

*Sustainable Development Goals a universal agenda which must address global inequality.*

The Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), in association with NITI Aayog, UN and Forum for Indian Development Cooperation (FIDC), Observer Research Foundation (ORF), on September 09, held the third round of consultation with stakeholders on SDGs, ahead of the special session of the UN General Assembly to be held in New York on 25-27 September. *The consultation was supported by the DFID-supported Knowledge Partnership Programme implemented in partnership with IPE Global.*



Post-2015, the global development agenda for the next 15 years will be preoccupied with the daunting challenge of achieving 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. The SDGs follow the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were conceptualised in 2000 as a set of eight goals on diverse development dimensions including poverty alleviation, gender equality, health and environmental sustainability.

In his welcome remarks, the Director General of RIS Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi stated that there was a “considerable shift in approach from MDGs to SDGs. SDGs now include 5 Ps: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership.” He noted that there were three issues for developing countries, notably, resources, capacity and technology.

Addressing the gathering, Ambassador Shyam Saran, Chairperson of RIS categorically stated, “For too long we have delinked development from the environment, and the SDGs offered a chance to correct this anomaly. The goals are ambitious but point to the interconnectedness of issues.”

The UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in India, Mr. Yuri Afanasiev noted that SDGs were complex and raised the question of how to nationalise these goals. “For the first time in the history of world there is a universal agenda that is SDGs. It is not the North talking to the South but the world talking to each other. There is also the need to address issues of inequality and going beyond the metrics of GNI per capita to a conversation on the wealth of nations and inequality within nations.” The richest 8 per cent control half the global GDP. Highlighting the key role of India, he said, “India is a key global player with its own set of distinct challenges and the world will be looking towards and listening to India during the SDG journey.”

In her keynote address NITI Aayog’s CEO Mrs. Sindhushree Khullar gave a perspective on how MDGs and SDGs are integral to our development process enshrined in five-year plans. “Between now and 2030, at the mid-point of 2022, India would be celebrating 75 years of Independence when the objective of providing housing, drinking water and sanitation, energy, road connectivity, digital connectivity, health, nutrition and education for all would be fulfilled. We have captured the spirit of SDGs”, she argued.

However, the challenges are immense in achieving 169 indicators. She further wondered if in the 12th Five-Year Plan, there were only 25 indicators, many of which could not be updated due to data problems, if we should do all 169 indicators. She also stressed implementing the goals was not the responsibility of the government alone, but of the people, academic institutions, civil society and the private sector.

Discussions were held on various SDGs such as health, education, nutrition security and development, physical capital, science and innovation and access to technologies, inclusive growth and sustainability, energy and environment, role of civil society, industry and media and on implementation and monitoring issues.

*KPP is a South-South cooperation programme promoting knowledge sharing in the areas of Food Security, Resource Scarcity and Climate Change; Health and Disease Control; Trade and Investment; and Women and Girls. KPP is funded by the Government of UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and managed by a consortium led by IPE Global Private Limited under its Knowledge Initiative. The main objective of KPP is 'Gathering and uptake of evidence on issues central to India's national development that have potential for replication in LICs and impact on global poverty'.*

