

KEYNOTE SPEECH

BY COMMISSIONER ANDRIS PIEBALGS

at the

Policy Forum on Development

panel session on post-2015

Brussels, 1 October 2014

Fellow Panellists, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

It is a great pleasure to be with you today. The EU Policy Forum on Development was set up as a space in which to interact, discuss and exchange experiences on development policies. It has been doing that job very well. So I would like to thank the forum and the Committee of the Regions for organising and hosting today's important event.

This session deals with possibly the most important issue challenging us today – the post-2015 agenda. I know that Director-General Fernando Frutuoso de Melo has already underlined how important the work of local authorities and civil society organisations is to us. I am happy to confirm that view, with special regard to the post-2015 agenda.

We often say that we are at a critical point – sometimes it feels that we are *always* at a critical point! But it really is true to say that time is running short. We still have a tremendous amount to do before next September. Today I want us to look beyond what the framework will actually look like. Let's look instead at what we must do once we've got it – in other words **how we implement it**. And we need to make progress with this discussion now. We cannot wait for the agreement to drop into our laps and then wonder what to do with it.

State of play

First a rapid look at where we are now. The first good news is that we have all the building blocks on the table. From the discussions in the Open Working Group and in the Inter-governmental Committee on finance, plus the very open consultation in which you have been so active, we have all the elements for a successful agreement – namely the ideas, the priorities, the issues to be covered. That is no small achievement for such a broad-based agreement. Of course, our task now is to translate these into a sound, coherent set of actions to galvanise our efforts towards eradicating extreme poverty and delivering sustainable development.

The EU is absolutely determined to be a force for good in this debate. We are ready for open and constructive discussions. We need to discuss how the world organises itself to make good on the post-2015 agreement. And to discuss how the EU itself can best support effective implementation, whether through our domestic policies, through our work in international organisations, through our development cooperation, or through other means. We are currently thinking very hard across the board about the measures we need for successful implementation. Of course, the EU's efforts will need to fit within the context of every nation doing its fair share. But we will not sit back and wait for others to make the first move.

Three panel questions

We see consultations such as this as vital for shaping our ideas. I know that the organisers have posed three questions today to this eminent panel – and to our audience.

- First: what are the three key elements needed for a successful agreement on post-2015?
- Second: what does the EU need to do to promote a strong post-2015 framework?
- And third: how can stakeholders like NGOs, local authorities and trade unions make the biggest impact in implementation of the post-2015 agreement?

Let me try to kick-start today's discussion by starting to answer these questions myself. I will then enjoy hearing some rich ideas from our panellists.

So first to the **three key elements**. Of course, making the post-2015 agenda work requires many things to go right. But it does no harm to focus sometimes on the core requirements. To my mind, national governments will be at the heart of implementation. They will marshal financial and non-financial resources, set priorities according to circumstances, build partnerships, monitor progress and answer to their citizens. To drive real transformation, the new agenda needs to be able to spark national governments into action and not confuse or deter them. So let me suggest three key elements that can support successful implementation:

- Element number one: **engagement of ordinary citizens**. The post-2015 debate has seen us take a major step forward in terms of broad public consultation. We want to see this continue into the implementation phase. Ordinary citizens need to be consulted on their governments' response to the agreed agenda, engaged in implementation and asked about concrete progress.
- Element number two: **incentives for new global partnerships**. We must ensure that the new agenda is not just taken forward by the same actors in the same ways. But new cooperation and partnerships need nurturing. So

we must look at specific actions to facilitate partnerships, to engage the relevant stakeholders and to improve mutual understanding – between public sector and private sector actors for instance.

- And element number three: **robust monitoring, reporting and accounting**. The post-2015 agenda will be implemented through millions of actions and by thousands of stakeholder groups across the world. We want to unleash this energy, not hold it back. However, actions still need to be anchored in some way. So a workable system to monitor and report on progress and agree on forward plans could be the answer here.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Here are some key elements for us to consider. But **what will the EU do to support implementation?**

The answer is: very many things. We will maintain our leading global role in promoting sustainable, low-carbon lifestyles. This is an evolving picture – much more needs to be done in terms of research and development, public information and attitudes and private sector engagement. But we will continue to work hard for this. We will also push hard for effective and responsible responses from the global community to post-2015 challenges. This may mean pressing for the right policies in international forums, engaging with fragile states on peace and security, or sharing information and experience on successful approaches to growth and development. And we will maintain a strong commitment to development cooperation. On top of that, we will continue our efforts to ensure that each euro we spend brings more impact for those who need it most.

The EU and its Member States have been world leaders in development and environment issues for many years. We intend to remain at the forefront now

and help drive the debate forward. As advocates for transformational change for a long time, civil society and local authorities have been driving the debate too. I'm glad to see that you have been actively pushing for an agreement in September 2015 that make a real and lasting impact.

This brings me to the third question, on **your role as stakeholders** and as actors in development in your own right. Not only are you development watchdogs, as I have said in the past. You also continue to highlight the voices and priorities of the poor and the marginalised, both in framing the agreement and in monitoring its implementation. And you act as trailblazers in forming partnerships and in sharing your partnership experiences. In doing so, you foster new and improved forms of cooperation which will really transform our world. To me it is clear: you are vital; you are needed. But what do you think? Where is your real added value? I'm eager to hear your ideas on all these key issues today.

Conclusion

I will conclude by saying how much I'm looking forward to today's discussion. Sadly, it will be the last that I will be having with you as EU Development Commissioner. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as Commissioner. It has been hugely rewarding to work with you all. I would like to thank you wholeheartedly for your energy, your imagination and your commitment.

Meanwhile, our work goes on. We now have less than a year to go to September 2015, when all the debates, ideas and different viewpoints must give way to global agreement. This session is about challenges and opportunities. We hear these two words very often – perhaps too often sometimes. However, when it comes to deciding on the way forward post-2015, the opportunities for the

international community to plot a truly different course are too great to ignore. So let us now redouble our efforts to secure a really strong post-2015 agreement. That will be the first step. Then we must really make it work. Work for the poorest in the world today and for the generations of the future.

Thank you very much.

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