the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. The conference authored the global agreement on what governments around the world would address in advancing women's rights; it is also the year in which the African Union has committed itself to advancing women's empowerment. The African Union is an important space, particularly for South Africa given that Dr Dlamini-Zuma chairs the AU, and it provides an opportunity to leverage an African agenda. Ms Matambanadzo felt a significant gain has been the inclusion of women in decision-making and accessing basic rights. However, even though there have been gains, there is a sense of discrimination, injustice and oppression. Thus, the goals need to be discussed in terms of the context of the realities on the ground. Firstly, despite the prevailing belief that educating girls would lead to change, dangers of sending girls to school have also arisen and include even their abduction in terrorist attacks. She said,

*We were preoccupied with the conundrum of driving an agenda for education for girls, and didn't foresee the terrorism that we are seeing happening. While education is a goal, the risks, the tensions are very much there and when we try and access these goals, unimaginable things are happening in trying to deliver development.*

Furthermore, the notion that health care has delivered dividends for women requires unpacking. There are cases on the African continent where although women access public health care systems, stories of human rights violations also exist, including those of forced sterilisation. Justice, therefore, becomes one of the major goals of the Post-2015 Agenda. However, justice systems are not positioned in a way to respond appropriately and effectively to complaints from women and girls. Ms Matambanadzo felt that the neo-liberal, Euro-centric influences in public systems has not been fully understood. In terms of women's rights, the Common African Position has made several radical suggestions. In particular, the right of women to access land stands out: land issues create a fundamental tension, dividing the prospects of an inclusive international development agenda. Conflict prevention is a further source of victory in the women's rights movement, but Ms Matambanadzo felt that tension remains in the peace and security architecture, as exemplified by International Criminal Court.

Referring to previous SALO workshops on Post-2015 Agenda, she identified the youth bulge and the role of youth in development. There is a tension arising in that youth are competing to drive developmental issues and that calls for a different kind of democracy. According to Ms Matambanadzo such a kind of a democracy may not be shared by those who are the most powerful at the negotiation and mediation tables of the Post-2015 Agenda. For instance, the youth call for sexual orientation and choice to be addressed, but the Common African Position has no

reference to sexual orientation and choice. Ms Matambanadzo thus believes, tension is likely to arise in the public sector, given the patriarchal and hetero-normative framework of the Post-2015 development agenda. For South Africa, the only state on the continent whose constitution protects sexual choice, the question is how its government is to be a credible broker when many other governments on the continent take a different stance on sexual orientation.

Securitisation of development is a further issue and so it is striking that the language of rights seems to have been watered down in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Ms Matambanadzo felt that the result has been one in which stability negates the responsibility of states to commit to the human rights framework. In terms of financing, the Common African Position terminology suggests that the matter requires more concerted dialogue. The Common Africa Position speaks about northern governments needing to fulfil their promises and commitments in the spirit of the Monterey Consensus and the G8 Gleneagles Summit with African governments and uses an emotional rather than technical terminology. These terms are clear indications of the gridlocks to be expected on financing mechanisms and the unfulfilled expectations of the past. Ms Matambanadzo also commented on partnerships: she believed that while there has been a lot of marketing about the Post-2015 Agenda, civil society remains a weak partner in terms of defining the Post-2015 Agenda. This previews the tension that can be expected during the implementation phase on the African continent. The Common African Position has chosen a diplomatic tone and despite acknowledging the need for ownership of the Common African Position, civil society have not had the opportunity to engage well with governments on the Post-2015 priorities, with the risk that the negotiations return to the old position of historical divisions. She said,

*The Common African Position is that Africa does not capitalize on the benefits of the global commons, including trade, financing and climate change. So the language of climate change, again, is going to be a battle...So this development framework is going to fall into the gap of old and historical battles and I think we need to be cognisant of those.*

Lastly, Ms Matambanadzo expressed concern that the poverty accent seems to lean towards young people, entrepreneurship, and empowerment, and away from the elderly whose role in the family has become prominent during the HIV/AIDS pandemic for instance. The problem ultimately rests on the fact that the Post-2015 Developmental Agenda does not seem to accommodate an African paradigm. Ms Matambanadzo called for a conversation about where the sites of innovation are for Africans in order to find how Africans can influence 'to a greater extent how a common, international, shared global agenda for inclusive development can look more like a shared plan, rather than a document that's only for certain citizens in the world.'

## **Responses to contributions from the floor**

**Ms Carmen Smidt** felt that national governments should implement the Post-2015 Development Agenda according to their national circumstances, capability and development stages on a voluntary basis. In addition, she recognized there would be a need for nations to consider regional planning for the Post-2015 Agenda. There is need for international society to move away from top-down approaches in order to improve implementation. In terms of financing, Ms Smidt looked towards the private sphere. She commented that while there was no expectation that the private sector commit to developmental initiatives, in fact their gains are trans-boundary and significant. These issues directly link to infrastructure development and industrialization in Africa.

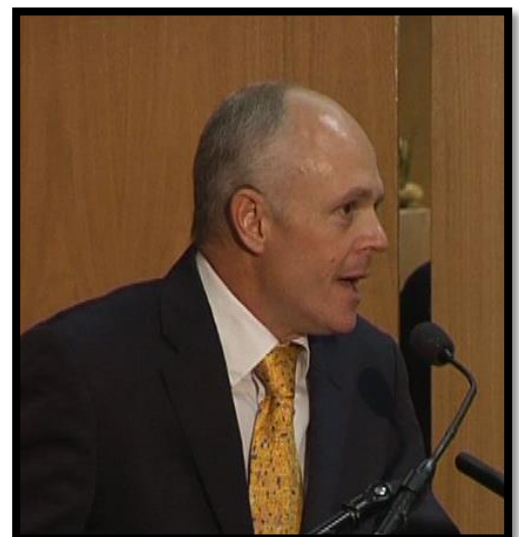
**Dr Garth Le Pere:** Dr Le Pere distinguished between decision-making deficit at two levels. At the level of the African Union, consensus is based on the lowest common denominator around which the fifty-four countries can agree on a basic set of principles. This lowers the level of ambition, particularly in regards to what is really a crisis of the global commons on the continent: the crisis of poverty and the persistent structural crisis of underdevelopment. BRICS countries could be 'norm entrepreneurs' but they have responded poorly to the Post-2015 Developmental Framework. They could play the role of pushing an agenda of universal consensus around the Post-2015 Agenda that is based on their interests. BRICS has the potential to straddle the interests of the G77 and the interests of the OECD more effectively. So far, BRICS is a missed political opportunity.

Moving on to human rights, Dr Le Pere stated that, like development, they are a categorical imperative and not colonial constructs. Both the MDGs and the Post-2015 discourse provide a broad framework or template for bringing mankind together, despite prevailing North-South divisions. Dr Le Pere identified the problem as one of how to reinvigorate the utilitarian dimension in international development. In terms of the private sector, the success of the MDG period was the mobilization of substantial funding. Much of that helped to deal with the global financial crisis and less funding went to the developing countries, though, because there was a fear on the part of global capital that the right kind of enabling environment for investment did not exist. Dr Le Pere felt this to be a justifiable point. Nevertheless substantial progress has been made, as illustrated by pockets of growth in Africa, and such growth can be further promoted through better engagement with the private sector. Thus, an appropriate course for intervention may include the private sector at some stage of the debate. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of governments to put in place the appropriate regulatory environments that will help them take advantage of the huge amount of global liquidity that exists.

**Bella Matambanadzo:** There is an absence in the popular communication and knowledge dimension of the Post-2015 Developmental Framework. Ms Matambanadzo felt that there cannot be good governance externally, when the media is failing in the job of educating the public in Africa around the Post-2015 Development Agenda. A point of interest for the media groups would be to discuss their role in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. She suggested advocacy on the nuances of the debate. She queried whether South Africa should lead international negotiations, given that it is, among the post-colonial states, the youngest on the continent. Xenophobia and Afro-pessimism within the African continent deny notions of equality and also freedoms, responsibility and obligations; self-hate requires further exploration.

#### **Concluding Remarks: Mr Richard Smith, Action Support Centre and SALO Board Member:**

Drawing from the panel and contributions from the floor, Mr Smith in his concluding remarks reiterated the complexity of the Post-2015 Agenda and the further dialogue it required. SALO therefore has expressed a long-term commitment to a Post-2015 series of events working towards a deeper understanding and consensus between participants. Mr Smith felt that engagement on the Post-2015 is a process, and said that, as the conversation unfolds, SALO is committed to support the emergence of new information to try to build a collective that is able to engage more effectively and more constructively with Post-2015 Developmental Framework.



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