

'Post-MDG goals must focus on inequities'

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The focus of the new development goals post the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which reach their deadline in December this year, must be much more on remedying inequities, asserted NITI Aayog member, Dr Bibek Debroy.

Addressing a deliberation in the Capital today that saw development experts discussing an array of issues revolving around the MDGs and the imperatives for the post 2015 agenda, Dr Debroy said, "If inequity in access (to inputs such as roads, water, electricity, jobs and skills) is addressed, then the issues of inequalities are automatically addressed."

The new set of goals ~ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ~ are set to be adopted by world leaders as part of the post-2015 Development Agenda at the UN General Assembly in September. As these new global SDGs will lead policy formulation and funding for the next 15

years, voices around the world are demanding leadership over food security, poverty, climate change and inequality.

Dr Debroy, however, expressed his discomfort with the 17 SDGs that have replaced eight MDGs, stating that there must be limited number of goals. "After whittling down, 17 SDGs are too much," he pointed out. "With a vague language and huge wish-list, they will not be as successful as MDGs."

Stating that as a whole the developing world has largely not done badly on MDGs, mainly because of China, the NITI Aayog member said, "The next 15 years should be because of India." He said India had not performed too badly on non-health MDGs. Health remained a major concern, thanks to the country's large and heterogenous nature.

The event was organised under the Knowledge Partnership Programme, which is an initiative of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and

implemented by a consortium led by IPE Global Pvt Ltd.

Commending India on its leadership role in global deliberations on SDGs, UNDP India Country Director, Mr Jaco Cilliers, said, "As the country with the largest proportion of young people, India is putting in place ambitious programmes to skill its workforce and ensure employment for all, which is at the core of the global agenda to ensure inclusive growth for all countries in the world."

In order to achieve the SDGs, Mr Cilliers recommended 3Ps: people, profits and planet. The goals must take care of the people and address their needs; have to look at growth but it can't be just profit-driven; and if we don't take care of the planet then human beings are in danger. Expressing concern that there is lack of effective participation from countries of the Global South, he said it is imperative that the southern voices are heard and have a leading role in setting the new agenda.

In a panel discussion that followed, Dr Pronab Sen, chairman of National Statistical Commission and Country Director, International Growth Centre India Central Programme, said one has to see the extent to which a general agreement can be made binding to countries. "We must see how to make them tight enough and non-discriminatory," he added.

The event also saw the release of a book Human Development in the Global South, which captured development deliberations in various sectors by the academic community from across the developing world. Elaborating on the book, its editor, Dr Tanuka Endow, said, "This book highlights the concerns of the Southern countries regarding human development issues. It provides insight into common challenges such as increasing inequality and will be an invaluable addition to the international discourse around development issues in the post-MDG era."