

Joint Appeal to Address the Problem of Inequality in the Post-2015 Framework

As a group of economists, academics and development experts, we jointly appeal for putting inequality at the heart of any potential post-2015 framework discussed during the meeting of the High Level Panel in Bali. In order to eradicate extreme poverty in all its dimensions by 2030, we must find a way to reduce vast and increasing inequalities both within and between countries.

While the Millennium Development Goals did spur some progress in human development in the last two decades, there is evidence of growing gaps in terms of income, health, nutrition, education and many other areas that impede the fulfillment of human rights and wellbeing. Global inequality has increased. The incomes of the world's top 1.75% earners now exceed those of the bottom 77% (Milanovic, 2010).

Inequalities threaten our ability to pursue fair and sustainable development as much as they threaten the eradication of extreme poverty. Research shows that inequality – both within and between countries – is a barrier to individual development and sustained economic growth. It undermines social cohesion and distorts the democratic process.

For this reason, a core objective of the post-2015 framework must be to enshrine our joint responsibility to tackle inequality at many different levels. The international community must continue its efforts to reduce inequalities between countries which, according to the World Bank, are still responsible for half of global inequality. This requires an international context that is conducive to progressive government strategies, including promoting poor and developing countries' efforts to diversify their economies, ensuring fair access and equitable distribution of natural wealth resources, establishing just and effective tax systems, and ensuring financial and economic stability. International agreements must be sensitive to these requirements, including those relating to trade, investment and financial flows.

The post-2015 development framework must also aim to reduce the gaps within countries. To this effect, we believe the framework should include a top-level goal to reduce inequalities, including income and gender inequalities in particular. This should be in addition to disaggregated indicators and targets in every other goal to ensure equitable progress across different social groups towards agreed development objectives.

Whilst it may be early in the process to discuss detail, we suggest that an inequality target could be based on Palma's (2011) ratio of the income share of the top 10% of a population to the bottom 40%. In more equal societies this ratio will be one or below, meaning that the top 10% does not receive a larger share of national income than the bottom 40%. In very unequal societies, the ratio may be as high as seven. A potential target could be to halve national Palma ratios by 2030, compared to 2010, and dramatically reduce the global Palma ratio, which is currently 32.

Prioritising the need to tackle inequality in this way will ensure that the new development framework is truly inclusive and can drive the human progress we all seek.

We wish the meeting is a grand success in this regard,

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