



Well begun but half done: Zero draft of the post-2015 outcome document has best of intentions yet many gaps on *things that matter*

Human rights are not only violated by terrorism, repression or assassination, but also by unfair economic structures that creates huge inequalities.

-Pope Francis

The **Global Call to Action against Poverty, GCAP**, welcomes the Zero Draft prepared by the co-facilitators of the post-2015 inter-governmental negotiations, David Donoghue of Ireland and Macharia Kamau of Kenya and released on June 2nd, 2015. It is a document well-begun. While the GCAP welcomes the focus on “call to action”, we also reiterate the need to ensure that the ambition and commitments necessary to accomplish a “transformative” agenda for the next fifteen years is well-established and central to the global development goals. With an aspiration to define the agenda for global action for the next fifteen years, the revised zero draft presents the proposed set of SDGs and attendant targets along with a theoretical underpinning to have a set of **universal, transformative** goals aiming to “**leave no one behind**”. The revised draft document attempts to address the longstanding criticism of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by foregrounding the proposed SDGs with a preamble, shared principles (paras 10 and 11) and a vision for transforming the world (para 15).

It is a 44 page document which continues to maintain the ambition with the draft declaration with all the 17 goals and the means of implementation and follow-up and review mechanisms (at multiple levels). That it did not let ambition fall at the altar of pragmatism and geo-political intransience deserves credit at the outset.

It begins with the best amalgamation of “Ps” that English language had to offer: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. It also acknowledges all the major UN conferences and summits which have laid a solid foundation for sustainable development and have helped to shape the new Agenda i.e. the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992; the Millennium Declaration, 2000; the World Summit on Sustainable Development, 2003; the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (“Rio + 20”), 2012; and the follow-up intergovernmental processes. And the High Level Panel efforts, the UN Secretary General’s Synthesis Report and the intensive set of consultations with people. This is one “Thank You” speech that betters Oscar awards and Nobel prizes if there were one! But this is also a document full of missed opportunities, a declaration, which could have been so much more.

First, the stand-out parts that wins our endorsement:

1. Its commitment to the principle of Leave No One Behind
2. Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments, including the Right to Development is affirmed and also the Common But Differentiated Responsibilities, CBDR, in the text.

3. It recognises the unique challenges of various countries and the differential pathways that they shall need to take. It avoids absurd generalisations and broad-brushing and actually goes on to list most vulnerable countries and, in particular, African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states deserve special attention, as do countries in situations of conflict. There are also serious challenges within many middle-income countries.
4. Carte blanche endorsement of the outcomes 3rd International Conference on Financing for Development, might look hopeful and naive prima facie, but considering it is the new world order, the emerging economies and the developing countries' led agenda, it is a good thing that the draft declaration recognises and endorses the same wholly. Having said that, we hope the outcomes from the conference are re-enforcing equity and justice for such holistic prior support!
5. It recognises the inequalities within and between countries and the need to address it via coherent policy and programmes
6. The threat posed by climate change and the importance of Paris COP 21 also finds appropriate mention including the need to decisively address it
7. The importance of well-functioning, equitable and rules-based multilateral trading system for the realization of the new Agenda finds multiple mentions. Need to work together to enhance macro-economic and financial stability through improved policy coordination and coherence is listed and importance of reaching early agreement in the Doha Development Round of trade negotiations is also flagged including providing trade-related capacity-building for least developed countries.
8. Need for addressing the ever-growing crisis of youth unemployment, decent work for all, universal health coverage, Global Jobs Pact of International Labour Organisation find their deserved space.
9. Limiting the transaction costs on migrant workers' wage repatriation is a very good technical detail that this declaration chooses to touch upon too.

But **for** a document which is realistic in some parts -- e.g. it takes cognizance of the challenges stacked against migrant workers, including wire charges on ***the repatriation of their wages home*** – ***it*** is unusually simplistic, reductive and naive in many other ***sections***.
We are extremely concerned about the following:

1. While the ambition is intact in keeping all the goals unaltered in the main text, why they were reduced and merged into nine in the preamble is unclear. This is a reductive exercise and worse it privileges some goals over others without mentioning so. If it is to reach that magic number of less-than-10, as called by many and acknowledging 17 as too unwieldy, then it undermines all the process and summits on the road to September 2015, which it acknowledged in the beginning!
2. Its call for ODA at 0.7% from the developed countries is un-ambitious pragmatic, considering even the 0.7% was not met, except for a few countries and further number-crunching shows that 0.7% also leaves much to be desired. But for a transformative agenda like SDGs, listing all the goals without re-calibrating the ODA needs is strange. One could make the case for the emerging economies to also put some money, but that maturing of world order doesn't take away the primary responsibility from the developed countries.
3. While accountability finds mention, it is extremely disturbing that nowhere is accountability comprehensively unpacked. And the role of civil society in reclaiming that accountability from the elites, the executives, the governments and the business groups

and hence the resultant backlash that civil society faces, which, it needs protection from, is not factored in either. We think this is an important lacunae.

4. Similarly, for all the energy around data revolution, foregrounding data revolution with accountability and recognising the citizens' pivotal role in the same, is missing too.
5. While the principle of "leave no one behind" finds mention in the Preamble and the subsequent paras, the language of many of the targets has been significantly watered down. For instance, the mainstreamed Means of Implementation (MOI) targets within the 16 proposed SDGs remain mostly recommendatory in tenor and still do not spell out concrete commitments that the developed countries will adhere to.
6. The principle of common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) that finds a solo mention under *Our commitment and shared principles* (para 11, page 3) and within Annex 3, remains critical as a principle for climate financing as well as for specific MOI for SDGs 1, 7, 10, 12 and 13. A significant bone of contention from the very start of the negotiations process, there is a need to elaborate on the application of the principle within specific goals and attendant targets and not restrict it to just a passing mention.
7. The review mechanism is also short of citizens, civil society roles and the national reviews aren't annual either, which leaves much scope for non-reportage, over-reportage et al.
8. Within the standalone Means of Implementation, MOI goal (proposed SDG 17) to realize the post-2015 development agenda, while technology facilitation mechanism is being regarded as a key driver to re-balance the South-North dichotomy, there is a need to examine the mutually supporting elements (as mentioned in Annex 2) more closely. The emphasis on technocratic solutions for challenges, which are essentially political, might be lopsided; solutions in terms of facilitation mechanism need to be embedded more at the community level than only limited to the scientific and technocratic community level.
9. Under *Systemic issues (policy and institutional coherence)* 17.13, the draft document would have been made more substantive by addressing challenges of global coordination around issues of fair and progressive taxation. There seems to be almost no reference to the need to address the challenges of tax havens, tax revenue foregone due to exemptions, tax holidays, tax evasion and avoidance, tax treaties and reporting of tax and beneficiary ownership that collectively create opaque systems that are already riddled with poor governance structures.
10. The previous few Inter-Governmental Negotiations focused more on providing adequate technical proofing of select targets on grounds of their lacking specificity or due to their inconsistency with international agreements. The revised zero draft retains these 21 targets that are being presented for further language corrections. While a more detailed assessment is needed, it has been seen, primarily by the developing countries, as a way to bypass the political endorsement that was arrived at for the set of proposed goals and attendant targets in the Open Working Group negotiations. Opening up select targets to further scrutiny runs the risk of unravelling the progress made and derailing the process substantially. A related concern is that many of the targets identified for technical proofing are more Southern-focused while many of the specific MOI related targets that are recommendatory and rather ambiguous, have not been dealt with as part of this exercise. The one instance of a MOI target being included for technical proofing (target 17.2 on the 0.7% of Gross National Income commitment by developed countries) narrows down the focus on only the Low Developed Countries, leaving out fulfilment of the existing commitments to developing countries.
11. But most concerning is the silence on need for global regulatory mechanisms, punitive provisions especially around business interests, belligerent nation states or countries

wanting to destroy large populations and swathes of civilisations in the name of “deepening democracy”. That the current and real danger of ISIL is also an outcome of such tendencies cannot be over-emphasized. This faith in self-regulation, inherent goodwill of big businesses or countries’ narratives captured by big businesses gives away an innocence that current state of geo-politics scarcely warrants. The mention of peace throughout the document, without emphasizing a mechanism that stops such adventurism, in the name of deepening democracy, markets or religious un-freedoms is deeply concerning.

Specifically we feel some sections are very problematic and **need** re-drafting completely or **should** even **be** knocked out:

- In paragraph 35, it talks of international financial institutions’ reforms with the developing and developed countries getting representation. This is odd, considering the recent FIFA controversy has shown how reforms are impossible if the rich nations only pull the strings. That almost all IFIs are still working the principle of 1-dollar = 1-vote instead of 1 country = 1 vote, requires challenging that fundamental principle in exact words and not be silent about the inherent iniquitous structure of IFIs, which renders reforms impossible.
- It poses some strange faith in micro-finance in Goal 1.4 for capitalising the poor on the face of mountains of contrarian evidence from meta-analysis and heterodox progressive economists. Micro-finance is also a short hand for the limited and unwieldy finance options available to the poor and marginalised compared to the dangerously easy finance available for the elite. Endorsing the FfD outcomes and pinning hopes on micro-finance as silver bullet is dichotomous.
- Goal 2.c on food commodities markets and derivatives alone, undoes everything good about the document. It is a regression of the worst kind. Considering the previous United Nations Special Rapporteur on Right to Food, Dr Olivier De Schutter, had called for a complete ban on futures trading in food commodities and countries like India and China, actually did ban any speculative trading in staple food commodities, what is Goal 2.c doing without a strong mention of regulation, punitive measures for entities indulging in speculation, is unclear.
- Goal 5 on gender equality is conspicuously silent on right to bodily integrity of the women, sexual and reproductive health rights and it also doesn’t acknowledge the onerous contribution of public policy and programmes like tax payer funded crèches for working mothers, recognition and computation of care economy in national income. Had structural challenges to gender equality been acknowledged, these remedies would have been discussed too!
- Goal 7 on energy’ access, is silent on knowledge, technology transfer or the differential contribution due to the global climate fund from the rich nations who caused the crisis vis-a-vis the poor who are victims of it. That most of the renewable energy patents are held in the northern developed countries and a shift without financing commitments and technology transfer, will adversely affect the energy access of the poor in the LDCs, SIDS, even in parts in countries like India, needed to be acknowledged too.
- Goal 8.1 with 7% growth for the LDCs betrays the growth fetish of the old narrative again.
- Goal 12.3 on halving food wastage is an EPIC FAIL, considering in 2015, 1/3rd of the food produced globally is still wasted, yet 1/9th of the population goes to bed hungry!

- Goal 17.12 on duty-free, quota-free market access to the LDCs is naive at multiple levels when the entire section is silent on permanent solution on agriculture trade or the need to revisit the Uruguay round Agreement on Agriculture.

We, at GCAP, the Global Call to Action against Poverty, truly believe a transformative future is only possible when justice and accountability is the pivot. In our campaign manifesto [15 Solutions for 2015](#), we believe in holding governments accountable, especially for human rights, poverty eradication and gender equality and social protection, making private sector accountable for tax justice and meaningful social responsibility, holding polluters accountable for climate justice and achieving all these via people's participation, from communities, sub-nations, national, regional till global level.

The ever-changing, geo-political contexts demand adopting a radically new approach to addressing the development deficits (which could translate to identifying 17 broad areas that merit attention in the next 15 years) and while this cannot be done without forging the necessary partnerships, the focus must remain centrally on the most excluded. Thus, reclaiming voice of those in the fringe of any such agenda-setting process remains most critical for us. As Arundhati Roy in her 2004 Sydney Peace Prize acceptance speech noted, "...there's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard." That would be the only way to realize the ambition of "leaving no one behind".

For the zero draft to become a good document and sustain through the process of negotiations and adoption, it is important to read the signs of the times, the distress of the majority, the obscene inequalities, and anchor the text and process, not just commitments are measured and celebrated but compliance with commitments are tracked for the ones at the margins and the ones excluded.

The Global Council
The Global Call to Action against Poverty