

On the Occasion of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Caribbean Community

*by Irwin LaRocque **

The year 2015 offers a unique opportunity for global leaders to end poverty and transform the world to better meet human needs and the necessities of economic transformation, while protecting the environment, ensuring peace and realising human rights.

Three high-level international engagements are presenting the international community with the opportunity to chart a new era of sustainable development. The first was the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD3) held in Addis Ababa in July, where an inter-governmentally negotiated and agreed outcome was produced which will contribute to, and support the implementation of, the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

That Agenda will be the focus of a Special Summit on Sustainable Development at the United Nations (UN) in September, where the global community will sign off on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are designed to achieve a global paradigm shift in thinking about sustainable development and also in the mechanisms needed at national, regional and international levels, to ensure coherence in policy development and implementation necessary to achieve the goals.

The new sustainable development agenda builds on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but goes further to address the root causes of poverty and the universal need for development that works for all people. While the global mobilisation behind the MDGs showed that multilateral action can make a tangible difference for the Latin American and Caribbean Region, pervasive poverty, inequalities, and relatively high unemployment rates remain a challenge. In addition, the impacts of the global economic, food and energy crises are still affecting growth.

The third engagement will be the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris in December 2015, where Member States have pledged to adopt for the first time, a universal, legally binding agreement that will enable us to effectively combat climate change and boost the transition towards resilient, low-carbon societies.

Climate change presents a particular threat to the viability of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of the Caribbean, as it makes delivering on a sustainable development agenda more difficult due, in part, to the mounting cost of building

resilience. These challenges all demand a truly participatory, responsive and transformational course of action. Tackling climate change and fostering sustainable development are agendas that are mutually reinforcing and will require a universal approach, buttressed by science and evidence, and built on the principles of respect for human rights and equity.

At the core of the new global agenda are the SDGs, which should promote opportunities for structural change, employment, productivity gains and competitiveness, while advancing social development and environmental sustainability. This broad scope is particularly important for the Caribbean in light of the poor growth performance being experienced by this sub-Region.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is of the view that the new agenda must prioritise enhanced financial and technological support to developing countries. In terms of global development cooperation, while it is understood that aid alone will not suffice to meet the challenges of implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, this should, in no way, dilute North-South cooperation. It is crucially important that agreed aid commitments are met. At the same time, South-South cooperation should also be facilitated and allowed to grow under its own principles of cooperation.

For CARICOM, successful implementation means that the SDGs and the commitments under other relevant international agreements such as the SAMOA Pathway, must be integrated into development plans and programmes and adapted to national circumstances and regional priorities and objectives. Here, the Post-2015 Development Agenda's accountability framework and means of implementation (MoI) will be key in driving the process.

Successful implementation will also depend on a robust but flexible framework for the mobilisation and provision of financing and other MoI, as well as a mechanism to support national and regional development policy-making and monitoring progress and achievements, at all levels.

A strengthened global partnership, well-co-ordinated, is another prerequisite for success. This is why I called for strong collaborative action among the development partners such as the UN and its agencies, the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), the OECD, and the Commonwealth, to address these issues in a focussed way.

For us in CARICOM, our 2015-2019 Strategic Plan can play a key role in streamlining and systematising the delivery of support for implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The Strategic Plan identifies a number of priority areas for action

which can serve as a basis for the mobilisation of resources and other MoI for the sub-Region. It can also provide a platform for enhanced South-South and North-South partnerships.

As global leaders prepare to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda in September 2015, it is my sincere hope that it will herald a truly transformative period of development which ends poverty in all its dimensions everywhere, leaving no one behind.

***Irwin LaRocque**, is the seventh Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). He is the former Assistant Secretary-General for Trade and Economic Integration at the CARICOM Secretariat, a position he assumed in September 2005. Prior to that, he served, with distinction, at senior management levels in the Public Service of Dominica for over eighteen years.

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