Post -2015 Global Development Agenda: A critical assessment of future options

By

Amarakoon Bandara[1]

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I.   Introduction

The United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration in 2000 and the Millennium Development Goals – a set of time bound development targets- in 2001 with the overarching objective of reducing poverty and improving social development. The MDGs were set to be achieved by 2015. Since their adoption MDGs have become a cornerstone of development policy around the globe and remains an overarching framework for development activities of the United Nations. To some extent MDGs have also become influential in donor assistance to developing countries. Ten years on, the job appears to be incomplete-while progress has been made in several fronts there is a long way to go in achieving all MDGs. The world is on track to achieving the poverty reduction target. Some of the poorest countries, especially in Africa have made greater strides in some areas including education. New HIV infections are declining steadily-around the globe and particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite the progress made the world has failed to reach the most vulnerable. Poverty remains a major challenge in most developing countries as the progress has been confined mainly to East Asia-notably China. The progress in reducing maternal mortality is slow and remains a major burden. Even if MDGs are to be achieved by 2015 it would only be half of the job. With four years to go to complete the initial process a debate is ongoing on the Post-2015 Development Agenda-mainly at the regional and global level.

The objective of this paper is to attempt to invoke a debate on the Post-2015 Development Agenda within the UN in Tanzania and possibly at the national level. In this respect the paper provides the background information on MDGs, reviews literature on the recent debate on the Post-2015 development agenda, critically assesses the pros and cons of alternative approaches and provides fresh thoughts on the way forward. The paper is structured as follows: Section II provides a brief background in the run up to MDGs. The role of MDGs in the global development debate, their progress and issues surrounding MDGs will be discussed in Section III. A brief account of the current international development scenario will be presented in Section IV. Key issues for a new development agenda will be elaborated in Section V while some options for the Post-2015 Agenda are discussed in Section VI. A brief reflection on who should champion the Post-2015 agenda is given in Section VII. Section VIII concludes.

II.   Background in the run up to MDGs

The MDGs didn't come out of a blue. While the idea of setting targets for development goes back to 1960s, the roots of the MDGs could be traced back to a series of UN conferences that preceded the MDG Summit of 2000, particularly in the 1990s. The Children's Summit of 1990 in particular, and other conferences on a range of development issues such as nutrition, education and social development, among others, have been influential in formulating the MDGs.[2] The Blue Print of international development goals that led to MDGs appear to have culminated within the OECD-DAC and not the United Nations itself.

After the cold war ended donor countries were less enthusiastic, development aid declined sharply, and the old aid mechanisms became rather inappropriate. Thus the need to have a new way of engaging with and mobilizing the donors as well as a new justification was felt by

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[2] These conferences include the World Conference on Education for All (1990), the World Summit for Children (1990), the UN Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the World Conference on Human Rights (1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the World Summit for Social Development (1995), the World Conference on Women (1995), the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)(1996) and the World Food Summit (1996). Please see ACIA (2011) for details.

the DAC (Hulme and Scott (2010)). It appears that this was an initial reaction to their being marginalized and the need for showing their relevance and existence. The benign fiscally stable period also facilitated such a move. It is with this background that DAC resolved to set up a 'Groupe de Réflexion' in 1996 to review the future of development aid and the role of the DAC in a post-cold war era. One of the tasks it undertook has been drawing up a list of UN declarations and pulling out a set of coherent goals. The outcome is the launch of a final report called "Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation" at an OCED high level Meeting of Ministers in the same year. The set of goals[3] in this document was the basis for the "International Development Goals" proposed in 2000, in "A Better World for all: Progress towards the International Development Goals" –a product of the IMF, OECD, the UN and the World Bank (Hulme (2009)).[4] And the goals set to define a vision.

This provided a perfect background for a grandiose idea for the then UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, to present at the upcoming Millennium Summit, at a time when perceptions on UN conferences were fading away. A report on "We the peoples: The role of the United Nations in the 21st Century" was presented to the General Assembly drawing on UN conferences and Summit Declarations.[5] The dawn of the Millennium provided an unprecedented opportunity and the Millennium Declaration was soon adopted unanimously by 189 UN member States. And the MDGs were born. It should be noted that International Development Goals approved by all OECD members –which are also based on UN declarations-provided a firm basis for acceptance of MDGs, particularly by donor countries. The UN also ensured that the potentially controversial issues such as gender equality and reproductive health are omitted in the MDGs. A goal (MDG 8) relating to the role of developed countries was also added at a later stage to garner support from developing countries.

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[3] The goals set in this report related to poverty, primary education, gender equality, child mortality, primary health care and sustainable development

[4] These include seven goals relating to poverty, primary education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal mortality, reproductive health and sustainable development.

[5] The Millennium Declaration calls for achieving specific goals on poverty, primary education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal mortality, HIV, malaria and other diseases, and people living in slums.

Some suggest that MDGs were developed through an interaction between neo-liberal ideology (one that promotes economic growth based on free trade and markets) linked to results based management (which was recognized in developed economies at that time) and a multidimensional human development approach (Hulme (2009)).

Not all have the same view point on MDGs. The experience of MDGs during the last decade or so has led to the emergence of several schools of thought on MDGs (ACIA, (2011)):

(i)   The Optimists (such as Jeffrey Sachs, Pronk and Vandemootele), who consider MDGs as a vehicle for transforming human development. They consider MDGs to be broad enough, results oriented, precise and quantifies and also ambitious.

(ii)   The Strategists (such as Fukuda-Parr, Jolly), who consider MDGs as essential element to achieving political commitment.

(iii)   The Skeptics (such as Clemens, Easterly), who regard the MDGs well intentioned but not appropriately thought out. They see the MDGs as a success in 'global consciousness raising' but have failed in translating that new awareness into achieving the goals. Promising too much could also lead to disillusionment (Clemens and Moss (2005)).

(iv)   The Radical critics (such as Antrobus, Eyden, Saith, Pogge), who see the MDGs as a diversionary maneuver to draw attention away from the 'real' issues of growing global inequality and disparity. They concede that the voices of the poor and poor countries are hardly heard, if at all.

III.   The MDGs: their role in development, progress and issues

The role of MDGs in development policy

According to Nayyar (2011), the significance of MDGs was two-fold. First, it characterized the multiple dimensions of poverty and deprivation. Secondly, they recognized it as a critical element of the four global challenges: development and poverty reduction, democracy and human rights, peace and security, and environmental sustainability. MDGs have also served as a useful planning tool.

Surprisingly, MDGs have received a level of sustained attention that is unprecedented for any UN development declaration. Their simplicity, clarity and good intentions bonded the international community together. The MDGs are arguably the most politically important pact ever made for international development. They generated an unprecedented global convergence around poverty reduction. While setting a bench mark for global development policy since 2000, they are seen as a significant step towards an international social norm that sees extreme poverty morally unacceptable and thus changing international values (Fukuda-Parr and Hulme (2009)). MDGs have also been instrumental in mobilizing public and political support for development. As survey results show MDGs seem to have influenced priority setting in developing countries in addressing poverty. The MDGs have also been successful in providing a focus for advocacy, improving the targeting and flow of aid, and improving the monitoring of development projects (Lancet (2010)). They generated a new consensus between the IMF/World Bank and the UN, the former incorporating poverty dimensions in their structural adjustment programmes and later in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) shifting the emphasis from growth to 'human development'.

Clemens and Moss (2005) posit a different view. According to them a more nuanced view might see the MDGs as a symbol of the kind of outcomes towards which the world should strive. This view takes the MDGs as a tool and not targets. Goals generate discussion, focus attention and help assign accountability. And MDGs have undoubtedly served these purposes to some degree.

The progress made on MDGs

While the progress made on MDGs can be assessed by monitoring and evaluating the advances in achieving the set targets, it would be difficult to attribute the success or even failures to the MDGs themselves or the process involved as many other factors could affect the indicators. One could have asked the question "what would have been the situation if MDGs were not in place? Answering this type of question is difficult but only make a qualitative reference. As the

Global MDG Report (2011) indicates, at a global level poverty is likely to fall below 15 per cent by 2015-well below the 23 per cent target under MDGs. The absolute number of poor people living below the $1.25 a day poverty line has dropped from 1.8 billion in 1990 to 1.4 billion in 2005. In China and India alone the number of poor people came out of poverty during this period was estimated to be around 455 million implying that elsewhere the progress has been slow. New estimates indicate that the number of poor people will drop to 900 million by 2015 and again China and India will feature well in reducing poverty at the global level. We should also be cautious in attributing the success to MDGs as much of the reduction in poverty has been achieved between 1990 and 2000- before the MDGs even existed (Fischer 2010).

Figure 1: Progress in MDGs-a global score card for selected targets
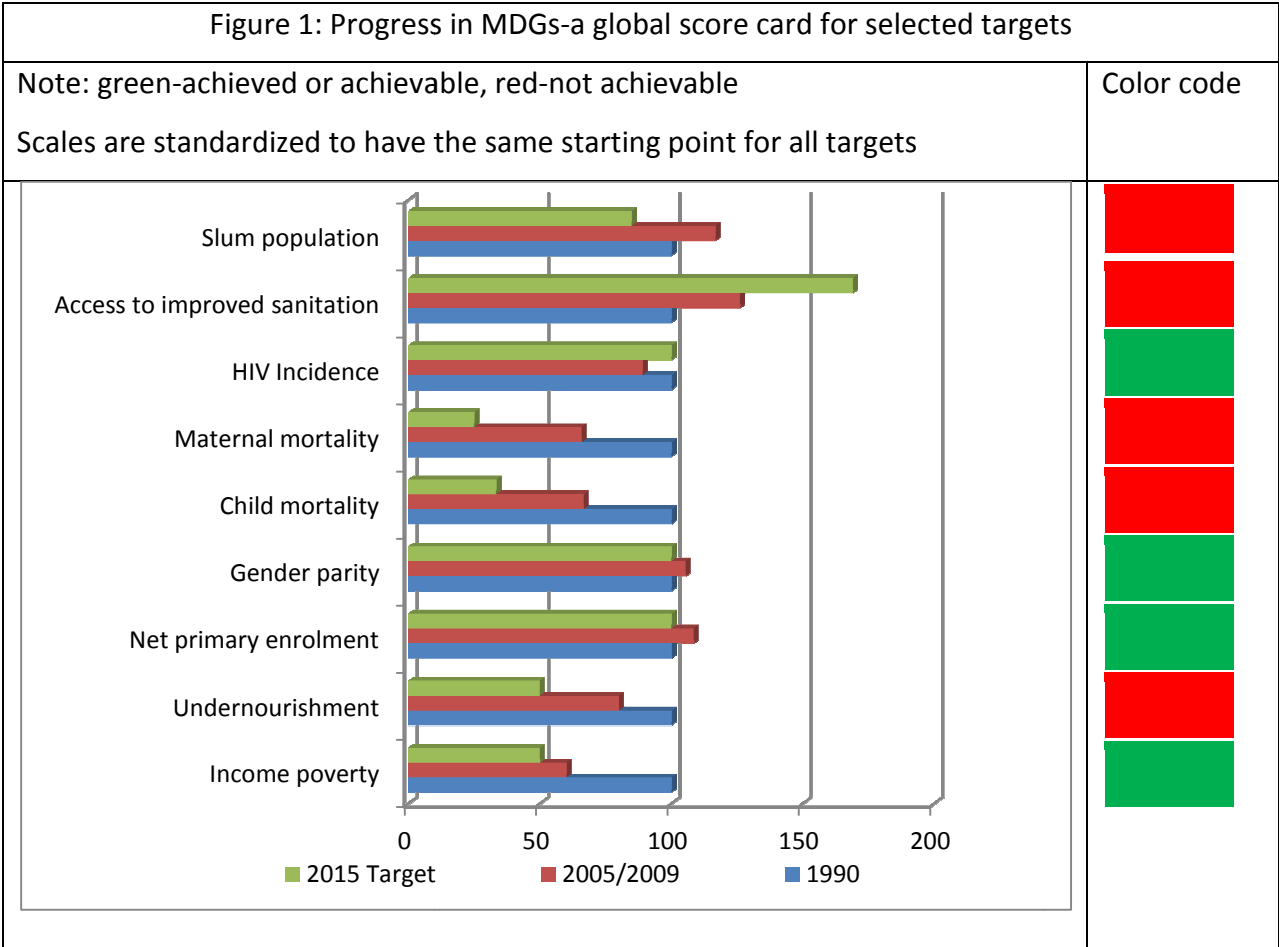
Although progress has been made-especially in Sub-Saharan Africa- the world is far from achieving the education goal as the net enrolment ratio increased to 89 per cent in 2009 from

82 a decade ago. Primary completion is a serious issue as many drop out early. Even where progress has been made in enrolment, this has been achieved at the expense of quality. While significant improvements have been made in girls' enrolment in primary and secondary levels, only three regions-Caucasus and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South East Asia have achieved gender parity at the primary level. The story is completely different at the tertiary level- as a whole gender parity is highest in developing countries at 97 per cent. But this is primarily due to East Asia and Northern Africa where gender parity has been achieved while elsewhere the participation rates have skewed towards either boys or girls.

Progress has been made in reducing child mortality. Since 1990, child mortality has reduced by one-third implying that the goal can be achieved only if concerted efforts are made to accelerate action in eliminating leading killers of children-diarrhoea, malaria and pneumonia. Post natal care and under-nutrition are other areas where action is lagging in some regions such as South Asia. Maternal mortality has become a key development challenge, a particular concern in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, despite proven interventions-reversing the gains in some countries. In developing countries, 35 per cent child births are not attended by skilled health personnel. The number of people newly infected with HIV is declining steadily since the peak in 1997. The number of deaths due to AIDS is declining and the number of people living with HIV is flattening off. This however, masks substantial regional differences-advances have been made in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia while challenges remain in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The deforestation rate is alarmingly high although slowing down somewhat. Four million hectares of forests are disappearing every year in Latin America- 3.4 million ha in Africa. Global greenhouse gas emissions are on the rise due to rapid economic growth, particularly in the developing world. On the positive side is the progress made in sustainable access to safe drinking water-the target is likely to be achieved at the global level although still one in ten people may be without access to safe drinking water by 2015. On the other hand, the sanitation target is unlikely to be achieved as access to sanitation has improved only from 54 per cent in

1990 to 61 per cent in 2008 against the target of 71 by 2015 - Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia particularly lagging behind. The rapid urbanization is exerting pressure on efforts in improving the lives of slum dwellers. As such, although the share of urban residents living in slums has declined from 46 per cent in 1990 to 33 per cent in 2010, the absolute number of slum dwellers is increasing.

Substantial progress has been made in aid disbursements- net aid disbursements rising to $ 129 billion (0.32 per cent of Gross National Income of developed countries) in 2010. However, key pledges such as the Gleneagles commitments in 2005 to double aid to Africa by 2010 have not been met. Progress has also been made in accessing the markets of developed countries by developing countries-in 2008 almost 80% of imports from least developed countries (LDCs) were tariff-free compared to 70% in 2000. The debt burden of poorer countries has been eased through the highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative. On the other hand, the negotiations on the Doha Development debate on trade issues are stalled.

Overall, some progress has been made in achieving the MDGs. Particularly encouraging are the successful development stories coming out of Sub-Saharan Africa. While these developments bring hope, the progress has been highly geographically uneven. Regional and country differences remain a serious challenge.

Issues relating MDGs and lessons learned

Have the MDGs changed the development discourse?*:* Although MDGs have achieved widespread interest and have been integrated to the workings of aid agencies and to some extent the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs), they have not been successful in shifting donor country policies. Nor did they induce a domestic social movement in favor of MDGs among donor countries. Although the MDGs were meant to influence PRSPs/national development plans, alignment of these strategies to MDGs has been limited. Hulme and Scott (2010) argue that although MDGs contributed to shifting policies away from the narrow confines of the

Washington Consensus, they have not been successful in gaining greater traction as it did not provide a fully articulated and institutionally embedded alternative to that approach. As a result, MDGs have not quite served their strategic purpose of changing the discourse on development.

Donor led agenda: MDGs are criticized for being a donor led agenda and pay little attention to local context (Sumner (2009) and Shepherd (2008)). The fact that the MDGs are mostly based on the international development goals adopted by the OECD and there was no wide consultation on MDGs might have also supported this argument. As a result, meaningful national ownership by developing countries has been mixed and often weak. The application of a unified structure for achieving MDGs regardless of initial conditions might have penalized and stigmatized the poorest countries where achieving the goals is a greater challenge (Easterly (2009)).

MDGs miss out crucial dimensions: Another criticism of MDGs is that they miss out on some crucial dimensions of development. These include climate change, human rights, good governance and security. MDGs also omit quality aspects of some goals such as education and chronic poverty and income inequality.[6] In measuring progress, MDGs look at national averages leading to neglect of the poorest and the most vulnerable. Although employment is a target under MDG 1, not much attention is paid on this target. In defense of this argument is the fact that more controversial areas such as climate change, human rights and gender had to be put aside for achieving consensus. Moreover, the goals had to be simple and understood by all thereby limiting them to a fewer number rather than covering all development issues. Overburdening the MDGs would have weakened their influence.

Is it MDGs or other factors that matter?: Whether or not the MDGs initiative itself has had an impact on achieving the goals is debatable as a direct relationship could not be established. Many argue that the faster progress in Africa may be due to other factors such as high

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[6] This relates to both national and global inequality. There has been a spectacular growth in inequality worldwide: the ratio of average income in the richest countries to that in the poorest rose from 60:1 to 116:1 between 1980 and 2007 (Pogge 2010).

economic growth. The latter is attributed to improved macroeconomic conditions through reforms and the rise in commodity prices. The apparent failure in fulfilling the Gleneagles commitments might also indicate that MDGs themselves may not have had an impact on development. In certain instances progress on some indicators have slowed since the adoption of MDGs-under-five mortality fell at a rate of 3.5 percent per year between 1960-2000 which slowed down to 2.75 per cent since.

How would have the world fared in the absence of MDGs? This is a difficult question to answer. But some qualitative aspects might help in understanding this issue. Although it is difficult to attribute the success to MDGs squarely, MDGs have helped to raise the profile of poverty and development issues around the world. Despite the challenges facing today, MDGs have been able to garner support from both developed and developing countries alike. MDGs appear to have had an impact in prioritizing poverty reduction in developing countries-a Survey revealing strong belief that development has become a higher priority because of MDGs (Pollard et al., (2010)). The initiative has also helped in building popular movements against poverty in many countries.

Who owns MDGs?: Lack of clear ownership and leadership on some targets has been a major limiting factor in progress on MDGs. A clear example is MDG 8 which was added later in the process. MDG8 does not demand that the rich countries provide any measurable support or ensure fair trade rules. At the national level, MDGs are mentioned in the PRSPs, but most see them as a donor driven process with limited ownership. Another issue that has affected ownership is the goal setting. MDGs have been designed to be achieved at the global level and thus pursuing them at national level has become ineffective.


IV.   The current international scenario: the changing dynamics of power and poverty

Two major factors that could influence the Post-2015 development scenario are the dynamics of economic power and the relevance and significance of the issue(s) to be addressed collectively in a broader context. Economic power matters as the implementation of the

process requires leadership and large scale funding. On the other hand, such commitments may not be forthcoming if the issues to be addressed are not so dire.

***The shift in economic power dynamics:***

The international scenario in the run up to the MDGs has been a boost to the MDG initiative. The period has been relatively benign, stable and fiscally buoyant. The initiative by the OECD to come up with the initial idea of international development goals itself is testimony to this. Average annual real GDP growth in developed countries was 2.9 per cent during 1991-2000 while that in developing countries was 5.6 per cent (Figure 2). Current account of the balance of payments was almost in balance in developed countries in comparison to a deficit of 1.36 per cent of GDP in developing countries (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Real GDP Growth
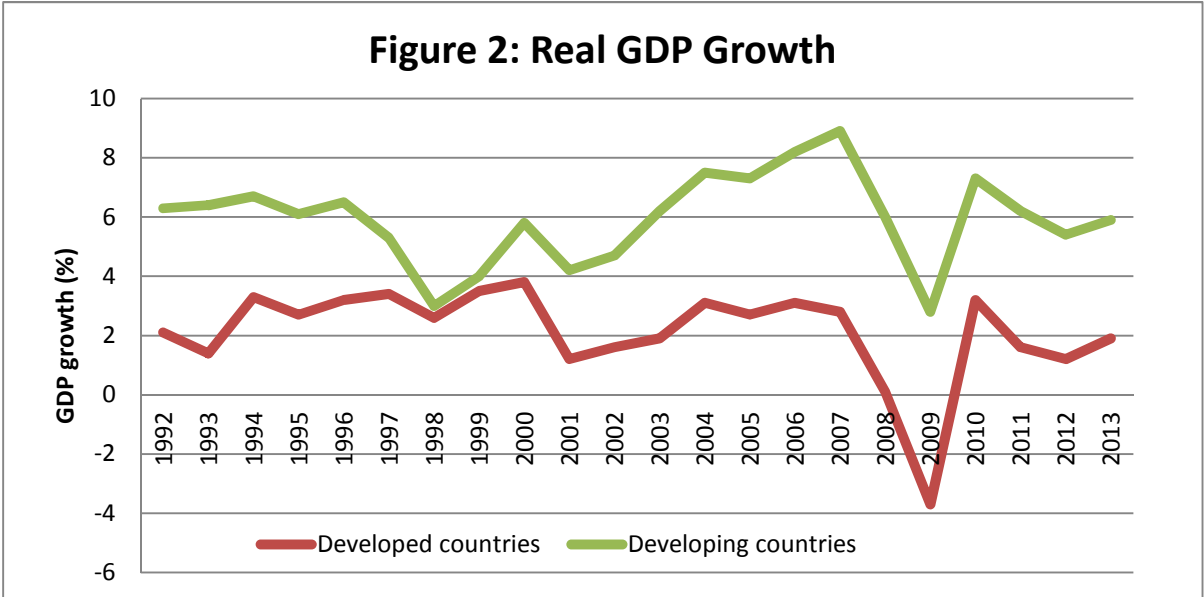
Data Sources: IMF World Economic Outlook, 2011 and 2005

The picture is quite different at the moment and in the coming years. Average Real GDP growth has dropped to 1.6 per cent in developed countries during 2001-2010 and is expected to remain at that level in the next three years as well. In contrast, real GDP growth has averaged 6.3 per cent in developing countries during the same period while it is expected remain over 5.8 per cent. The current account balances of developed countries are in the negative territory (0.6 %

of GDP on average) during this period while that in developing countries has improved significantly to 2.6 per cent of GDP.

**Figure 3: BOP-Current Account Balances**
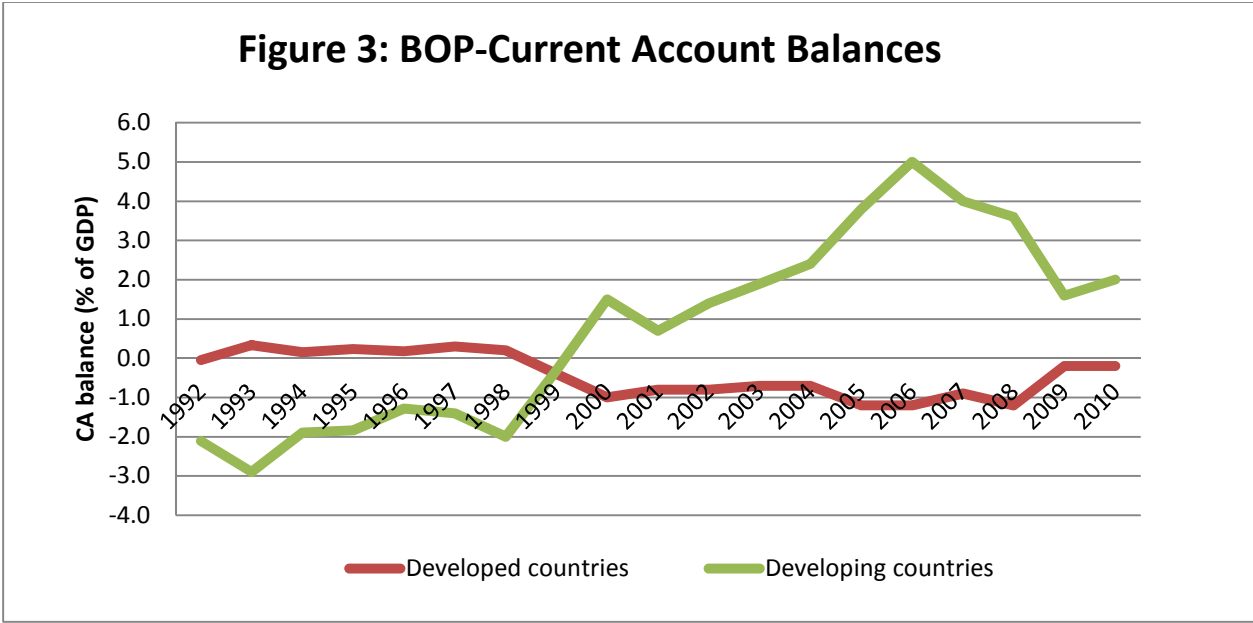
Data Sources: IMF World Economic Outlook, 2011 and 2005

A similar shift has occurred in savings and international reserves (Figure4). The domestic savings rate in developed countries declined from 21.5 per cent of GDP in 1999 to 18.2 per cent in 2010 while that in emerging economies increased from 25.6 per cent to 33 per cent. International reserves of BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) increased significantly from about 225 billion dollars in 1999 to almost 4 trillion dollars by 2010. All these indicators point to a significant shift in financial power towards emerging economies led by the BRIC countries.

With these changes, the global economic power is shifting more towards emerging market economies such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) while the financial muscle of OECD is diminishing. The most supportive donor, the European Union (EU), is in distress following the recent financial crisis. Japan is in similar difficulties due to recent shocks

including the effects of Tsunami and subsequent nuclear disaster and the long standing macroeconomic problems such as economic slowdown and rising debt.

Figure 4: Savings and Reserves Trends
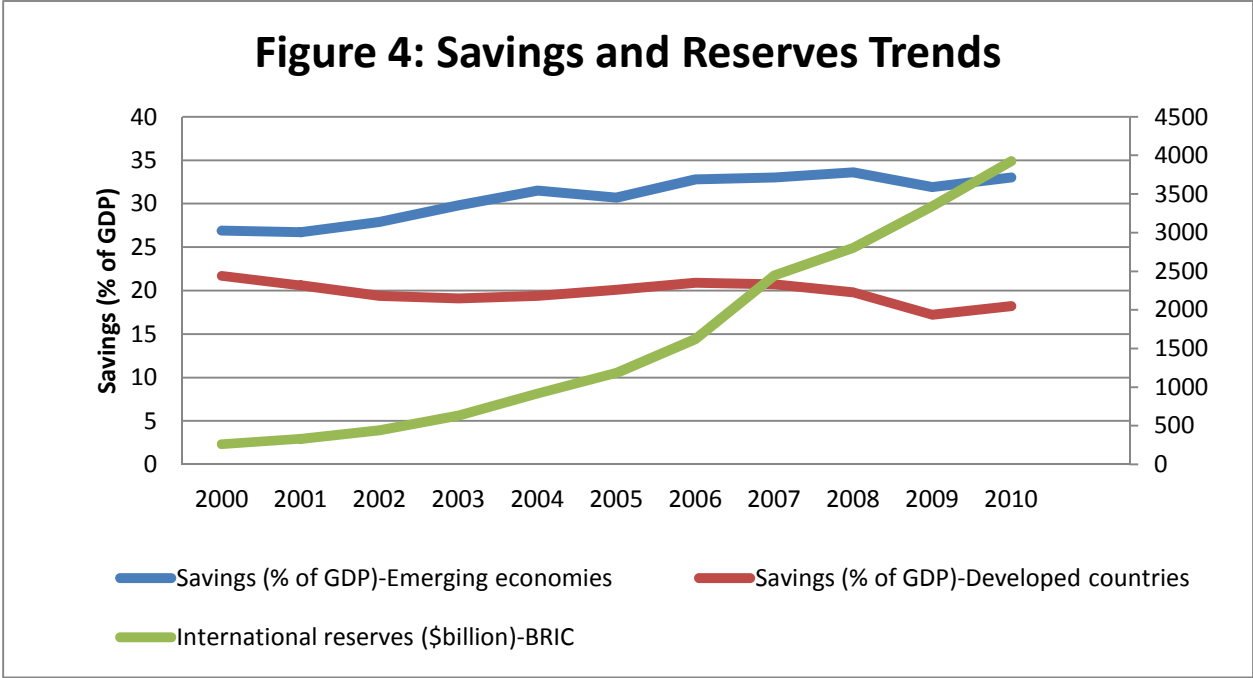
Data Sources: IMF World Economic Outlook, 2011 and 2005

Change in global poverty dynamics:

At the time the MDGs were formulated with 1990 as the baseline there was a strong justification-unacceptably high levels of poverty in low income countries that demanded and warranted direct intervention and support. In 1990, 93 percent of the world's poor lived in low income countries (Table1). Only 7 per cent of the poor were in middle income countries (MICs). The scenario has changed significantly over the years reversing the scales. By 2007/08, 72 per cent of the world's poor lived in middle income countries while only 28 per cent were in low income countries. This is underlined by the rapid economic growth of low income countries, led by China and India, graduating to middle income status while poverty still remains an issue. As Sumner (2010) argues, with the majority of world's poor people now living in middle-income countries, the donor/recipient model may no longer be the right framework for the global actions required to end poverty. Moreover, within this income group, priorities may also shift

from poverty to inequality. A new approach to development assistance that also looks into the dual roles played by some MICs (by being both a donor as well as an aid recipient) such as the BRIC countries may be required to address development issues within a broader framework. The changing dynamics could also pose a challenge for traditional donors to take the lead in designing a new approach on accepted principles.

Table1: Trends in global poverty (% of the world's poor by country type)		
	1990	**2007-08**
Low income countries	93	28
Middle income countries	7	72

Source: Sumner (2010)

Emergence of other issues to the forefront:

At the time the MDGs were introduced, climate change was a far-off concern and far from the global mainstream political dialogue. Climate change was then not a global issue that could garner consensus. In fact it is because of these reasons that this issue has not been considered in the MDGs. Not only it now poses a more serious challenge than perhaps poverty and human development but also threatens progress in human development. The need to change the development models towards more sustainable production and consumption patterns has become a necessity.

In a nutshell the Post-2015 global development framework would have to be developed at a time when the economic crisis is threatening the supporters of MDGs; climate change is looming large; and emerging actors play a vital role in geopolitical power and global governance.

V. Key Issues for a new development agenda

Some guiding principles of a new agenda

The experience from the MDGs initiative could be used as a basis for an effective post-2015 global development agenda. Some guiding principles of a new agenda should include among the others the following:

- The national goals should take into account national characteristics, initial conditions and circumstances with no 'one size fits all' approach (treating countries differently) ideally through a national democratic process. Global aggregates could be used for monitoring at the global level. However, too much focus on the national level will run the risk of reducing the global reach and relevance that were such defining features of the MDGs. This trade-off will have to be considered carefully.

- The goals and targets should take into account not only crossing a particular threshold in quantity but also in terms of quality. Education is a clear example on this issue.

- Use broadly defined targets and go beyond pre-existing targets to avoid gaps in important areas of development and maximize synergies.

- The mechanism linking goals to national development processes needs to be reformed. The future goals should be linked more directly to nationally owned strategies (national development plans or PRSPs).

- There should be an effective and clear champion/leader for each goal. Within competition should be avoided.

- Focus on those aspects of development that can be addressed through coordinated global action. Rather than trying to develop a perfect agreement, the quest should be for one that seems more likely to work

International norm setting and ensuring enabling factors

Two critical aspects of any Post-2015 agenda could be international norm setting and ensuring an enabling environment for global development. Once international norms are set, with time they are expected to get through into policy making at the national level. This would enable the strategy to broaden to a wider area of focus and reflect them in totality. To avoid any danger of missing the urgency, such norms could be linked to goals/targets within a time frame (depending on country circumstances). Within such a framework, an enabling environment could be provided by both the international community and the governments to ensure that the Post-2015 agenda is effectively implemented and goals/targets achieved. The idea of the latter is to deal with systemic and structural impediments to development in poorer countries. Among such enabling factors are eliminating trade barriers, creation of and provision of access to markets, good governance and inclusive participation. Buy-in by the international community is one of the most critical factors to ensure full adherence and implementation of such norms and enabling factors.

Donor interests

Not only the guiding principles but also what drives development assistance that matter for a successful Post-2015 global development agenda. Few principal motivations for donor assistance may provide some clue on the process (DAC, 1996):

(i) *Fundamentally humanitarian motive*: development support is a compassionate response to the extreme poverty and human suffering that still afflict nearly a billion people of the world's population

(ii) *Enlightened self-interest*: Development benefits people not only in poor countries, but also in the industrialized donor countries. Increased prosperity in the developing countries expands markets for the developed countries. Increased human security reduces social inequality at home countries, ease pressures for migration and accompanying social and environmental stresses. Political stability and social

cohesion diminish the risks of war, terrorism and crime that inevitably spill over into other countries.

(iii) *Displaying solidarity*: Sustainable development expands the community of interests and values necessary to manage a host of global issues that respect no borders (e.g. environmental protection, limiting population growth, nuclear non-proliferation, control of illicit drugs, combating epidemic diseases).

Donor interests do not work in isolation. They have to be mutually met and accepted by developing countries as well. Both developing and developed countries have an obligation to fulfill their commitments.

Emerging power shift

One of the most significant changes in recent years is seen in international coordination, including on global development. A clear shift from G7 (or G8) to G20 is seen in more recent years in reaching global consensus with more representation given to emerging economies such as China and India than before. This is a complete different configuration from the one in the run up to the MDGs, where the OECD DAC played the lead role. While the leadership of the G20 matters, questions arise as to whether G20 has the legitimacy and broader representativeness in acting as a global forum, particularly on an issue such as the Post 2015 global agenda. The increasingly integrated world economy highlights the need for better management of international interdependencies. One approach to address such issues is to have co-leads including the UN, OECD and G-77 in taking the Post 2015 agenda forward.

The rising power of the BRICS, in particular China and the resulting change in the concept of aid could have implications for a future development agenda. China has formally acknowledged in Busan in 2011 that it is an official donor. China provides more aid than the World Bank and in some countries it is now the major source of development. As such China must be a determining factor on future aid and possibly in shaping the Post-2015 development agenda.

With 40% of its aid delivered as a finished product through trade credits or other means, the dynamics of aid could change in the coming years. South-South cooperation is gaining ground in development aid with implications for development assistance for the Post-2015 agenda.

Vi. Possible options for the Post-2015 Agenda

As discussed before we are in a period of multiple crises, a complete contrast to the period in the run up to MDGs. The financial crisis is still threatening to destabilize Europe, prime supporter of MDGs, with serious implications for the global economy as a whole. This along with the slowdown of the global economy has worsened fiscal constraints in most advanced economies. The threat of climate change is real and becoming a serious impediment to development and survival. It is with this background that the global community is heading for a Post-2015 era. The above discussion pin points to the thrust of a Post 2015 development agenda. Any post-2015 agreement needs to maintain popular momentum, recognize the effects of global factors and international power structures, allows ample scope and space for all stakeholders to engage in the process, and move beyond aid to cover broader development. The new approach should also heavily focus on the need for tailoring to national context and circumstances and localize them (Jahan 2009).

One common issue agreed by most is the fact that goals/targets of any Post-2015 agenda should be simple, clear and agreeable by all. If all important indicators were to be incorporated in a new agreement it would only add to the complexity and confusion and invariably prevents anyone from being held accountable. Overburdening MDGs will only destroy the robustness and power of them (Jahan, 2009).

With these in mind a range of options that are being discussed are summarized below with a critical analysis:

a)   Continue with MDGs

One of the advantages of MDGs has been their success in drawing global attention to reducing poverty in particular and in progressing on broader human development. Proponents such as

Jeffrey Sachs argue for the continuation of MDGs with or without a timeline. Dispensing with time-bound targets however, could fatally weaken the incentivizing power and influence of the MDGs (Vandemootele (2009)). As discussed before, even if MDGs had been achieved by 2015 the job is half done. This (implied) understanding was there in the first place when the MDGs were introduced. Achieving global consensus on a completely new Post-2015 agenda could be a touch challenge given the current global scenario and as such sticking on to MDGs would provide a breathing space for the countries which are unlikely to achieve MDGs by 2015. On the other hand, the timeline for achieving the goals by 2015 has exerted additional pressure on donors and national governments to increase their efforts. It should be noted that the base line of 1990 was set for most targets in 2000 leaving only limited time (15 years) to achieve the targets. If this approach is the most likely to happen then following may be considered:

- For countries that will achieve the targets by 2015, the focus should be on consolidation and sustainability of progress on the Goals. Ambitious goals of achieving broader development to cement a firm basis for higher level of human development may also be considered.

- For those with mixed progress on the MDGs, the priorities should be in sustaining progress on those targets that have been achieved and strengthening implementation modalities to achieve the other targets within a given time frame- e.g. shifting the goal post. Measures should also be taken to avoid slippage by paying attention to quality in addition to quantity, and minimizing inequalities. The MDG Acceleration Framework (MAF), which has been piloted in several countries, could be a good modality to accelerate progress in MDGs in this group of countries.

Two issues that go against this line of argument is that the global political-economy climate and priorities are different from that prevailed in the 1990s and are changing, new development issues and challenges are emerging and it would be undesirable not to take these into account in a new approach. Moreover, just extending the timeline could reduce the eagerness both on the part of developing countries as well as donors. This would also mean an admission of failure

and would negate the possibilities of learning from experience in the pursuit of doing better or moving faster. Some argue that it would be the 'worst scenario' to continue with the current MDGs (Vandemoortele, 2009).

b)　　Retain current MDGs but with modifications

Several view that the concept of MDGs is still relevant and MDGs should not be completely abolished (Jahan (2009), Lancet (2010) and Nayyar (2011)). MDGs were intended as a global consensus to make development efforts more focused and multidimensional by setting targets and thus creating accountability. MDGs have been successful in reaching that unprecedented political consensus and deserve to build on rather than abandoning half way through. What needs to be done is to reform the initiative to take into account changes that have taken place during the past decade or so as well as emerging priorities and the lessons learned from the MDG initiative. The Post-2015 discussions should also provide an opportunity to respond to some of the criticisms of the MDGs (Vandemoortele, (2009)). However, while acknowledging the need for redesigning, some believe that it would be irresponsible to make a radical break with the current system, which was based on a major international consensus on a development agenda (ACIA, 2011). Some of the areas that were not covered by MDGs but having increasing attention are inequality, sustainable development (environmental protection), quality of education, gender, human rights and governance, among others.

One approach in this regard could be to take a set of three or four 'core' universal goals plus a small set of three or four locally defined goals and/or goals that go beyond human development (Moss, 2010). Another approach could be to re-visit the OECD DAC report 'Shaping the 21st Century' and expand the MDGs to suit present day demands as most of the issues we want to incorporate had been suggested in the report but not incorporated in the MDGs due to political, cultural and other reasons. Although not set as targets/goals the OECD DAC report clearly brings out key elements for a stronger compact for effective partnerships including joint responsibilities (e.g. creating conditions conducive to generating adequate

resources for development and combating corruption), and responsibilities for developing countries (e.g. fostering accountable governance and rule of law, and strengthening human and institutional capacities) and external partners (e.g. supporting policies affecting human rights, and contributing to international trade and investment systems in ways that permit full opportunities for developing countries).

Also could be considered are the innovations in indicators and defining development. The current approach to measuring poverty leaves out many and only encourages economic production and thus material development. The Post-2015 agenda could consider some of the recent shifts in approaches to measuring poverty and development, away from measuring economic production, and towards measuring people's wellbeing. In this regard, the multidimensional approaches proposed by the Human Development Report Office of UNDP along with Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative; The Sarkozy Commission; ESRC Wellbeing in Developing Countries Network and OECD One-world indicators could give a basis for direction.

c)   A Human rights and capabilities approach

Sustained human development is the overarching goal of development strategies at the national level. Human rights are part and parcel of this. Although not formulated as 'rights', the MDGs are an important milestone in achieving economic, social and cultural rights (ACIA, 2011). On the other hand, human rights can strengthen the MDGs, with a focus on the vulnerable groups whose rights are violated: incorporate human right elements such as non-discrimination, participation and accountability as guiding principle of development policy; and paying attention to quality rather than quantity.

A word of caution is due here. The very words 'Human Rights" can simply nullify the whole process if it confers legal obligation on the part of national governments or stakeholders. This applies not only to the States for ensuring their rights at the national level but also donors to

act upon their obligations. In this context the proposals to change goals into a right, which can encourage people to demand accountability from the state could only generate resistance in reaching a consensus. While acknowledging the greater role that human rights could play in achieving the broader objectives embedded in MDGs, the priority should be to build global consensus on a workable solution to sustained development and not one that looks fancy in terms of ensuring the rights of the people but lacks merit in attracting political agreement.

An alternative is to encourage States to follow the examples of some of the countries which have drawn up additional goals voluntarily. An example is Mongolia where a ninth goal on human rights and democracy has been adopted on their own.

The capabilities approach of Amartya Sen, which equates development with more freedom, has elements of human rights that also underpinned the Millennium Declaration. Five essential freedoms in the capabilities approach are: (1) political and civil freedoms, (2) social and (3) economic opportunities, (4) transparency in governance and economic life, and (5) protective freedoms (social security and the rule of law) (Sen, (1999)). Of course some of the elements under this approach could also face resistance if not properly articulated in a Post-2015 agenda as they could be regarded as a backdoor policy for political intervention. Another alternative could be to incorporate human rights throughout as a cross-cutting issue.

d)   An agenda based on Rio+20

With risks of climate change well established, the recent debate on Post-2015 Development Agenda has shifted from mainly poverty reduction to sustainable development. The basic argument is that the global development has been achieved at the expense of the natural environment. The erosion of biodiversity and climate change are the ecological prices that we pay for that ignorance. The technological progress has not compensated for the rising populations and consumption. And hence increasing pressure is being built up on natural resources. Sustainability is yet to become a determining factor in global politics and policies.

The discussions at the Second Rio+20 Inter-sessional meeting held in New York in December 2011 seem to suggest a consensus building to use Rio+20 to shift the Post-2015 agenda from MDGs to sustainable development. The COP-17 meeting held in Durban in November/December 2011 also focused on green growth and climate change. On the other hand, in 2010 the G20 has reached an agreement on the Seoul Development Consensus for Shared Growth with a focus on contributing to the reconstruction of the world economy in a form conducive to strong, sustainable, inclusive and resilient growth.

This approach focuses on a critical problem that affects all communities regardless of wealth or where they live instead of only the poor. The caveat in such an agenda with a focus only on sustainable development is the neglect of the poor. Sustainable development cannot ignore the plight of the poor as stability, peace and security are fundamental for development. If we are to take lessons from the Arab uprising and voices being raised elsewhere, the aspirations of the youth, the poor and the marginalized cannot be overlooked.

A better approach could be one that puts sustainable development and poverty reduction at the heart of the global debate. The Rio+20 itself could deliver such a message, so that a consensus could be built on the Post-2015 development agenda. Some propose a rolling agenda that encompass long term targets for a sustainable development model where progress is measured every five or ten years (ACIA, 2011).

We design a score card to evaluate the merit of the above four options. Each of the options are evaluated against six criteria: consistency with the changing global environment, consistency with current global priorities, whether a champion exists to take the agenda forward, whether consensus could be built, comprehensiveness and simplicity and clarity. Scores are given in a scale of 0-4, zero having the least relevance to the criteria. It should be noted that in assigning scores consideration was given to possible risks in some of the options e.g. human rights (if they are implied as legally binding directly or indirectly). Recent debates on the relevant issues, as discussed above were taken as a basis. As Table 2 indicates, the most likely option that could

garner international support is a revamp of the MDGs taking into account criticisms against omission of critical aspects of development such as environmental sustainability. It should be noted that the OECD-DAC's 'Shaping the 21st century', 'A Better World for all' and the Millennium Declaration, were all very comprehensive and could even be relevant to today's world and also had the support from the donor community. This option could be based on these approaches.

An agenda based on Rio+20 and poverty reduction comes close but has the risk of not having a consensus if climate change issues taken up are regarded as prohibitive for growth in emerging economies in particular. The current MDGs scoring third are still attractive due to their simplicity and clarity, and consensus. The human rights and capabilities approach may not garner support as discussed before due to possible legally binding (at least from the point of view of some countries) constraints. These concerns only point to the need for wider consultations on the Post-2015 global agenda.

Table 2: Potential score card of options for Post-2015 Agenda							
Option	Consistent with changing global environment	Consistent with global priorities	Champion exists	Consensus building	Comprehensiveness	Simplicity and clarity	Total Score
a (continue)	0	1	3	3	1	3	11
b (modify)	3	2	2	2	2	2	13
c (Human Rights)	2	2	0	1	2	2	9
d (Rio+20 and PR)	3	3	1	1	3	1	12

VII. Championing the Post-2015 Agenda

The success of the Post-2015 development agenda depends very much on who the Champion is in promoting the idea. As this is not just an agenda that will remain only on paper but put into action, especially by the poor countries, international support is a fundamental requirement. If the initiative is not championed by a donor or political group (e.g. OECD, G20) as in the case of the MDGs, then not only consensus building will be difficult but continuous support will not be forth coming even when all agree to such a process. It should be noted that although the UN proposed the MDGs, a consensus had already been there on the goals/targets as proposed by the OECD DAC report on 'Shaping the 21st Century' and also reflected in the international development goals that followed on which the MDGs were based. International support for the implementation of MDG related activities very much depended on that understanding. A question one need to ask is would MDGs have been as successful as they are had there not been OECD backing? The answer may be 'No'. As such it would be important to push the OECD or the G20 to champion the Post-2015 agenda with consensus built with all stakeholders (this however does not mean a donor led agenda as discussed before).

If the present fiscal conditions in the Euro zone become a constraint for OECD/G20 to take a lead then what are the other options? There is no guarantee that the emerging players such as the BRIC countries would take the lead with firm commitment (including financial commitment) in taking the process forward and implemented. The BRIC countries, despite having the financial strength, are still trying to put a firm footing in the global arena. They not only have their own issues at home un-attended but are also in a learning process. As emerging players, their priority appears to be strengthening economic and political linkages with the rest of the world. Their development assistance to developing countries through South-South cooperation is based on this principle. Therefore it is unlikely that the BRIC countries could take the lead despite willing to support both politically and financially.

Does this mean the whole process should be discarded if there is no sign of a willing Champion? The answer is a firm 'No". The UN should play that role if no one is forth coming. Although this

does not guarantee success in the process or in the implementation, it is duty bound to play that role and make an attempt to bridge that missing gap. This could also help in ensuring that the new development approach is based on accepted principles that the UN upholds. Noting that donor assistance is not just driven by self interest but by other factors such as humanitarian motive and solidarity as well, one could expect the donor community to support such an initiative even if it is not led by them.

VIII.   Conclusion

The United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration in 2000 and the Millennium Development Goals – a set of time bound development targets- in 2001 with the overarching objective of reducing poverty and improving social development. Since their adoption, MDGs have become a cornerstone of development policy around the globe and remains an overarching framework for development activities of the United Nations. Whether or not attributable to MDGs, some of the poorest countries, especially in Africa have made greater strides in some areas including, economic growth and education since MDGs were introduced enabling them to come out of a "lost decade".

The MDGs have received a surprisingly high level of sustained attention that is unprecedented for any UN development declaration. Their simplicity, clarity and good intentions appear to have played a greater role in bonding the international community together. The MDGs are arguably the most politically important pact ever made for international development. They generated an unprecedented global convergence around poverty reduction. While setting a bench mark for global development policy since 2000, they are seen as a significant step towards an international social norm that sees extreme poverty morally unacceptable and thus changing international values.

But the global environment has transformed significantly since 2000 and is still changing. The poverty dynamics have reversed-the majority of the world's poor now live in middle income countries as against low income countries in the 1990s. The economic power is shifting from

the North to the South with BRIC countries playing a larger role in the global economy and development. This has also shifted the center of world power from G7(8) to G20 although the 'rules of the game' and in particular the central importance of real '*politik*' remain largely unaltered. Issues such as climate change and sustainable development have become stronger contenders for global attention than poverty. The global economy is also going through some stormy conditions as the Euro zone, in particular, is struggling to cope with debt and financial market issues.

With this background the paper analyses several options for a Post-2015 development agenda: (i) continue with MDGs, with a revised timeline, (ii) retain MDGs with necessary modifications to reflect recent changes in priorities and missing critical elements from the MDGs, (iii) adopt a human rights and capabilities approach with some qualifications and (iv) adopt an agenda based on Rio+20, mainly focusing on sustainable development and poverty reduction.

In all these options one thing that needs to be avoided is a 'one size fits all' approach. Initial conditions and national characteristics need to guide any goals/targets in a future scenario through a wider consultative process for the agenda to be owned by all stakeholder rather than donor centric. The paper highlights the need for a champion to lead the process as did by the OECD DAC in the run up to the MDGs. The current international scenario may call for the UN to play that role.

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