The MDGs and Beyond: The Retrospect and Prospect of International Cooperation in Development

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Opening Remarks by Ambassador Andrew Kao, Director General of Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in New York:
Ambassador Kao emphasized that while many achievements had been made to facilitate parts of the UN MDGs, still more needed to happen before the 2015 target deadline. Taiwan over the past several decades has successfully transformed itself from a recipient of foreign aid to a donor, and has partnered with more than 50 UN Member States including its allies to enhance their economies, education, health care, etc., thus further promoting the MDGs agenda. Since 2008, the Republic of China (Taiwan) has adopted “viable diplomacy,” one of the goals of which is to make Taiwan a provider of international humanitarian aid. With that, Taiwan will continue to work with its allies in implementing projects of poverty eradication worldwide in accordance with the MDGs.

Ambassador Kao also pointed out that maintaining peace and security is the key to prosperity and sustainable growth. Taiwan in its efforts to act as a peace-maker, has endeavored in recent years to support the reduction of tensions and in turn to help foster peace and prosperity across the Taiwan strait. By the same token, in view of the recent territorial disputes over the East China Sea, Taiwan has proposed the East China Sea peace initiative, which calls on all parties concerned in the East Asia region to resolve the issue peacefully and thus paving the path for facilitating the achievements of the MDGs.

Keynote speeches

• Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Professor of International Affairs, the New School, New York:
Taking “Should Global Goal Setting Continue, And How, in the Post-2015 Era?” as her topic, Professor Fukuda-Parr stated that Millennium Development Goals, as a set of indicators to track the implementation of United Nations Millennium Declaration,
became the basis for a global consensus that made the fight against poverty the priority and common objective of the global community.

However, despite the positive achievements of the MDGs, Prof Fukuda-Parr pointed out some of MDGs controversies as follows: (1) poor design in development goals, such as incomplete methodology, biased against countries that start low, distorted national priorities and application, and undefined global or regional or national targets; (2) too narrow in scope: equity and equality in and between countries, unemployment, and climate change were items that did not find adequate expression or inclusion in the MDGs agenda; (3) process setting from the top-down, which did not invite adequate participation from other actors such as national/local governments and civil society. These were some of the reasons why the UN Secretary General now has advanced the notion that Member States should begin considering, and debating the post-2015 MDGs agenda and related sustainable development goals; (4) "Unintended Consequences": for instance, while we try to achieve universal primary and secondary education, the quantity and quality of enrollment, especially for girls, cannot be neglected.

In terms of what should be addressed beyond 2015, Professor Fukuda-Parr indicated the following:
(1) The global community should not abandon the MDGs: in fact we should recognize that the MDGs have had profound impacts on poverty issues as they helped to create a useful global consensus;
(2) Nonetheless, discussions for the post-2015 agenda must pay greater attention to new or emerging global challenges, in particular to issues of sustainability and rising inequality, levels of youth unemployment, and the effects of instability in global markets. All of these topics and challenges constitute issues that we have to deal with through much greater effort;
(3) The way forward: the post-2015 agenda should return to the broader norms and values of the Millennium Declaration, with more focus on sustainable growth, equality and parity development;
(4) Any post-2015 goals should be universal, instead of only focusing on poor countries.
In the end, Prof. Fukuda-Parr identified inequality between countries, rising unemployment rates and climate change as the three major challenges the world is facing. "Global problems require global solutions," She also emphasized the importance of international cooperation and solidarity among the global community by echoing what Ambassador Kao said, "We can do more when we are together."

Stanley Kao, Director General, Department of international Cooperation and Economic Affairs, the Republic of China (Taiwan):
Director General Kao gave an overview of Taiwan’s contribution towards the UN MDGs. He started by touching upon Taiwan’s state-building experiences, from a foreign aid beneficiary country to a donor country. Taiwan has transformed from an aid recipient to an active donor in the international arena, having started its foreign aid program by sending agricultural and technical missions to Vietnam and African countries in 1959. Taiwan was the first country to graduate from the U.S foreign aid program since it voluntarily stopped receiving foreign aid in the 1970s. In 1996, Taiwan set up its specialized aid agency, the International Cooperation Development Foundation (or ICDF), in order to enhance international cooperation.

In 2011, Taiwan’s ODA was $381 million. Although Taiwan is not a member of the UN or the OECD, it has made great efforts to place its current ODA at an average of $400 million, alongside with the same economic size such as Luxemburg, South Korea, and Greece. Taiwan will do its utmost to keep up with the targets even at this time of global economic downturn.

Taiwan has conducted its own foreign aid policies in accordance with global trends and rules such as UN 2000 Millennium Declaration, 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and 2011 Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. In 2009, Taiwan renewed its foreign aid policy by issuing its first foreign aid policy White Paper, which indicated three basic principles: Legitimate Purpose, Lawful Process and Effective Implementation. Taiwan also passed ICDF ACT in 2010, and other six by-laws which focused on transparency and accountability and sought to make Taiwan’s
foreign aid policy move further toward a more professional, institutionalized and result-oriented framework.

Through bilateral and multilateral ODAs, Taiwan has sought to fulfill its responsibility as a member of the global community. It not only provides bilateral aid programs for its diplomatic allies, but where possible cooperates with international organizations and development banks such as Mercy Corps and the Asian Development Bank to conduct multilateral aid programs.

Taiwan held a Conference on the topic “International Development Cooperation and the Taiwan Experience” on September 25, 2012. The themes of the Conference were to identify the global trends in implementing UN MDGs, to explore Taiwan’s experience and its implications, and to build global progressive partnerships. President Ma and Minister of Foreign Affairs Timothy Yang of Taiwan, as well as former World Bank President Robert Zoellick, made opening remarks or gave important talks at the conference. High-caliber participants also included officials from USAID and the Gambia. As Taiwan continues to pursue the challenge of working hard and smart at the same time, it will remain committed to broaden and deepen its cooperation with other partners in order to facilitate the UN MDGs.

**Q&A**

During the Q&A section, **Professor Fukuda-Parr** emphasized the argument that the Millennium Declaration should be revisited, as it had offered a broader vision than the MDGs. For instance, the Millennium Declaration included issues such as human rights, environmental sustainability, as well as peace and security. She emphasized the human rights was not meant to privilege only civil or political rights, democracy, etc. Rather, the principle of human rights should have to do with considerations of participation, equality, transparency, accountability, non-discrimination, dignity, and respect.

In terms of what should be placed on the primary concern after 2015, Professor Fukuda-Parr said as far as the sustainable development goal is concerned, the main
problem of any framework is not what it includes, but what it excludes. She suggested that the policy makers and advisors in any country or organization should pay more attention to achieving "balanced" features on every goal, as they all are inter-related.

Panel Discussion

1. H.E. Amb. Afelee Pita, Permanent Representative of Tuvalu to the United Nations: Amb. Afelee Pita stated in the beginning that Taiwan has been for a long time played a significant role and provided substantial assistance in particular to Tuvalu in achieving the MDGs goals. The very first project Taiwan funded for Tuvalu was to build the only hotel in the country in the 1980s. The second project was a national sports stadium, which was critical for promoting sports events in the country. The third project was the construction of the three-story government building, which is now the highest building in Tuvalu. This building becomes not only a tourist spot in Tuvalu but also offers the only multi-story shelter if a tsunami should threaten Tuvalu. In addition, Taiwan has provided Tuvalu with continuous assistance in agriculture development and education via scholarship. It is worth mentioning that Taiwan is the only country establishing an embassy in Tuvalu. That’s why Taiwan understands what Tuvalu’s people need.

2. H.E. Amb. Camillo Gonsalves, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations: Ambassador Gonsalves said that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is clearly not the drafter of MDGs. Though the 8 MDGs are very important to many countries in the world, they do not directly apply to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The main challenge Saint Vincent and the Grenadines encountered in the early 2000s was that the country was in the process of economic transition. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines had produced only one agricultural product, bananas, for export and this had become its largest foreign exchange earner. When Saint Vincent and the Grenadines lost its preferential market access quota to the UK, its economic activity had to be changed rapidly from this single agriculture product export to a more diversified service sector.
Ambassador Gonsalves continued by saying one of the primary services Saint Vincent and the Grenadines provides is tourism. Even though the natural resources his country has are abundant to develop tourism, the country still lacks other basic facilities, including infrastructure and basic training of personnel. For example, although there is universal primary education, there are only a few students in the country receiving education beyond the primary level. Ultimately people did not need secondary education if they were looking to work in the banana field. However, people do need further education to work in service sector. That’s the problem Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are facing now.

Ambassador Gonsalves emphasized that Taiwan understands not only the development priorities of St Vincent and the Grenadines, but also the goals and objectives that have had to be achieved when the above-mentioned transition took place. The foreign aid Taiwan is providing to its allies within the Caribbean community is deeply felt; the important thing is the “partnership” and “ownership” that Taiwan has shared with its allies.

Ambassador Gonsalves described examples of this partnership in the areas of secondary education, health care infrastructure development and medical training, and youth employment as well as general economic infrastructure development. Ambassador Gonsalves concluded by noting the high degree of complexity faced by local farmers seeking to access European Union development funds compared to the relative ease for them to apply for the Taiwan Cooperative Fund.

3. **H.E. Amb. Susan Waffa-Ogoo, Permanent Representative of the Gambia to the United Nations:** Ambassador Waffa-Ogoo said that the implementation of the MDGs has made a significant progress so far, but there is still a long way to go to reach the MDGs targets. She shared with the audience Gambia’s performance of implementing the MDGs. Gambia’s goal-1 indicators have gone down from 58% in 2005 to 39% in 2010. This figure indicates that the eradication of extreme poverty in the Gambia is not possible by 2015. Also, the proportion of children who are underweight has
decreased from 23% to 17% in 2010, but the MDGs target will not be met by 2015.

Gambia is achieving the goal-2, of universal primary education for boys and girls. It has reached the goal of gender parity in primary and secondary education. Efforts to promote gender equality and empowerment of women have made a significant progress; for example, 33% of the cabinet members are women. For goal-4 of infant mortality and goal-5 of improved maternal health, Gambia might not be able to make it, particularly in the most deprived regions in the country.

Gambia’s major challenges for goal-6, combating HIV/AIDS, are complicated by the lack of reliable data on tracking our indicators and performance. However, Gambia is doing well in protecting people especially children from being contracted with malaria. On environmental sustainability (goal-7), the Gambia has made progress slightly, particularly in protection and provision of safe drinking water. By 2010, the Gambia will reach over 87% of safe drinking water in many areas of the country. Protecting forests and combating drought have also made good progress in the Gambia.

Taiwan has effectively helped and offered its development system toward the Gambia. In terms of education, Taiwan has helped the country establish schools and provided scholarships to students, especially girls, in rural areas. Likewise, Taiwan has been supporting women in rural areas to grow rice and vegetables to fight hunger. The above-mentioned efforts have also helped ease the unemployment issue local women and the youth encounter in rural areas. Creating jobs, from Gambia’s perspective, is the most important goal for the MDGs after 2015. In Gambia, the unemployment rate hits 26% recently and the youth suffer the most.

With the focus on the future SDG agenda, the Gambia really needs Taiwan’s continuing provision of its support, especially in the area of natural disaster assessment, prevention, and management. Another important topic is sustainable energy, for without energy the Gambia cannot go far in its development.

Ambassador Maza began by highlighting that the Millennium Development Goals represent a global development commitment effort that resulted from several Global Summits during the nineties. As a direct response to the biggest development challenges, the MDGs promote poverty reduction, education, maternal health, gender equality, and contribute to the eradication of child mortality, HIV-AIDS and other illnesses.

The MDGs were a framework within which developing countries have committed to better governance and to invest in health and education for their population. At the same time, developed countries have committed themselves on paper at least, to support developing countries with cooperation for development, debt relief, and in making the international commercial system more equitable and fair.

Ambassador Maza highlighted that according the 2012 report on the MDGs presented by the Secretary General, three important goals have been achieved before 2015: reduction of poverty, improvement of living conditions in slums, and access to safe water. Achieving the remainder of the MDGs will only be possible if governments do not ignore their commitments agreed to more than a decade ago.

The 2012 report also emphasized that in order to continue advancing in achieving the rest of the MDGs, the need to achieve MDG 8 (a global partnership for development) becomes a must. Why is MDG 8 so important? The main objective of MDG 8 is to create a global partnership for the eradication of poverty through a more open and fair commercial system, an increase in mobilization of cooperation for development, debt relief for the least developed countries, and access to essential medications and new technologies for developing countries.

This Global Partnership for development has accomplished many advances, including an increase in South-South cooperation, as well as an unprecedented amount of Official Development Assistance in 2010 ($129,000 million). Although
we have achieved much progress, there is still plenty of room for improvement considering 2015 is right around the corner.

Even though ODA reached unprecedented levels in 2010, donor countries today are reducing their contributions for 2012-2013. Having this in mind, it is unclear how donor countries will keep their promise of contributing 0.7% of their GNIs for ODA. At the same time, the international trade system keeps benefiting the interests of the developed countries. This is a challenge for small farmers and for the governments of developing countries. While in the developed countries, food products keep on being protected with high import tariffs and subsidies, developed countries demand developing countries to completely open their borders to trade. Also, although many measures have been established to increase access to medications and new technologies, many of the developing countries still have problems affording them.

Ultimately, it is clear that most of the commitments under MDG 8 have not been achieved. These refer primarily to commitments made by developed countries. It is these commitments that could offer a real change in the current international development cooperation model. It is of utmost importance to focus on MDG 8. The level of resource mobilization necessary to achieve the rest of the MDGs in the developing countries depends ultimately on the accomplishment of this objective.

5. Mr. David Prettyman, Strategy Director, Humpty Dumpty Institute (HDI)

Mr. Prettyman began by introducing HDI as a unique, innovative and effective international NGO focused on development work and making the United Nations more effective. He said HDI has implemented $20 million worth of development projects in ten countries. In January 2012, HDI became the first American NGO to begin a mine action program inside the borders of Myanmar. There are 30 sitting Members of the U.S. Congress in HDI’s Advisory Board. HDI also has a strong Board of Directors that enjoys close ties with the United Nations and Governments around the world.
HDI began a “Mushrooms with a Mission” (MwM) project in Quang Tri province, Vietnam, in 2009 with great support from Republic of China (Taiwan). 126 families have been invited to join the project ever since it came into being. Republic of China provided a second grant in May 2012, with a goal of including 1,000 families to participate in the project in the near future.

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