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Ministerial Strategic Dialogue on South-South Cooperation (SSC) in Population and Development

Session One: Strengthening SSC for Sustainable Development

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Keynote address by Rebeca Grynspan

Ibero-American Secretary General

His Excellency, Dr. Li Bin, Minister of the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) of the People's Republic of China and Chair of the Board of Partners in Population and Development (PPD);

His Excellency, Dr. David Parirenyatwa, Minister of Health and Child Care of the Republic of Zimbabwe and Chair of this Session;

His Excellency, Mr. Wang Pei'an, Vice Minister of NHFPC;

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA);

Dr. Joe Thomas, Executive Director of Partners in Population and Development (PPD);

Distinguished Ministers, Vice Ministers and senior government authorities from Asia, Africa and the Arab States;

Dear friends,

Allow me to begin by thanking the United Nations Population Fund for the invitation to attend this event, as well as the Chinese government and especially the Beijing authorities for their extraordinary hospitality. It is always appealing to come to this ancient capital, to witness its grandeur and marvel at the magnificent history and cultural wealth of China.

I am delighted to be here today and to have the opportunity to share some thoughts on the linkages between population, sustainable development and South-South Cooperation. It is also quite fitting that this Ministerial Strategic Dialogue should take place in China, the most populous country on Earth and the single largest contributor to poverty reduction around the world over the last couple of decades, as well as a global leader on South-South Cooperation. I congratulate the People's Republic of China on hosting this event and on the country's remarkable social and economic achievements.

More than 21 years have passed since the adoption of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo. The Preamble of the Programme of Action began with the visionary recognition of the interdependence of population, development and the environment (in fact very much in line with what the Executive Director of UNFPA Babatunde calls the 3 Ps: people, planet and prosperity).

Cairo called for the establishment of, and I quote, "a new global partnership among all the world's countries and peoples, based on a sense of shared but differentiated responsibility for each other and for our planetary home."

The ICPD thus laid the groundwork for international cooperation for development in the years to come, focusing on concrete, specific commitments adopted voluntarily by the countries and with the support of the international community. It was an invaluable precedent of the Millennium Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, not just in the format of the commitments but also in their content.

Many have highlighted the coincidences between the ICPD and the SDGs. I believe these coincidences speak to a continuum in our understanding of human development, and a growing consensus around certain issues that are central to promoting a sustainable and equitable future.

This morning, I would like to go over some of the achievements and gaps registered since the adoption of the Programme of Action, highlighting the need to reduce vertical and horizontal inequalities going forward. I will then refer to the 2030 Agenda, focusing on the challenges of financing and implementation. Finally, I will speak about the role that South-South Cooperation can play in helping us achieve these goals, while stressing that SSC is a complement, and not a substitute, of North-South Cooperation and other sources of finance and technical assistance.

So, where are we now? It is very important to highlight the progress we have made. Only if we believe that change is possible will we be able to mobilize the good will of all – government, society, the private sector, philanthropists– to enact change. Despite all the difficulties that lie ahead, the truth is that the last couple of decades have seen an unprecedented reduction in poverty, hunger and extreme poverty around the world.

The number of people living in extreme poverty has declined by about one billion since 1990, owing in part to a period of robust economic growth in large emerging countries but also due to advances in health and education, along the lines envisaged by the Programme of Action.

The number of people in the working middle class has almost tripled.¹ Maternal mortality and infant mortality have declined by half globally –although we did not achieve the goal of the 75% reduction established in the MDGs–, while the primary education enrolment rate in the developing world is now 91 percent.²

The region that I come from, Latin America, made significant strides, reducing extreme poverty by 63 percent and under-five mortality rates by two thirds (Latin America and East Asia are the only two regions in the world that managed to achieve this goal).³

Although maternal mortality rates remain high, and adolescent and early pregnancy continue to rise in several countries, this is a problem not only in Latin America but also in many countries that are here represented.

We know that what matters it is not only the number of children women have but also how early they get pregnant, and the pace at which they have their children. The evidence on the positive correlation between postponing pregnancy, female literacy, healthier families

¹ United Nations (2015) The Millennium Development Goals Report
[http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20\(July%201\).pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf)

² United Nations (2015) The Millennium Development Goals Report
[http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20\(July%201\).pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf)

³ CEPAL (2015) Latin America and the Caribbean: Looking ahead after the Millennium Development Goals. *Regional monitoring report on the Millennium Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2015*
http://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/38924/S1500708_en.pdf?sequence=6

and stronger GDP growth is overwhelming. Still not enough resources are being put into these areas. Universal coverage of sexual and reproductive health is still far away and UNFPA has been struggling with resource mobilization to move this agenda forward. Let me congratulate Babatunde on his efforts and on leading the campaign “girls not brides”.

There is probably nothing that can boost sustainable human development and growth more effectively than gender equality and the empowerment of women. If we want to cut the intergenerational transmission of poverty and inequality, we need to invest in women and girls: education, social and economic empowerment are at the heart of attaining the SDGs!

In Bolivia, babies born to women with no education are two-times more likely to die within a year of birth than babies born to mothers with at least secondary education.

We also know that, despite progress shown at the aggregate level, human development remains greatly unequal between countries and within countries.

Infant mortality rates, for instance, are only two per 1,000 live births in Iceland, 11 in China but over 120 in Mozambique. A five-year-old child born in a low-income household in Central America is, on average, six centimeters shorter than a child born in a high-income household.

Maternal mortality is on average 85 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in Latin America and the Caribbean, 27 in China and 17 in my country, Costa Rica.

This is so not only because of the disparities that arise with unequal distribution of income –what some of us call vertical inequalities– but also because of horizontal inequalities, those that exist between groups because of their race, gender, ethnicity, age or disabilities, or due to disparities between communities because of their location or the segregated nature of our cities and territorial development.

Exclusion is therefore the consequence of the *interaction* between these dimensions, since many people are subject to different and simultaneous forms of discrimination and vulnerability. The combination of vertical and horizontal inequalities generates the hard core of exclusion, marginalization and unfairness, perpetuating the intergenerational transmission of poverty and inequality.

The Report of the Secretary-General on the Framework of Actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action, underlined this problem. We need to be very cognizant of the fact that overall achievement is not achievement for all and that we must strive to “lift all boats”. As the Secretary-General has mentioned, an estimated one billion people live in the 50 to 60 countries that have seen only limited gains in health and well-being since 1994. Unless we implement deliberate policies to reach those who have been marginalized, we will continue to see a widening gap between and within countries.

This is something we recognized in adopting Goal 10 of the 2030 Agenda. Through this goal, countries acknowledged the need to reduce inequality in and of itself, but also as a prerequisite to achieve the remaining goals.

If inequality continues to rise, for instance, it will be harder to eradicate poverty, since highly unequal countries need much higher rates of growth to achieve the same rate of poverty reduction as countries that are more equal. At the same time, we also know that high inequality affects growth itself, erodes social cohesion and creates the space for violence and instability.

The 2030 Agenda emerges from this awareness and the realization that the landscape of development has shifted greatly in the last couple of decades. Twenty years ago, most of the poor lived in low-income countries. Today they live in middle-income countries. Twenty years ago, most people lived in the countryside. Today the majority of the world lives in urban areas. Twenty years ago, developing countries accounted for about a third of global trade in goods. Today they account for almost half.

The Sustainable Development Goals reflected this new global landscape and were the product of inter-governmental negotiation, through an inclusive and consensus-based decision-making process. The 2030 Agenda is also a universal agenda, where all countries share the load and all countries take on commitments.

In the same spirit as the ICPD, the 2030 Agenda puts forth an integral view of development. It recognizes the connection between population and the environment, between gender equality and economic growth, between the need for clean energy and energy for all, and the linkages between development and the attainment of peace and justice. It acknowledges that a world without poverty is dependent upon the fulfillment of all other objectives: there is no such thing as partial development.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda represents a milestone for humankind, but we know that implementation is just as challenging. We have settled on the *what*; we still have to fully figure out the *how*. Financing, good policies and institutional arrangements are key to ensuring that all countries reach the Sustainable Development Goals.

The 2030 Agenda is ambitious and it will require resources far exceeding current levels of development finance flows at the national and international levels, as well as collaboration and progress in other areas. Development depends on what happens with Doha and the reform of rules governing international trade, investment, and finance; on the full implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and our capacity to build more resilient communities; on our ability to come together to address international migration in a humanitarian and sustainable way; on our capacity to curb illicit activities draining resources out of many developing countries.

Only a handful of developed countries met the target of disbursing 0.7 per cent of gross national income to official development assistance under the Millennium Development Goals (Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom), while a global scenario of sluggish economic growth is putting pressure on ODA flows. Even though developing countries share the responsibility to find and leverage all available resources for the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals, we must insist on the need for developed countries to honor their commitments.

Private sector financing, fiscal reform, productive investments, a boost of social and physical infrastructure, science and technology transfer, together with the appropriation of the agenda by societies, are also key elements for a successful implementation of the SDGs.

Let me now turn to the importance of SSC and why it has become an essential tool in the hands of developing countries for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, especially with respect to lessons learnt on policies, systems and capacity development. As Minister Li Bin mentioned earlier, we are living in a golden age of South-South Cooperation: SSC reached an estimated 20 billion dollars in 2013.⁴

There is an immense wealth of knowledge to be shared among countries and cities in the South, where innovative solutions are being crafted to address the very particular challenges of our time. We need to accelerate knowledge exchange and technology transfers, while finding space to scale up successful interventions and broaden their scope.

The more active governments are in cooperation initiatives, the faster we will advance on solutions and implementation challenges.

The geography and geometry of cooperation has changed. We do not have a simple donor/recipient dynamic anymore, or countries that give while others receive. We have countries that do both at the same time, while many developing countries have established or are establishing their own cooperation agencies. Relevant experiences, policies, technologies and investments can go from the North to the South, from the South to the North, and from the South to the South in a linear, triangular and quadrangular way.

⁴ United Nations (2015) Millennium Development Goal 8: Taking Stock of the Global Partnership for Development. *MDG Gap Task Force Report 2015*
http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/mdg_gap/mdg_gap2015/2015GAP_FULLREPORT_EN.pdf

One of the main ideas defeated with the rise of the global South was the idea that there is a unique path to development, as there is no “one size fits all” solution. The success of many emerging countries shows that there are different ways to attain human development, and that –despite historical, cultural and institutional differences– there are lessons, practices and policies we can all learn from.

Development thinking and practice coming from the developing world has been reappraised and valorized. We feel closer to one another with respect to the challenges we face, our experience is more contemporary, and we can still talk to the main actors that designed and implemented successful programs that we are trying to replicate. There is also a more symmetric and horizontal relationship between developing countries, which allows for better adaptation, a custom-made approach and a strong component of capacity development in our cooperation projects.

Let me give you two examples from China and Latin America. Designing and implementing sustainable social protection schemes are main challenges for the developing world, given our new population structures. One of the reasons for setbacks in our gains on poverty reduction, health and education is that low-income families cannot afford a sickness, a sudden death, the effects of a natural disaster or a bad economic cycle. It is so painful to see people once and again lose everything and have to start over... and when this happens, we sacrifice the future. The children and the young that drop out of school, or suffer malnutrition, are irrevocably put on a slow track, their destinies are fixed by no fault of their own.

China has carried out the fastest expansion in social insurance we have witnessed thus far. Workers of the informal sector have been an important part of this achievement. 50 million informal workers had access to insurance in 2008. Today, 500 million people are covered.

According to the World Bank, the sixth largest social safety net programs in the world are in developing countries, including China, India, South Africa, Ethiopia, Brazil and Mexico.

A lot of exchanges are already happening around this issue and many challenges remain for universal coverage of health and pensions, but we need policy dialogue, technical assistance and more collaboration in order to widen the policy space for development.

The other example I wanted to give pertains to urbanization. Latin America is the most urbanized region in the world. China is experiencing the fastest urbanization process in the history of humankind. We have witnessed the emergence of mega cities even in Africa. So we know that a large part of the sustainable development agenda will play out in cities.

The same goes for resilience in urban and coastal areas and the impact of climate change on health. My experience in Haiti with the early recovery programs that created temporary jobs was that the developing countries were the only ones that understood the importance of these programs.

Lastly, we face significant challenges in securing better livelihoods for our young people. Our political stability and ability to compete globally will depend on the quality of their education, their capacity to innovate and their economic and job opportunities. High hopes

and a very demanding youth is a great opportunity but also a huge responsibility. They are demanding not only access but quality services and jobs. Are we ready to provide them?

At the same time, we have the challenge of an aging population, and the surge on migration, which poses the need to create inclusive identities. More globalization and more human mobility mean more diversity.

I would like to mention the Ibero-American example. In 2013, 19 countries of Latin America implemented a total of 576 cooperation projects and 400 horizontal South-South cooperation actions. Every country in the region acted as recipient while most were also providers of South-South Cooperation (a reminder that, in the quest for development, we all have something to show and something to learn).

At the Ibero-American General Secretariat, we feel proud to have documented this effort. I hope our experience in systematizing and gathering information from the countries themselves can prove valuable in the aim of creating a global South-South Cooperation Report, a report that will make justice to the huge effort that is being done within the developing world.

Let me finalize by thanking President Xi Jinping for his announcement last September at the General Assembly of the United Nations, regarding the creation of the UN-China peace and development fund, and very especially for the commitments on the Global Leaders' meeting on gender equality and women's empowerment for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the SDGs on Gender.

Finally, let me also recognize the establishment of the new development banks and institutions of the South that we hope will support the 2030 Agenda.

Dear friends,

Expanding South-South Cooperation is key, as well as leveraging private and philanthropy resources. What we need is not an “either or” approach, but rather an “all hands on deck” approach. We need to establish a fluid, dynamic, innovative and open dialogue between all stakeholders to maximize resources. This will require building trust between governments, citizens, public officials, businesspersons, international organizations, global and regional actors. The 2030 Agenda requires a collaborative effort like we have never seen before.

It is also the time for consistency. A global development agenda needs a global development mindset. It needs countries to realize that, as the Programme of Action stated more than twenty years ago, we share a responsibility for one another on our planetary home.

The world has come a long way since that meeting in Cairo in 1994. No matter how grim the headlines we read on the papers and how complicated our problems seem on a day-to-day basis, there is cause for optimism. We have seen that it is possible to rally behind specific goals and objectives, and attain them. We have seen that it is possible to leverage financial and technical cooperation to help countries dramatically improve their conditions. Now we must raise the banner higher.

If we manage to reduce current levels of inequality, ensuring full inclusion for women, youth, older persons, indigenous and disabled persons; if we manage to increase resources allotted to official development assistance; if we manage to enhance South-South Cooperation and other forms of financing for development, I believe that the dream of a world without hunger is possible. The dream of a world without illiteracy is possible.

The dream of a world where no one dies of preventable diseases, where everyone receives access to sexual and reproductive health, where we eradicate gender-based violence, where we harness the benefits of migration, where we are able to mitigate and adapt to the effect of climate change.

We will not get there by chance or with the help of an invisible hand. We might get there through a lot of work and a lot of political will. Let us welcome the challenge.

Thank you.