

## ***Roundtable Discussion: Reactions to the Zero Draft of the Post-2015 Development Agenda***

**18 June 2015**

### **Summary**

With the conclusion of the inter-governmental negotiations and the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda drawing to a close in September, the Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) hosted a round table on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 2015 to interrogate the reactions to the Zero Draft of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Opening remarks were made by Ms. Thato Chabana, the research and coordination officer at SALO. Panellists included Mr. Zane Dangor the Special Advisor to the Minister of Social Development, Mr. Richard Smith the Technical Advisor at ACTION Support Centre and SALO Board member and Mr. Khwezi Mabasa the Policy Coordinator and Researcher of COSATU, all of whom have an excellent comprehension of the Post-2015 agenda and the document thereof. Input from the floor was also given from the Honourable Obed Bapela the Deputy Minister in the Presidency for Performance, Monitoring, and Evaluation and also the Chair of the ANC International Relations Committee, Ambassador George Nene the Former DDG Multilateral at DIRCO, and Mr. Marthinus van Schalkwyk from DIRCO gave an input from the floor.

### **Ms. Thato Chabana**



Ms. Chabana stated that the Post-2015 Development agenda aims to end poverty and hunger, secure education and health and provide basic services for all, achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, combat inequalities between and within countries, foster inclusive economic growth and shared prosperity, promote safe and inclusive cities, protect the planet and fight climate change, use natural resources sustainably and safeguard our oceans, strengthen governance and promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies, and lastly revitalise global partnerships and sustainable development. She indicated that it is vital to ask, *“To what extent has this captured the aspirations expressed during the dialogues and consultation – some of*

*which took place in this very same room?”*

### **Mr. Zane Dangor**

Mr. Dangor started by clarifying the role of the Ministry of Social Development with regards to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), stating that Minister Bathabile Dlamini is part of a core team within government that is driving the SDGs agenda. The team includes DIRCO (as the lead agency), the Ministry of Social Development, and the Ministry of Environment. The three departments have been engaged in negotiations focused on framing South Africa's input into the SDGs.



Mr. Dangor's presentation focused on the following:

#### ***The issues surrounding negotiations from South Africa and the African delegation as a whole***

The Common African Position (CAP) has been a useful framework for negotiators during the finalisation of the seventeen SDGs and some of the issues captured in the CAP are falling by the 'way-side'. Two key issues remain salient, pertaining to:

- ☐ Means of implementation.
- ☐ Common but differentiated responsibilities .

The South African negotiation team calls include:

- ☐ When one talks about discrimination, it must be about discrimination of any kind.
- ☐ When one talks about human rights, it must be about all human rights.

#### ***Thoughts on the positive outcomes of the Zero Draft, and the aspects viewed as shortcomings***

The Zero Draft is welcome in the sense that the seventeen goals ensure that a lot of the issues that emerged out of the CAP remain intact and the goals dealing with women's health and equality remain in the document. The perspective of women and girls, and a focus on gender equality in conflict, is underrepresented. It is not seen as a cross-cutting issue and women's empowerment is not well reflected but parallel to the SDGs there are other UN commissions formulated for gender related issues:

- ☐ The Commission on the Status of Women
- ☐ The Commission on Population and Development
- ☐ The Commission of Social Development

Mr Dangor indicated that what was being left out of the debate was a recognition of multi-national corporations who have much more power than many states and the accountability loop is leaving them out. He suggested that the following questions be asked:

- ☐ Should corporations not be held liable for wilful destruction of the environment?
- ☐ Should corporations not be held liable or accountable for their low wages?

- How do we locate the extractive industries and their role in ensuring that the SDGs are being met?

## Mr. Richard Smith



Mr. Smith began his presentation with a quotation from renowned Sufi poet, Rumi, that states, *“Somewhere out there between right-doing and wrong-doing, there’s a field. Let us meet there.”* He stated that having arrived at a Zero Draft is significant and it sets an important precedent that takes the process forward in a fundamental way. He noted that the document comes with flaws and that he would speak to both the achievements as well as point out the deficiencies that the Zero Draft encapsulates.

He indicated that one cannot discuss the post-2015 development agenda without addressing the issue of peace and that any attempt to build peace has to go beyond the absence of physical violence, beyond ending armed conflict; it should be about putting in place all the building blocks that allow people to reach their full potential. He stated that he would look at the following:

### ***How do the SDGs address issues around human security and durable peace?***

Goal 16 speaks to peaceful and inclusive societies and Goal 11 speaks to safe cities and settlements, which encompasses the elements of human security necessary in the establishment of durable peace. The Post-2015 development agenda defines peace as being better-governed and inclusive societies and it recognises that peace is about building on existing agreements as well as establishing shared principles.

### ***Some of the interesting, controversial, and potentially important elements within the SDGs***

The sections that are a part of the controversy of the Post-2015 development agenda include the economic section and the issues that deal with energy, infrastructure, economic growth, and implementing partnerships. There is no attempt to change the idea that GDP is a solid and acceptable measure of economic growth; a growth-driven development agenda that focuses on larger projects remains at the centre of where the thinking about financing and the resources for the development process are going to come from.

In many developing countries, mega infrastructure projects lead to serious conflict and violence and there’s a lot of opposition and questioning around whether or not this economic path is still the best one for developing countries to be following. Yet this has been put on the table within the Zero Draft as a finished product, without very much discussion or questioning. This must therefore be critiqued.

The issue of foreign and colonial occupation is recognised as a concern, a driver of conflict in the Zero Draft. Growth, employment, and decent work are seen as the foundation stones of economic development. Therefore, trade as well as other key unbalancing factors within global politics, are mentioned. There is no clear call for a universal, rule-based, equitable, and multi-lateral trading system which has

been one of the consistent calls from developing countries in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in an attempt to turn around the exploitative nature of global trade.

He then mentioned that the issue of growing migration is included as an urgent concern that needs to be addressed, as it is assumed that this leads to the growth of extremism and conflict, both of which are factors which could threaten and reverse development progress.

## **Contributions from the floor**

- ☐ What did the MDGs achieve and what did they not achieve?
- ☐ Do you think this transformative agenda will speak to the uneven development?
- ☐ The seventeen goals should then be mapped to the National Development Plan (NDP) and complement the respective departmental approaches to the NDP.
- ☐ Why can we not reach a state where we are saying that we have stunted the agreements and that this is what people are entitled to in each and every country in terms of human rights, food security, and the issue of security amongst people?

### **Mr. Richard Smith**

Mr Smith expressed that there is a need to interrogate whether the post-2015 agenda is a transformative agenda: does it lead to fundamental change, does this fundamentally change the current trajectory of the planet, and will it transform the power relations as well as the structural and the systemic barriers to equal development? He stated that, in his view, the answer to these questions is 'No'.

Another fundamental question to ask is whether it is a step forward in comparison to the MDGs, which were presented as finished products that would be used as a guide on how ODA would be spent and how the North-South developing countries' partnership would be understood and financed.

He indicated that SDGs need to fit in with existing national development plans and that sovereignty remains a clear principle around which they have been developed. Even though this is not going to level uneven development, the SDGs are step toward making inequality less of a driver of conflict and are expected to have power to influence the big corporate multinational and transnational corporations towards development trajectories. Corporate social responsibilities are not expected to address levels of inequality but to minimise the level of harm done by the ruthless and exploitative nature of corporates, especially in the extractive industry. There are moves to try and remove the focus on GDP as the sole measure of whether or not progress is being made economically within states.

### **Mr. Zane Dangor**

Mr. Dangor expressed that there is a need to move away from a money-metric measure of measuring poverty to a multiple deprivation measure that talks about people being poor when they don't have access to land, when they don't have access to quality education, water, and healthcare.



## Mr. Martinus van Schalkwyk

Mr. van Schalkwyk stated that the Zero Draft is very explicit on many issues:

- ☐ Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)
- ☐ Rights and discrimination are not to take place on specific grounds: sex, gender, and religion.
- ☐ Education and Health
- ☐ Means of implementation, which alluded to the financing for development negotiations.

He expressed that it is vital to pose the question of whether commitments in terms of resources come forth.

## Ambassador George Nene

Ambassador Nene encouraged organisations such as SALO to organise information sharing dialogues where the Department of Social Development can inform the public on how they are going to internalise the outcomes of the SDGs as well as how they are going to implement them.



## Contributions from the floor

- ☐ Are our challenges around implementation due to capacity building or resources and how do we partner with those who want to support us?
- ☐ How will we know that we have indeed achieved our goals?
- ☐ Don't you think we need to come to the primary note, where we address issues from the inside before we express them externally, so that we are on the same level?

## Mr. Zane Dangor

Mr. Zane Dangor mentioned that one of the weaknesses in international human rights law is that it is state-centric; it asserts that states are duty holders whilst non-state actors such as multi-nationals are rights holders even if they are powerful. However, Mr. Dangor stated that this does not imply that we should not tackle the issue of multi-national institutions. We should focus on the institutional power that they wield and how we will go about tackling that institutional power.

Mr. Dangor stated that at present, he, amongst others, is working on specifically these issues to hold multinational corporations accountable through a global treaty.

Mr. Dangor acknowledged that investment and development in technology has come at a cost to the developing world, in relation to intellectual property implications. This is a challenge in that developing countries could stand to majorly benefit from access to affordable technology as well as life-saving medication and technology.

Mr. Dangor concluded by stating that developing countries should look for ways to protect their assets and resources as well as whether it is possible to use intellectual property rights in the developing world's favour.

### **Mr. Richard Smith**

Mr. Smith explained that understanding how the issue of intellectual property rights can be addressed and promoted is important. Technology transfers are mentioned in the Zero Draft with the acknowledgement that developed countries have greater use and control over technology advances and that allows them to entrench an unfair advantage over developing countries. It will be interesting to see if countries will continue to protect the advantages that they have gained in order to maximise profits and retain competitive advantage or will there be recognition that there is a need for greater sharing and for technological advancement to assist developing countries, which will ultimately be beneficial to all in the long term.

### **Contributions from the floor**

- ☐ What are the benefits or disadvantages for South Africa in relation to the unregistered foreign owned small enterprises that are in our country?
- ☐ In the post-2015 development agenda, is there a platform for young people?
- ☐ The South African representatives at the negotiations must have a clear mandate from the people of South Africa to say what South Africans want to be formulated.
- ☐ It is important that we talk about adequate skills development and give the right information to the people on the ground.
- ☐ Kindly address the issue of the disregard of the international law because there is a talk currently that South Africa did not act correctly around Al Bashir.

### **Mr. Richard Smith**

Mr. Smith emphasised the significance of the youth sector, their voice, and aspirations. He indicated that the voice of the youth is not as prominent as it should or it could be. He also stated that there were youth sectors involved within the open working group discussions and that some of the issues they raised have been weaved into the agenda. He then posed a challenge that the youth should organise and look at the domestication of their aspirations.

He stated that there is a need for the political will, underpinned by cooperation and partnership. Mr Smith also noted that the private sector is a key role player, both because it is often a perpetrator of destruction as well as the fact that it has additional capacity that could be utilised. On the issue of migration, Mr Smith stated that it is inevitable. Therefore, there is a need to recognise that migrants are not necessarily a threat but in fact present an opportunity for all communities. He also expressed that drivers of conflict are not just corruption and poor governance but also militarisation and disregard for the international law.

## Deputy Minister Obed Bapela

Honourable Bapela indicated that African leaders are calling for reform of the UN, particularly the expansion of the permanent seats in the Security Council, and for Africa to have two seats in the Security Council with veto rights from those who are initial permanent members. They will also be reviewing whether there is still a need for a veto system because the world has now changed since 1945.

On the matter of the court order for South Africa to arrest Sudanese President Al Bashir when he was attending the AU summit, he clarified that Al Bashir was not on a state visit to South Africa, rather he was in South Africa for the AU meeting. The AU is an institution of African states, it enjoys similar status to that of the UN. As such, wherever it holds its meetings, the host government has the responsibility to activate the immunity act status granted to government leaders. The AU is not the signatory of the ICC. Thus, SA chose to follow AU stance regarding the issue of the ICC.



## Dr. Showers Mawowa



Dr. Mawowa stated that it is important to acknowledge that post-2015 is not a process in isolation and that it should not be looked at as such. There are other issues that would impact on the delivery or non-delivery of the post-2015 agenda, some which include issues around the Security Council reform. He indicated that one cannot talk of justice at the national or continental level without addressing the way justice is administered globally. Dr. Mawowa made reference to the incident with the Sudanese President, Omar Al Bashir, as an example about the shortcomings of the international justice system.

## Conclusion

While the SDGs formulation process might have been consultative and inclusive, it is important to ask, 'to what extent are the SDGs in themselves inclusive?' Looking at the current global economic model, which is very exclusive, there is a need to push for an economic model that is inclusive, progressive, and pro-poor. There is also a need for an adequate approach to the learning of lessons and how they can be used to suggest a successful way forward.

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### About the Southern African Liaison Office:

**S A L O** 

International liaison, dialogue and research

The Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) is a South African-based not-for-profit civil society organisation which, through advocacy, dialogue, policy consensus and in-depth research and analysis, influences the current thinking and debates on foreign policy especially regarding African crises and conflicts.

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