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Office for South-South Cooperation



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Summary of Webinar Consultations for HDR 2020: **Sustainable Human Development Pathways**



21 May 2020

Discussion summary
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Introduction:

The webinar consultations for Sustainable Human Development Pathways to inform HDR 2020 held on May 21, 2020, in continuation of the [online e-discussion launched on the Global Thinkers Platform](#). The webinar consultation was co-organized by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report Office. Inputs from the e-discussion from the South-South Global Thinkers community have brought forward diverse and important perspectives. These range from suggested indicators for greening the HDI to ways of leveraging SSC and TrC for addressing climate-related risks.

The objective of webinar consultation aimed to further maximize the stakeholder engagement and ensuring inclusive preparation of the HDR 2020. It will also help in enriching and sharpening the focus of the report and ensure that it represents diverse views from the South. This consultation will specifically aim to: (i) hear stakeholder's perspectives and experiences from Southern-based think tanks relating to sustainable development pathways, climate change and related sub-themes, identify broad contours, and scope on the specific issues; and (ii) discuss key policy options among the stakeholders, including both national and cross border cooperation through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms.

The event was moderated by Ms. Xiaojun Grace Wang, Deputy Director, UNOSSC and featured presentations from the representative of the Southern think-tanks.

Opening Session:

Ms. Wang welcomed the participants and introduced the objectives of the virtual consultations, followed by opening remarks by Mr. Jorge Chediek, Director UNOSSC and Mr. Pedro Conceicao, Director of UNDP Human Development Report Office.

Mr. Jorge Chediek highlighted the Important this year as the 30th Anniversary edition of HDR. He briefly explained the historic background of HDR that re-opened a new line of thinking - a revolutionary attempt to expand the scope of our view on how to measure progress. This not only generated Political and technical backlash, but also led to Millennium Summit which basically builds around the same concept. However, with the emergence of new challenges such as Climate Change, digital economy, the emergence of some countries in the south, devolution of the international architecture and pandemics keeps the process iterative. Mr. Chediek appreciated the continued partnership with HDRO and commitment of the southern think tank and capitalizing on this for horizontal Knowledge sharing from the south and learning from each other in the spirit of south-south cooperation.

Mr. Pedro Conceicao acknowledged the partnership between UNDO and UNOSSC that started in 2019 and hence an early on investment in this year's process. Since the concept of HDI originally came from the south, therefore engaging with the south is at its core. He also reiterated the importance of the report this year given the magnitude of the theme that the report intends to tackle i.e. Sustainable Human Development Pathways". The report tries to bring together the aspiration of the HD approach, which is

to expand human freedom and expand people's capabilities and to do so, in the context of environmental sustainability and Climate Change that we are confronting. Natural scientists at the turn of 21 century started highlighting a number of ways in which human activity is changing systems at a planetary level in an unprecedented way. This is what the report intends to confront in this year's report — Understand the concept of HD in the context where humans are geological force, what are opportunities to continue to expand the opportunities of HD, drawing potential of technologies and how to reflect these new challenges in the matrix in the way we measure human development and need to add/ modify the indices to capture these new challenges.

Presentation on the upcoming Human Development Report 2020 on Sustainable Development Pathways:

Mr. Heriberto Tapia presented the business case highlighting the problems, questions, and complexities that the report intends to address and welcome inputs from the think tanks in areas exploring answers. In addition to the historic importance of the report being the 30th year edition, the report will allow us to rethink the human development journey. Over the period of 30 years, there has been an improvement in human development, however, given today's complexity of issues, it will require to provide insights on how to reshape development going forward. Issues such as loss of biodiversity, i.e. declining populations of plants and animal species, unstable patterns of production and consumptions, and pressures on the ecosystem as a source of pandemics put earth system under pressure, pushing planetary due to human activities making the situation unsustainable. The other element is climate change where we have started seeing its which require urgent action.

HD is connected with sustainability and even in the developed countries, serious problems are resulting in development itself such as growing inequalities as underlying tension. There may not be gain in capabilities despite technological progress and an increase in accumulated income and years. In this context, the results of HDR 2019 report also highlighted the changes over the last decade accessing certain proxies of development, for example, convergence in mobile/ cellular subscription which is a most basic form of digital technology vs fixed broadband which is a more empowering form of technology and countries which already ahead showed more improvements. With current COVID-19 pandemic, it shows how this is affecting countries' capabilities to respond to the current challenge. Other examples of growing inequalities showed how the advantageous groups making more progress and at the same time others are lagging behind, thus enhancing demand for sustainability and rethinking human development.

The presentation also highlighted the areas where the upcoming report will be exploring further with a focus on people-centered i.e. social norms and values, technological progress, nature-based solutions, incentives, and prices i.e. role of the private and public sector and collective action. The participation of the south in this regard is crucial. This will require new measurement for new policy priorities that go beyond income, are disaggregated and forwarding looking. Given the technological advancement, this will also require looking into new sources of data such as geospatial and big data. Also, a new generation of composite indices and the revision of HDI.

Role of Climate Change in Sustainable Development:

Prof. (Dr.) Hebatallah Adam's presentation highlighted climate change as a global threat and comprise of more than one goal in SDGs. Developing countries are among most adversely affected by climate change and are least able to afford consequences, in terms of poverty, natural disasters, gaps in education, etc.

and result in depriving developed gain and even reverse the progress made. She presented a southern perspective on the comprising of four pillars to deal with climate i) Market efficiency by increasing renewable energy production and efficiency in material consumption. Also, enabling efficient market conditions where prices include the societal cost of GHG emissions and other environmental externalities. Investment in higher efficiency in energy and material use and investment in carbon natural options are appropriately rewarded. ii) Increase in mitigation investment i.e. increase in clean energy investment focusing on efficiency improvement and energy decarbonization. These investments will make the system transition to zero-carbon energy and minimize potential trade-offs vis a vis SDGs. Also moving towards innovative climate finance e.g. by mobilizing commercial banks through innovative financial schemes to facilitate households, access to small scale renewable technologies and efficient appliances, initiating green credit lines e.g. providing appropriate funding and technical support through banks and financial institutions for enhanced participation in the renewable energy sector. iii) International cooperation for enhancing capacities of developing countries through a global call for action and also through south-south cooperation. iv) Gender-responsive (Feminist) Climate actions where women can be more powerful agents by and need to advance health rights, including women in a leadership role and decision making and supporting employment and business opportunities for women in the renewable energy sector.

Greening human development:

Dr. Carlos R. S. Milani emphasized the need for mapping out quantitatively and qualitatively the vulnerabilities and the existing socioenvironmental conflicts in different regions and subregions. He also highlighted the interconnectedness and challenge of assessing vulnerabilities across regions and countries, also the impacts across sectors. The mapping of regional and local vulnerabilities would allow us to know the social and environmental problems that can impact human development in developing the south. This will also inform future policies and line of actions.

On how to operate the greening of HDI, Dr. Carlos pointed out that HDR 2018 acknowledged the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that require new indicators for assessing the many faces of inequality, the impact of the global environmental crisis on people today and tomorrow. Some examples can be looked into include: Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW), Desai (1995) has developed an 'index of intensity of environmental exploitation', Eric Neumayer's proposal (2004) of measuring sustainability through Genuine Savings (GS). However the choice of indicators is political, because sustainable development implies thinking of: (a) intergenerational responsibility; (b) common but differentiated responsibilities; (c) economic and technological changes through adaptation and mitigation; (d) the precautionary principle.

Dr. Arunabha Ghosh underlined mainstreaming the range of issues highlighted during the discussion which were not at the center of the discussion previously and hence what are the new matrix and solutions are needed. He emphasized having a focus on risks that a lot of progress made in humans developed over the years might be reversed due to the planetary shocks that we are facing, which are chronic in nature. A risk lens needs to be built in while bolstering south-south cooperation and maintaining resilience. He also proposed having a climate risk atlas that enables not only understand the hazards of the past but also apply different layers for assessing loss and damage that comes from it. This will enable us to assess the investments made today in hard or soft infrastructure invested in the decade of sustainable development. He also highlighted the value of pooling risks and setting up a fund for a collective response that will enable to flatten the overall risk curve as these risks vary from country to country.

Human Security and Sustainable Development:

Dr. Zhang Chuanhong highlighted the need for strong political will and corrective policies to keep track of sustainable human development, especially in the context of a global pandemic. The current trend of economic recession due to the current pandemic reminds us of the opportunity to reflect and correct our actions by working together to overcome the issue. She added that deficiency of financial resources which is usually considered as a major issue. As per UNCTAD 2019 report actions such as curbing hidden capital transfer and tax evasion can generate \$700 billion dollars for developing countries alone. Governments are putting in huge money of domestic and global market resources She emphasized a more inclusive and sustainable global system, based on multi-polarity and wide participation which is wiser and fairer and needs to combine different perspectives. It is needed to manage the resources wisely and should not compromise on the sustainable gap and enlarging the gap between the rich and the poor. Rather these resources should be used to narrow the gap by investing in new technologies, education, food systems, renewable energies, and health which are also important for 2030 Agenda that the international community needs to tackle now. It certainly needs global action, same as the solidarity demonstrated 2008 global financial crises could be an example. China's experience can also be looked into as a country with political commitment and the right policies which are going to achieve a moderately prosperous society, eliminating extreme poverty.

Our experiences show that people-centered policies and earth-centered inherently contradicted with each other. Human security is multi-dimensional people can have different perceptions. People who have suffered from environmental degradation may accept the notion of green development, however, others may not willing to the cost of slowing economic growth. These issues are intertwined but sometimes policymakers have to make a choice. The State has a role to play and green development for some people means losing jobs. Policies should be such that people are encouraged to encourage green technologies.

The role of Social Protection for Sustainable Development:

Dr. Sarah Wang pointed out that progress made on poverty reduction can be reversed if not protected through the social protection system and may hampering sustainable development.

For the current pandemic, statistics already show how serious the challenges are that developing countries are facing in terms of income loss, job loss overrun and under resources hospitals, shrinking economies and business, and trade supply chains. China faced a historic drop in industrial production and retail sales until March this year and a negative growth rate. Social protection plays a key role in achieving sustainable development promoting social justice, reducing poverty and helping poor and vulnerable to cope with the crises. The current measures are not enough and a universal social protection system is needed which requires strong international cooperation and leadership. Social protection programmes currently being implemented by countries for COVID-19 are mostly short term and have temporary social protection policies. A long-term and universal social protection system is needed. The government should invest in a sustainable social protection system that is people-centered, working in close collaboration with local communities and collective efforts by NGOs, scholars and different organizations and bringing attention to this important issue.

Inclusive Sustainable Development and role of gender:

Dr. Ameena Al Rasheed highlighted the nexus between gender-Specific Implication of Climate change. Climate change impact is not equal and relates to geographical location, socioeconomic conditions,

political will, poverty, and race, and gender inequality. Climate change is not gender-neutral—it affects women and men differently. Women tend to rely upon livelihoods that are more likely to be influenced by climate variability and change. Gender-responsive climate change responses will contribute to the reduction of gender inequality and will increase people's resilience to climate change. Environmental threats affect multiple aspects of well-being including livelihood, education, Empowerment, and equity. Rethinking the development models is needed and the state has a role to play. The presentation also highlighted various policy options. Decision-makers and development partners at all levels and sectors need to integrate gender perspectives into the planning, financing, and implementation of adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Dr. Racha Ramadan highlighted the four entry points in HDR 2020 presentation are interrelated and should consider inequalities in gender norms such as in technological progress, women in rural areas in Egypt may not have the access to mobile phones technology or access to the internet. Also, the gender dimension should be cross-cutting especially in terms of enhancing capabilities in terms of educations, access to technologies and economic opportunities, and an increase in the care economy, as in the current scenario women are even more vulnerable - most working in the informal sector will lose jobs. She reiterated the need for rethinking the development agenda and also taking looking into how we can take forward the environmental benefits resulting from the lockdown due to COVID-19.

Role of Civil society in South-south Cooperation for Sustainable Development

Ms. Amanda Lucy highlighted the important role of civil society in south-south cooperation in contributing to sustainable human development. Civil society plays an important role in south-south cooperation but primarily remains government to government initiative. The absence of a global south-south framework which is critical to ensure if south-south cooperation activities are effective and efficient. Civil society can play a different role i.e. providing guidance, technical advice, enabling consultations, representatives of people voices, watchdog, M&E, and providing a renewed focus on issues and also service providers where government capacities are weak and hence also providing capacity development. She also explained the work of civil society work with NDB and also across the BRICS countries. It also includes monitoring of SDGs and also the response to COVID-19 which was substantively supported by CSOs, mostly led by women, providing context-specific and cost-effective solutions, where government response was slow due to bureaucratic hurdles. However, there have been challenges including uncertainty in funding sizes and sources, trust deficit with government, and lack of coordinated and holistic approach. The propositions for what needed to be done can include engaging CSO as part of formulating strategies, CSO should be supported unconditionally with the flexible funding mechanism. Governments should be encouraged to break the silos and embrace the role of civil society particularly for sustainable development by developing people-centered and context-specific indicators for monitoring the activities. Developing a strategy for such an engagement could be the first step.

Regional perspective on Sustainable development from Turkey and OIC countries:

Mr. Kaam Namli emphasized on the definition of sustainable development needs to be looked into from the perspective of southern countries. In the case of Turkey, for example, there are large scale projects having to said an impact on economic and social development however, they have a detrimental effect on the environment, even for the wider regions. There needs to be some balance in the economic development desires and policies of the countries in the south and make these development pathways sustainable. Political will for sustainable development vs traditional model of economic growth remains the issue and hence the development of social norms and values becomes important in bridging this gap.

Secondly, to what extent civil society, international organizations working together with local communities and government to provide an inclusive policy for sustainable human development. Also from the experience from the OIC member states, particularly the least developed, have to deal with the issue to meet the basic social needs of the people. Hence, sustainable development takes into consideration, environment, economic development needs, social norms and values, capacity issues, resources required by the countries, particularly the least developed countries. This will result in incentivizing sustainable development and more ownership by the countries.

International development pathways and the role of south-south cooperation:

Dr. Hany Baseda talked about the interconnected natures of the global challenges that would require a coordinated global response. Southern countries are leveraging south-south cooperation to work towards borderless development challenges and are an evolution from the traditional development approach. It also allows countries to be in driving seat to find lasting solutions for non-traditional issues of climate change, governance and inequalities in a more effective manner. It also promotes national ownership, allowing mutual learning, experiences and knowledge sharing making it more humane and people-centric with robust integrated policies and plans for mutually shared benefits. SSC encourages flexibility and adaptation in the local context. Time and cost efficiency of development projects are considered a strength of south-south cooperation, all contributing to the sustainable development efforts. This is also evident from the role it is playing in responding to the current COVID-19 pandemic. The momentum should continue by leveraging digital technologies and services through diversification of experts portfolios, digital infrastructure for industrialization, enhancement of trade and services, management and establishment of data policies, building the capacities and building economies in a sustainable manner.

The consultation ended with the note of thanks to all the participants.

For the recording of the webinar, click [here](#).