

From: G. Adaba

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Note on today's release of the Draft outcome Document for the June Conference.

It turned out that the PGA's (President of the General Assembly) release this morning of the Draft Outcome Document (DOD) was fraught with controversy, and compromises the smooth running of preparations towards the June Conference.

Background

In line with standard procedure at the UN, the PGA appointed two Co-Facilitators to draft the outcome document for the UN Conference on the Global Economic and Financial Crisis (1-3 June, 2009) Ambassadors Camillo Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), and Frank Majoor (Netherlands). Their remit was to engage broadly in consultations with member states and relevant stakeholders, as well as take inputs from the Stiglitz Commission Report and the Chair's Summary of the ECOSOC Meeting with the BWIs, WTO and UNCTAD (27 April, 2009). Our understanding was that their document was presented to the PGA on Tuesday 5 May.

The PGA released a DOD this morning, stating that its contents was broadly representative of the voices and the aspirations of the peoples of the planet, especially those that had no other Forum to voice their concerns but the UN. It also took in inputs from the Stiglitz Commission, from civil society and the private sector, as well as Member States. It was being tabled as the negotiating document for the Conference.

Ambassador Majoor objected to the document, stating that the Co-Facilitators had submitted their document on Tuesday, and that this new document was subsequently produced by the PGA in a non-transparent manner, without consultation with the Co-Facilitators who had been mandated by the Modalities Resolution for the Conference, and by standard UN procedure to produce the first draft outcome document for negotiations in the run-up to the Conference. He needed to seek instruction from his capital as to whether he should remain in the process. The EU, Germany, Spain, Italy, the US, Canada joined in with the Co-Facilitator in expressing concerns about the non-transparent nature of the process of arriving at a PGA DOD, and insisted that GA processes must be member-driven, and that the PGA's moves represented a departure from that approach.

Cuba, Venezuela, Syria, Iran, Nicaragua took the floor to support the PGA's text as the basis for proceeding with negotiations. They did not acknowledge the procedural inconsistencies.

Sudan (without stating that he was speaking for the G77) was more nuanced than his southern counterparts. He said that if procedural mistakes had been made, they needed to

be corrected, “but we should not throw the baby out with the bath water”. In the interests of the suffering millions all over the world, we should explore whatever takes us in a fruitful direction, focusing on substance, and assessing the PGA document on its merit.

Germany insisted that in the interests of transparency, the PGA should share the Co-Facilitators’ draft with Member States. The PGA stood his ground, emphasizing that his draft was the only one on the table.

Ghana suggested that the PGA should meet with the Co-Facilitators and the main negotiating blocks to explore the best way of sorting out the situation. This suggestion was endorsed by Estonia and Chile.

Assessment of the situation

It is clear that the PGA is very committed to the goals of social justice and poverty alleviation, and shows a sense of urgency about moving ahead decisively with solutions to the crisis, including global governance reforms, and a strong pro-development agenda. No doubt he felt that the Co-Facilitators’ text fell far short of expectations in this regard, and needed to be substituted with his own text. However, in making this bold move, he has alienated a large constituency of Member States, and unless the UN figures out a way to overcome this situation many fear that the June Conference will be compromised.. I think our approach should line up with the positions of G77, Ghana, Chile, Estonia i.e. we should support every avenue to overcome the impasse and move the process forward. Member States should not use this as a pretext to stall the whole process. They should exercise the necessary political will to move beyond the differences which surfaced today, and maintain and operationalize the vision of the UN as an inclusive, multilateral Forum where all of the issues of the crisis and its development impacts can be thoroughly discussed, and workable policy proposals can be agreed.