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Climate Justice – A New Frontier for Development

I am delighted to return for the second Frontiers in Development Forum and thank USAID for bringing so many development experts together. This Forum is very timely. I can't think of a more strategic moment for us to be together and to reflect on the critical development issues of our day. I have a real sense of the significance of the time we are in right now, the decisions world leaders are being asked to take and the scale of what is at stake if we don't get it right. We need to do the right thing as never before and we have an opportunity that rarely comes around in global policy making cycles.

Communities, development practitioners and governments have worked hard in recent decades to reduce poverty and advance social development goals in the fields of health, education and governance. Progress has been made and in many cases the MDGs have been both the driver and the measuring stick of success. Estimates are that the goal of halving the number of people living in extreme poverty was reached in 2010 with 18%

of world population living on under \$1.25 a day, down from 36% in 1990. These numbers represent improvements in real people's lives.

But we also know I am heartened that USAID has chosen to focus on ending extreme poverty of the global population in this conference. We will not lift these remaining people out of poverty through business as usual development. Many factors conspire to keep people poor – exclusion, the absence of rights, gender inequality, climate change – and successful approaches to development require targeted, multidimensional, people-centred policies and actions.

Unfortunately, business as usual development may actually contribute to inequality. The results of Oxfam's research on inequality which you heard about in a session yesterday are shocking. The wealth being created globally through largely fossil fuel based development is concentrated in the hands of a few, and those who are vulnerable, excluded and politically disempowered are getting poorer.

Almost half of the world's wealth is now owned by just one percent of the population. So while the MDGs have contributed to a significant reduction in extreme poverty, 70% of people live in countries where economic inequality has increased in the last 30 years. The rich are getting richer and in many cases the poor are being excluded and are getting poorer. Here in the US, the wealthiest one percent captured 95 percent of post-financial crisis growth since 2009, while the bottom 90 percent became

poorer. Is this the way we want the world to develop? Is the old model of development fit for purpose?

The approach we have taken to development to date has set targets and in many cases delivered results consistent with these targets – but it has done this in a way that left the poorest and most vulnerable people behind and increased the divide between rich and poor. The top down approach that dominates development planning, and the drive for results and quick wins, has not delivered equitable or sustainable outcomes. Hence in 2015 we still have a daunting challenge to face.

We must adopt a new frontier in development – to end extreme poverty, to reduce inequality and to minimise the risks posed to development from climate change. The international framework to confront these challenges culminates between now and the end of next year: the post 2015 development agenda, Financing for Development, and a new climate agreement under the United Nations Framework Agreement on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The time is now, we are at the frontier. Will we develop as we have done in the past, addicted to fossil fuels, accepting gross inequalities and accepting that some people will just stay poor? Or will we grasp this once in several lifetimes opportunity to change things for the better?

This new frontier won't be easy. Left unchecked, climate change has the potential to wipe out the development gains of recent decades. We can't place it to one side and say we will deal with it once we have alleviated

poverty worldwide, nor can we leave it to others to deal with. If you care about development, you must care about the impacts of climate change.

The Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) tells us that climate related hazards will exacerbate the challenges faced by the poorest and most vulnerable people by negatively affecting their livelihoods. Climate change impacts will also slow economic growth and make poverty reduction more difficult, creating new poverty traps.

In the context of food security and the right to food, the Fifth Assessment Report finds that all aspects of food security will be threatened, including production, access and price stability. This in turn will threaten public health, with an increased likelihood of under-nutrition resulting from diminished food production – undermining, if not reversing, the significant strides made by the Millennium Development Goals.

More than 2 billion people globally are reliant on surface water and shallow ground water to provide drinking water, essential sanitation services, and irrigation for agricultural productivity. The IPCC reports that these resources will reduce significantly in the dry, sub-tropical regions of the world. These reductions will inevitably threaten the sustainability of livelihoods in rural areas while in cities and towns water scarcity will lead to poorer public health and destabilize economies.

The IPCC's conclusions that the impacts of climate change are felt disproportionately by societies' poorest and most vulnerable, and that future impacts of climate change will be most damaging for female-headed households and those with limited access to land, modern agricultural inputs, infrastructure, and education, make it clear that dealing with climate change is integral to ending extreme poverty.

To quote chapter 3 of the report of Working Group 3 of the IPCC *'the climate threat constrains possible development paths, and sufficiently disruptive climate change could preclude any prospect for a sustainable future'*, therefore, *'a stable climate is one component of Sustainable Development'* and *'there are synergies and trade-offs between climate responses and broader sustainable development goals, because some climate responses generate co-benefits for human and economic development, while others can have adverse side-effects and generate risks'*.

So climate change is integral to sustainable development and should be part of any global agenda to achieve sustainable development. Happily many policy makers and governments, and many people here in this room agree with this assessment, and as a result climate change is included as a goal in the report of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I encourage those negotiating the SDGS to continue to work to strengthen the goals, to integrate climate change and human rights across all the goals and to make the goals a practical and effective instrument for all countries to use.

I will return to the SDGs, but first I would like to explore the scale of the challenge we face as a result of the new frontier shaped by extreme poverty, inequality and climate change.

To avoid dangerous climate change requires a complete departure from business as usual. A little added ‘greenness’ won’t be enough. We need a wholesale change, a revolution as we had with the industrial revolution, but this time one that weans us off fossil fuels and onto renewable alternatives. This revolution will only be truly successful if, in addition to curtailing dangerous climate change, it results in a more equal world, where no one is left behind and where there is equitable access to the benefits of the transformation.

The New Climate Economy report released earlier this week makes the point strongly that business as usual is not an option – and that economic growth is contingent upon climate action. It concludes that countries at all levels of income have the opportunity to build lasting economic growth at the same time as reducing the immense risks posed by climate change. The economic case for action is clear and the report points to some of the steps needed to make the transition to a new climate economy fair and inclusive resulting in higher quality growth. Addressing the equity aspects of the transition is critical if all people, regardless of where they live or how rich or poor they are now, are to reap the benefits. This needs to be the focus of the work of the Commission in the second phase of its work.

So the frontier we find ourselves at offers an incredible opportunity – to kick start a transformation that will benefit people and the planet by creating healthier, more inclusive and more equal societies. World leaders and policy makers need to approach this frontier without fear, with an open mind and with determination. Nothing is beyond the power of human endeavour and creativity – if hearts and minds are committed to the cause.

So what to do? What role do all of us here today play in achieving this?

Firstly, as has been said here already, we need to stop thinking about these challenges of under-development, climate change and inequality separately. They are linked, and to be effective responses need to be informed by these interconnections. When my Foundation hosted the Hunger- Nutrition- Climate Justice Conference with the Government of Ireland last year (where one third of delegates were grassroots practitioners from around the world) it was clear that the practitioners from communities living with the impacts of climate change understood the interwoven nature of the factors that make them poor and vulnerable. It is only at the national and international level that policy makers divide the issues into siloes and make the resulting response fragmented and less effective.

The alternative is to listen more and understand what locks people into extreme poverty, and then design responses with the full participation of the communities that are traditionally excluded. A key message from that Conference was the need to enhance rights, from land rights to the right to participation, as a cornerstone of any effective response to the needs of poor and vulnerable communities.

These linkages between under development, inequality and climate change have implications at the international level too. It may be a coincidence of timing, but it is significant that next year is the culmination of international negotiations on the post 2015 development agenda, a new climate agreement and a successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action. It is also significant that next week discussions on climate change at the UN Secretary General’s Climate Summit and discussions on sustainable development in UNGA will take place back to back, in the same week. This reinforces the point that these two processes are two sides of the same coin –mutually reinforcing - peas in a pod. This does not imply that they should do each other’s business – but it does mean that the new climate agreement must contribute to sustainable development and that the post 2015 development agenda must address climate as the biggest threat to achieving poverty eradication and sustainable development.

As policy makers and development practitioners your role is to make the links, talk to your colleagues who work on the ‘other issue’ and seize this once in several lifetimes opportunity to shape international policy that will make a real difference. We need to move away from business as usual by delinking growth from fossil fuels and protect and fulfil human rights to combat extreme poverty and increase equality.

Secondly, we need to take seriously the commitment to leaving no one behind. In making the transition to a carbon neutral world, there is an opportunity to improve the lives of all and not just a few. It is not acceptable to me to make significant progress on reducing greenhouse gas emissions at the expense of the poor and vulnerable. The transformation

needed of our economies and societies provides an opportunity to realise the right to development for millions, to enhance equality and end extreme poverty.

Providing access to sustainable energy for all is a good example. As you know, there are currently 1.3 billion people living without access to electricity and 2.7 billion people relying on traditional biomass fuels for cooking and heating. You also know the health, gender differentiated and environmental impacts associated with a reliance on dirty and often dangerous fuels. Based on current levels of investment 1 billion people will still be without access to electricity in 2030.

Here is an opportunity – the new frontier – a chance to improve lives, combat poverty and give millions of people access to energy without greenhouse gas pollution. The renewable energy technologies exist and are improving all the time. More investment is needed and most critically, targeted approaches are needed to ensure that the marginalised and vulnerable, who live beyond the reach of market based solutions, are enabled to benefit from sustainable energy services.

Development practitioners know that specialised approaches are needed to reach the poorest and most marginalised communities. USAID has been a champion of social protection in many of its partner countries, based on the understanding that social safety nets can prevent chronic food insecurity and enhance health outcomes, by targeting reliable resources to those most in need. The same principle applies to access to clean energy and making

sure that the transition to a sustainable, zero carbon emissions world is fair and inclusive. Targeted approaches are needed to ensure that the extreme poor are included and reap the benefits.

Thirdly, let's get over the problem of even mentioning human rights! A human rights framing for the post 2015 development agenda and the 2015 climate agreement would significantly increase the potential for equitable and effective results. It is not possible to end extreme poverty without improving access to rights. Until there are genuine steps taken to hear the voices of the marginalised, to enable participation and to empower the powerless, a significant portion of the world population will continue to be excluded.

We have all the evidence we need that women are being excluded from decision making and from making their full contribution to society by an absence of rights. We also know the significant impact women can have on could have on development if they are allowed to make their full contribution. The 2012 World Development Report found that eliminating barriers that discriminate against women working in certain sectors or occupations could increase labour productivity by as much as 25 percent in some countries. Enhancing women's land rights would increase yields and increase resilience to the impacts of climate change. Respecting the right to participation would enable women's voices to be heard and result in more equitable policies. If we want the female half of the global population to preach their full potential, their rights must be respected and fulfilled. The key to ending extreme poverty and inequality lies in the Universal

Declaration on Human Rights - “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

Likewise human rights are the foundation of effective climate actions. As you are aware, and as the Human Rights Council has acknowledged, climate change-related impacts have a range of implications, both direct and indirect, for the effective enjoyment of human rights. But human rights can also inform more effective climate responses. Without attention to human rights climate policies and actions can have unintended negative impacts on people’s lives. For example, Olivier de Shutter, former Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food found that bio-fuel policies adopted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have had negatives consequences for food security and the right to food. A human rights framing for all climate policies and actions can ensure that climate actions are good for the planet and good for people. This is why the 2015 climate agreement and the post 2015 development agenda must be grounded in human rights.

Human rights are the foundation upon which equitable and inclusive solutions to extreme poverty, under development and climate change must be built. This is the climate justice approach I advocate in my work – linking human rights, climate change and development to achieve a people-centred approach and find fair solutions to these interlinked challenges.

So we stand at a frontier, at a moment in time, and we must not let the opportunity to pass us by. The report of the High Level Panel on the Post 2015 Development Agenda stresses the need to leave no one behind as we

embark on a new era of global development. I believe as they do that the lives of billions of people can be improved, in a way that preserves the planet's natural resource assets for future generations. I for one do not want future generations to look back on this time and say that we failed them, we ruined their chance for a good life.

So, I would not say I am an optimist – but I am heartened by the strong sense of convergence in thinking at this Forum. I like to borrow

Archbishop Desmond Tutu's expression:

When asked if he was an optimist, he said “No, I am a Prisoner of Hope”

I too am a Prisoner of Hope – hope that we can change the lives of the very poorest and leave no one behind.