Towards new post MDG global compact linking Sustainability and Socio-economic Development goals: possible Bangladesh position in RIO+20 global dialogue

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Atiur Rahman, Ph.D.
Governor, Bangladesh Bank

Plenary Discussion 2

Although socio-economic development indicators of Bangladesh are improving steadily, poverty incidence is still high and the country is some way behind her regional neighbors and the broader world in human development index. We cannot therefore afford to compromise the imperative of faster economic growth and inclusive social development with attempt at overambitious elitist environmental goals.

In the RIO+20 global dialogue for a post-2015 framework Bangladesh may consider advocating some variant of the so called ‘hybrid approach’. We may suggest adoption of two separate sets of (a) Socio-economic development goals, and (b) ‘Green Growth’ Environmental Sustainability goals; with the Socio-economic goals taking priority over Sustainability goals in low income developing economies like Bangladesh.

For low income developing countries the Socio-economic development goals will be the minimums to attain or exceed; but because of their severe constraints in resources and knowhow, the Sustainability goals will be benchmarks to make progress towards, but not necessarily to fully attain or surpass.

Developing low income economies should be demanding strongly for separate mechanism of transfer of resources and knowhow from developed economies in pursuit of the Sustainability goals. New ‘carbon tax’ and other levies on ‘polluter pays’ principle will have disproportionately high negative economic growth impact on low income economies; they will need to be protected by deferral of paying such taxes/levies, perhaps by a couple of decades or so.

Unlike in case of MDGs, some part of the onus of realizing the post-2015 sets of Socio-economic and Sustainability goals may be placed with the corporate private sector including
the Trans National Corporations (TNCs), as their Social and Environmental obligations in the SR/CSR framework. To this end, the ICC and other global forums of private sector businesses may be drawn into global dialogues, eliciting concrete commitments of actions and resources. Attempts by developed country groups of abusing SR/CSR as trade restriction tools against developing countries must however be vigorously resisted.

There are vast potential gains to be reaped in global stability and environmentally benign equitable inclusive growth from mainstreaming of Social Responsibility in corporate ethos and objectives of businesses. Modalities of engagement of corporate business sector in attainment of Socio-economic development and Environmental Sustainability goals remain to be worked out; proactive promotion and support in innovating environmentally sustainable, climate change adaptive production technologies in agriculture and manufacturing can figure importantly among those.

In Bangladesh, we at the central bank have spearheaded mainstreaming of CSR in financial sector corporates, for them in turn to influence non financial real sector corporates into embracing CSR obligations. We have also issued ‘green banking’ guidelines equipping banks to make financing decisions based on prior environmental appraisal of investment projects. Concessional refinance support has been introduced for banks against their financing of environmentally beneficial projects, including renewable energy (bio-fuel, solar etc.) generation, effluent treatment, and adoption of more energy efficient emission minimizing production techniques.

Addressing environment and climate change issues with CSR funds: Experience from Bangladesh

Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI), with the funding of Bank Alfalah made provision of safe water for 355 families of a remote village in the mangrove forest Sundarbans by digging ponds. This will improve health condition of people, particularly that of women and children.

MRDI distributed eco friendly oven among the families of the same village with the funding support of Midas Financing Limited. This aims to minimize carbon emission and save trees from being used as firewood for cooking.

Green World Communication is operating a beach cleaning program in Cox’s Bazar along the world’s longest beach with the financial assistance of Banglalink, a mobile phone operating company.
Al-Arafah Islami Bank distributed solar energy panel among 1,100 families amounting 50 kilowatt of electricity in a remote village of northeastern district of Hobiganj.

Islami Bank and Jamuna Bank Foundation operated tree plantation and sapling distribution programme in eleven districts of the country.

HSBC provided climate awards to different companies in green business entrepreneurship, climate change mitigation and green operations categories. The initiatives included energy saving technology in garment manufacturing, green brick project, reducing energy consumption, heat/carbon emission, water and paper recycling, and waste management.

In the non-banking sector, Rahimafrooz, YKK, Chevron, Unilever, Grameenphone, Lafarge Surma and Coca Cola provided CSR funds for tree plantation, sapling distribution and beach cleaning.

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