Asian Perspectives on Post-2015 Development Agenda:  
Taking Stock, Harnessing Knowledge and Achieving Results

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Objective of the Post-2015 Development Agenda proposal analysis by leading Asian intellectuals

The research and discussions in different fora on the post-2015 agenda started after the major 2010 stocktaking of MDG progress. As we move closer to 2015, the global reflection process toward a consensus will be punctuated by a series of events and milestones. As an example, a special High Level Panel on post MDGs is expected to be set up by the UN Secretary General in Summer 2012 to lead discussions, consultations and work around the new post 2015 agenda. To ensure that the new paradigm post 2015 responds to the needs of the countries and of the global development agenda, and gets the maximum buy in and support, wide consultations will also be key.

The proposed analysis and recommendations by Asian leading experts on current post-2015 development agenda proposals is expected to contribute to stimulating Asian debate as well as maximizing the Asian input into the post-2015 agenda negotiations process.

Background and rationale for the Asian Perspective

Crises feed uncertainty, but also build momentum for multilateral solutions: Multiple crises that continue rocking the world economy provide a complex backdrop for the global discussion on a new set of goals that will succeed the current Millennium Development Goals (MDG) framework. The crises threaten to undo the hard-won progress made in attainment of the global goals, especially in the poorest countries. At the same time, the threats of global crises serve as an impetus for seeking a new multilateral cooperation framework to advance global development. MDGs have been playing an important role in focusing national development efforts, maintaining social investments, reminding countries of their responsibilities and focusing ODA. What set of development goals could help cushion some of the impacts of crises and global threats and galvanize public support and political will in the changing global context?

Asia will play a major role in shaping the global development trends: In the changing global context, Asia is emerging as a major trendsetter. According to some estimates, Asia’s share of global GDP will nearly double by mid-century; Asia’s aggregate GDP is expected to increase from $17tn (£10tn) in 2010 to $174tn in 2050\(^1\). This should lead to millions of poor people in Asia being lifted out of poverty in the next forty years. Whereas the advent of an “Asian century” and the shift of power from West to East continue to be debated, the pace and scope of economic transformation in the region clearly increase its

\(^1\) Asian Development Bank
economic influence in the world. On development assistance front, Asia is also home to emerging key development actors and champions of regional and international south-south cooperation. Events in Asia will have a deep impact on global development prospects and as such, Asian countries should have an active role in shaping new development agenda. In the past decade, Asian countries have also made significant steps to engage in the global governance and the definition of the global development goals represents an important opportunity to use the rise of region’s global prominence. Asia also hosts a number of countries with unique development paths which can provide leading insights for the new development paradigm.

*But the region also continues facing serious vulnerabilities...*: Despite significant achievements, Asia remains home approximately 60% of the world’s poor with over 900 million people living in absolute poverty\(^2\), out of a total of over 4 billion people in Asia. Asia is the world’s largest and most populous continent. Rapid urbanization poses major challenges of urban poverty, at the same time creating additional pressures on the environment. Global financial crisis, soaring food and energy prices have significantly affected increased numbers of the poor in the region. Despite progress on many fronts and MGD targets, growing income inequality and persistent gender gaps continue undermining region’s development. Closing the gaps will require targeted interventions and significant expansion of social investments, social protection mechanisms and empowerment. Access to and protection of sources of clean water remains a key challenge. Climate changes are exposing large population groups, from both people in the mainland and island states to new vulnerabilities, where one single event can wipe out decades of development gains. Rising sea levels and melting of Himalayan glaciers may affect the lives and livelihoods of millions of people. Asia’s development experience and development status is as diverse as the continent’s geography: Asia includes developed countries, as well as emerging powers and LDCs. Many of Asian countries are middle-income and the notion of “middle-income trap” was developed primarily with regards to the challenges faced by Asian countries. As such, MDGs and their successor post 2015 will remain highly relevant to many Asian countries and the region’s experience in their implementation should contribute to shaping the development of the post-2015 goals.

*To ensure legitimacy and wide ranging support, the deliberation on the goals should ensure broad global consultations among all development stakeholders and solid inter-governmental negotiations, in line with the Busan call for greater country ownership, inclusiveness and transparency.*

In his speech “The Future We Want” UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon committed the UN to “forge consensus on a new generation of sustainable development goals that build on the MDGs”. Building consensus will require significant preparations and active, national, regional, global, multi-stakeholder and inter-governmental negotiations. Discussions, reflections, consultations on the post-2015 paradigm have already started on many fronts.

At the UN, the research work on post-2015 agenda started after the discussion on this subject at UN ECOSOC in March 2011. In early 2012, a UN Task Team on post-2015, coordinated by UNDP and UNDESA was set up. It has been mandated to produce a report on post-2015 for the Secretary General by the end of May 2012, doing groundwork for the High Level Panel which will be appointed in June 2012 (after the Rio +20).

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\(^2\) UN ESCAP, Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2011 people living on less than PPP$1.25 constant 2005 prices/day.
UNDP will also be supporting 50 country consultations on post-2015 development agenda. It is currently putting together a work plan with the specifics, including which countries, and which themes for the planned ‘thematic’ consultations.

A contact group on post-2015 agenda has been created under leadership of the Government of Japan Civil society mobilization is also underway. For example Beyond 2015 Campaign gathers almost 200 people representing NGOs, academic institutions and social movements.

A number of prestigious think thanks are also leading discussions and reflections, such as ODI and the CIGI and KDI

The initiative:

The initiative will mobilize Asian intellectual resources to feed into the official work and consultation process. To maximize the Asian input into the post-2015 development agenda negotiations process, the joint initiative by UNDP Seoul Policy Centre and KDI will seek to mobilize intellectual resources to stimulate regional debate and contribute to preparation of policy positions, alternative scenarios and evidence for the inter-governmental and global negotiations process.

The initiative will bring together leading Asian research institutions, think-tanks and/or specialists in the field of development to discuss the post-2015 development agenda based on major existing reports on post MDG options and set forth comments, alternative proposals and suggestions.

As part of the exercise, the initiative will focus on the enabling framework that can support the realization of the goals, in particular in the capacity development area, starting from the recognition that investment in the human capital was critical in the development of two generation of “Asian tigers” and one of the key common features of the Asian developmental states. Human capital provides enabling conditions for the implementation of the goals. As such, its role should be considered in the formulation of a new set of development goals.

MDGs played an important role in significantly improving the standard of living in developing countries. At the same time, inequality within countries became a major problem threatening sustainable development. Building on the recognition that while there has been progress overall on the MDGs, in many countries pockets of vulnerabilities still prevail, with widening gaps and enhanced risks, the initiative will also look at the proposals from the reports on post-2015 options through the lens of how well they help address these persistent and growing inequalities. The initiative will consist of two parts:

1. Analysis and comments by the selected experts, captured in individual reports, which will be shared with the other participants for review and discussion and will be summarized in a consolidated draft report.

2. 1 1/2 day expert workshop among all experts, authors of the post- 2015 proposal reports, additional experts form the Asia region to review their respective inputs and agree on a set of comments, alternative options and suggestions, to be presented in the second part of workshop in a public forum. The final proceedings and comments will be captured in a consolidated report to feed into national, regional and international fora on the post-2015 development agenda.
Methodology:

Participating countries selection:

Taking into account Asia’s very large diversity, the review experts will be selected from Asian countries representing a mix of less and more advanced countries, emerging development partner countries, to ensure the analysis and suggestions capture the experience, needs and expectations of the Asian region. The countries are ROK, People’s Republic of China, Thailand, Indonesia, India, Cambodia, Mongolia, Laos.

An additional group of experts from Asian countries, i.e. Japan, Vietnam, Philippines and Kyrgyzstan, will be invited as discussants to the workshop, for their review and comments.

The experts will be eminent members of research institutions, think tanks, academia and/or government representatives in their personal capacity, familiar with the MDG and development agenda.

The expert workshop (one and a half day):

It will be organized by the UNDP Seoul Policy Centre and the Korea Development Institute, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea.

The expert workshop will bring all the experts together, the lead author of each one of the reports under review, selected development specialists from Korea and the UN, as well as discussant experts from other selected Asian countries (referred to above) to review and discuss the findings. The experts from the other, Asian countries will both provide comments on the recommendations by the initial group of experts join in as discussants on the main event and present also their own perspective on the Key report proposals and their suggestions, from their country perspective, for the way forward on the post MDG / post-2015 global development agenda.

The expert workshop will be divided in two parts:

Day 1: afternoon ½ day closed door session in which the consolidated comments will be reviewed by the expert writers, the authors and invited expert discussants from other Asian countries.

Day 2: full day – Public

Morning: Plenaries
- Official public opening
- Presentation by the authors of the key reports (CIGI-ODI-UN Development Group) of the main recommendations and reasons why of their reports.
- Presentation by the Asean countries group writer experts of their key analysis, recommendations on the existing reports and key challenges ahead, with comments from the expert discussants from Asia on both the key reports and the expert writers' individual comments and recommendations.
Afternoon:

- Presentation by the non-Asean countries group writer experts of their key analysis, recommendations on the existing reports and key challenges ahead, with comments from the expert discussants from Asia on both the key reports and the expert writers’ individual comments and recommendations
- A round table bringing all experts (authors, reviewers, discussants), organizers and MOFAT together to provide their own views and recommendations for the post-2015 global development agenda, both on a global perspective and where applicable from their own country perspective
- Questions and answers from the public will also continue feeding into the final report.
- Summary and Conclusions of the workshop.

**Key output:**

A printed consolidated joint report with comments, alternative option and suggestions to be published and made available electronically for wide dissemination.

The report will be presented at relevant consultations (possibly as early as September 2012).