

# **Social Summit 1995 and Nepal : An Overview**

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## **BACKGROUND**

The social summit of 1995 was held in the capital of Denmark, Copenhagen from March 3, 1995 to March 12, 1995. The summit has a great historical significance to developing countries of the world for it adopted a declaration and programme of action aimed at eradicating poverty, fighting unemployment and bringing social integration. This paper is highly based on the participations of the author in the discussions and accommodation of views, as the member of Nepalese delegation to the summit.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The critics of the summit view that this summit did not produce any concrete results such as new schemes to ensure that the poorer countries have funds to finance social development. But in fact it did successfully shift the world attention from poverty alleviation to poverty eradication for the first time. It is also significant as it is the first time that all the world leaders met to share concern about the state of the world with regard to three major conditions: poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. The goal is to improve living condition of the people of this Globe through the eradication of poverty, the provision of employment and to facilitate social integration for peaceful coexistence.

Another uniqueness of the Summit was that, it was a summit of commitments not simply theory and statements of problems. Solutions were sought, Heads of the states (120), political blocks were required to commit themselves to action which would demonstrate social justice. Frank discussions and accommodation of views from the non-governmental organizations are other significant features of the Summit. Various caucuses acted as intermediary agencies to bridge the views of the representatives of NGOs and GOs. Women's caucus with a powerful and dynamic leadership in the person of Bell Abzug, USA co-chair of

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Women Environment Development Organisation (WEDO), was the strongest caucus to influence the activities of the Summit. South Asia caucus was also active to project the interests of South Asian Countries and for lobbying the government delegates of the developed countries to support the interest of least developed countries. Attention was also focused on various target groups. First in the list are women and children who form over 50 percent of the world's population, and the most affected by the core issues such as poverty and unemployment.

Another highlight was the endorsement of the 20/20 initiative; the basic concept of which proposes that 20 percent of national budgets of developing countries be devoted to providing basic social services. The victory of this proposal indicates the element of mutual solidarity to alleviate the suffering of the poor, and to removal all the constraints in their lives. The participants were optimistic that this breakthrough will be followed by the goodwill to release resources required for implementation in the immediate future. It is to be mentioned that there were two worlds at the Summit the governmental and the NGO. The NGO was given a whole island-Holmen, a formal naval base, and the heart of activities was centered round the global village with all its exhibitions surrounded by rooms for workshops, exhibitions and restaurants. The governmental Summit was held in Bella Centre which was about half an hour bus drive at another end of the city.

NGO Forum '95 was organized by the NGOs to provide the NGOs' perspectives on the themes adopted by UN for the Social Summit. A little less than 4500 persons from outside Denmark took part as registered participants in the NGO Forum. During the period of 10 days a total of more than 150,000 person participated in the activities of NGO Forum. Approximately 1500 meetings and more than 100 cultural activities were held.

The Social Summit in Copenhagen was so far the culmination of the process between NGOs and the official delegations of the UN-member states initiated at the first preparatory meeting in New York in January 1994. A gradually improved dialogue between the NGO's themselves during the preparatory process as well as between the NGO's and the government delegations, resulted in NGO-positions having a significant influence on the content of the officials documents of the summit. Despite having good gesture from both sides a little less than 1000 NGOs signed an *an alternative Copenhagen declaration* as a reflection of their dissatisfaction with the content of the official declaration. In addition to

the governmental and NGO level discussions, various lectures and workshops were organized at Bella Centre, in Holmen and in other centers of Copenhagen. These thematic lectures and workshops helped the delegates to understand various aspects of social problems faced by the countries of this planet.

## MAJOR ISSUES ADDRESSED BY THE SOCIAL SUMMIT

The following major issues were addressed by the Social Summit of 1995 to solve the social problems of the globe by adopting an approach of international solidarity, in which the individual national, regional level community and the international community should act together:

- A clear commitment by the international community to eradicate absolute poverty.
- The need for structural adjustment programmes to be socially responsible. It has shown the need for policy coherence and dialogue between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions.
- The recognition of unremunerated work performed by women.
- The imperative of people's empowerment in the design and implementation of social development policies.
- Commitments of the international community as opposed to *principles or objectives*.
- Shift on the question of financial resources for development.
- Finding a durable solution to the foreign debt problem of the least developed countries and the countries of Africa.
- Mobilization of resources through 20/20 initiative for the social development of developing countries.
- Comprehensive definition of core issues namely poverty, jobs and social exclusion.
- The Summit's declaration of employment is the most innovative one, particularly on matters relating to the opportunities and uncertainties brought about by globalization.
- Stress on the importance of productive jobs as central elements of development that should be protected from the negative impact of measures for macro economic stability.
- Address, in creative ways, the interaction between the social function of the state, market responses to social demands.

- Thrust in the promotion of an enabling environment based on a people centered approach to sustainable development.

The final draft declaration of the summit contains 10 commitments which are the basis for launching a global drive for social progress and development. They are:

- Creation of a conducive economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that would enable people to achieve social development.
- The goal of eradicating poverty in the world as an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind.
- The promotion of the goal of full employment as a basic priority of economic and social policies.
- Promotion of social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just.
- Promotion of full respect for human dignity and to achieving equality and equity between women and men.
- Attainment of the goal of universal and equitable access to quality education, the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health access of all to primary health care.
- Pledges to the world leaders to accelerate the economic, social and human resource development of Africa and the least developed countries.
- Inclusion of social development goals in the structural adjustment programme.
- Significant increase and/or more efficient utilization of resources allocated for social development.
- Improved and strengthened framework for all levels of cooperation for social development.

## PROGRAMME OF ACTION

In order to implement the outcome of the Summit, The Programme of Action has been presented in five chapters, showing the inter linkages among the agencies to be involved in the implementation process. The Programme's special importance, therefore, lies in its integrated approach. The following are the major contents of the Programme of Action presented in five chapters:

## **Chapter I : An Enabling Environment for Social Development.**

The following are the major points included in the programme of action which are more relevant in the context of Nepal:

- The promotion of productive investment and expanded access to open markets under a multilateral rule-based international trading system and technologies for all people, particularly those living in poverty.
- To make economic growth and interaction of market forces more conducive to social development.
- Ensuring substantial public and private investment in human resources development.
- Use of appropriate taxation at the national level to reduce inequities.
- Reduce inefficiencies and improve stability in the financial markets.
- Special needs of Africa and least developed countries receive priority within the framework of support to developing countries.
- Immediate implementation of the terms of debt forgiveness agreed upon the Paris Club in December 1994. These encompass debt reduction, including cancellation or other debt relief measures.
- An increase in ODA, both in total and for social programmes. It is urged to attain the agreed target of 0.7 percent of gross national product (GNP) for ODA and 0.15 percent to the least developed countries, as soon as possible.
- Several actions recommended on the creation of a political and legal environment aim at the involvement and participation of all people in the formulation and implementation of economic and social policies.

## **Chapter II : Eradication of Poverty**

It states that poverty has various causes, including those of a structural nature. Country specific programmes and international efforts are needed to find a solution to this problem. The action programmes for the eradication of poverty agreed by the summit are:

- Formulation of integrated strategies. Formulating or strengthening, preferably by 1996, and implementing national poverty eradication plans to address the structural causes of poverty, encompassing action at the local, national, sub regional, regional and international level.

- Improved access to productive resources and infrastructure.
- Meeting the basic human needs of all .
- Enhanced social protection and reduced vulnerability.

### **Chapter III : Expansion of Productive Employment and Reduction of Unemployment**

In this chapter it is stated that both productive work and employment are the central elements of development as well as decisive elements of human identity. The action programmes agreed by the summit are:

- Efforts are needed to accord recognition for non-paying productive work as well as to accord equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value.
- The centrality of employment in policy formulation.
- Education, training and labour policies.
- Enhanced quality of work and employment.
- Enhanced employment opportunities for groups with specific needs.
- A broader recognition and understanding of work and employment.

### **Chapter IV : Social Integration**

The aim of *social integration* is the creation of a society for all, where every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play. The following are the major programme of action agreed by the Summit:

- Responsive government and full participation in society.
- Non-discrimination, tolerance and mutual respect for and value of diversity.
- Equality and social justice.
- Responses to special social needs.
- Responses to special social needs of refugees, displaced persons and asylum-seekers, documented migrants and undocumented migrants.
- Solidarity against violence, crime, the problem of illicit drugs and substance abuse.

## Chapter V : Implementation and Follow- up

In order to implement the programme of action an integrated approach to the implementation of the programme of action is called for, including strengthening community as well as non-governmental organisations. The contribution of the private sector to social development should be enhanced. The following actions have been agreed to implement and follow-up by the governments and by the United Nations System:

### *National strategies, evaluation and reviews*

- Reviewing macroeconomic, microeconomic and sectoral policies and their impact on poverty, employment, social integration and social development.
- Integrating social development goals into national development plans, policies and budgets.
- Formulating or strengthening, by 1996, comprehensive cross sectoral strategies for implementing the Summit outcome and national strategies for social development, including government action.
- International support for the formulation of national strategies for social development.

### *Involvement of civil society*

- Strengthening community organizations and non-profit non-governmental organizations in the areas of social development. Involving private sector in the sphere of social development.

### *Mobilization of financial resources*

- Encouraging greater domestic savings and investment required for public spending, through progressive, fair and economically efficient taxes and through cutting back on subsidies that do not benefit the poor.
- Reducing excessive military expenditures and investments of arms production and acquisition. Increasing the effective and transparent utilization of public resources, reducing waste and combating corruption, and concentrating on the areas of greatest social need.

- Striving for the fulfillment of the agreed target of 0.7 percent of the gross national product for overall official development assistance (ODA) as soon as possible.
- Agreeing on a mutual commitment between interested developed and developing country partners to allocate, on average, 20 percent of ODA and 20 percent of the national budget, respectively, to basic social programmes.
- Providing international support and assistance to the landlocked developing countries in their efforts to implement the outcome of the Summit, taking into account the challenges and problems characteristic to those countries.
- Preference should be given to the utilization of competent national experts, either from the region or from other developing countries, in project and programme design, preparation and implementation, and to the building of local expertise where it does not exist.
- The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are called on to further integrate social development goals in their policies, programmes and operations, including by giving higher priority to social sector lending.
- The United Nations, in cooperation with the Bank and the Fund are asked to study the impact of structural adjustment programme on economic and social development.

#### *Role of the United Nations System*

- The United Nations system is given several role to activist the implementation of the decisions of the Summit. The General Assembly is recognized as the principal policy making and appraisal organ on matters related to the Summit's, follow-up with the United Nations Economic and Social Council overseeing the system-wide coordination in its implementation.
- The General Assembly, at its fiftieth session, should declare the first United Nations decade for the eradication of poverty, following the international year for the Eradication of Poverty (1996) with a view to its considering further initiatives on the eradication of poverty.
- Economic and Social Council should consider the possibility of holding joint meetings with the Development Committee of the World Bank and IMF.



- The Secretary-General is asked to ensure effective coordination of the implementation of the Summit outcome.
- There is also a call for strengthening the capacity of the United Nations System for gathering and analyzing information and developing indicators of social development.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION IN NEPAL : A VIEW POINT**

The 62 page long document consisting the programme of action adopted by the World Summit for Social Development 1995 has covered almost all the issues relating with the issues of social development in the developing countries of the world. It has also deeply analyzed the ways to solve the problem of abject poverty, unemployment and social disintegration that are inhibiting the development of these countries. The issues identified by the summit are so profuse that their implementation demands for an integrated approach. This demands for the participation of the government, NGOs and the private sector.

The implementation of the programme of action of the Social Summit in Nepal also demands for an integrated approach to achieve the goals and objectives of the Social Summit. For this the government has to play a lead role. Twelve months have already passed until now substantial follow-up works have not yet been carried both by the government and the NGOs. If the implementation process is not accelerated Nepal will lag behind. The following activities are to be carried immediately to accelerate the implementation process of the programme of action

### **National Council Development : An Apex Body**

There is a need to form an apex body for translating the programme of action of the Summit to the condition of Nepal. In view of the diversified works to be performed for implementing the programme of poverty eradication, provision of productive employment and social integration a broad based National Council of Social Development (NCSD) is needed in the country. It is to be chaired by the Prime Minister to make it more effective. It can integrate the activities of the government, NGOs and the private sector. In view of the existing institutional set-up in the country the secretariat of the Council can be the National Planning Commission. The Functions of the Council suggested are as follows:

- Formulation of long term plan for the eradication of poverty, creation of productive employment and social integration.
- Design of strategies for the implementation of the programme of action for social development.
- Identification of the size of the resources needed for the implementation of the programme.
- Identification of the capabilities of national organizations for the implementation of the programme.
- Identification of donor agencies interested to be involved in the agenda agreed in the Social Summit.
- Follow-up of the agreement made by the developed countries to provide resources to the least developed countries.
- Prioritization of the programme based on national capabilities.
- Based on the long term perspective plan preparation of rolling plan for three year period.
- Identification of the works to be carried by the government, NGOs and the private sector.
- Communicating the message of the Summit to the people through various agencies.

### **Role of the Government**

- HMG/Nepal has to play lead role in the implementation of the programme of action. The activities of other agencies are to be coordinated and monitored by the government so as to achieve the targets within the envisaged time period. The government should act as the facilitator rather than controller on the activities of other agencies. The following role, the government will have to play in the process of implementing the programme of action:

#### *Poverty Eradication*

- Fixing the duration for the eradication of poverty from Nepal. It should be a phase-wise target. The direction to eradicate poverty is to be identified.
- Demarcation of the areas where the poor live and to develop special programme for the upliftment of the poor.
- The development objective of poverty eradication is to be linked with the operational policy of the government.

- Each development programme is to be linked with poverty eradication.
- In designing macroeconomic policies attention is to be given not to affect negatively to the poor.
- Designing development programme to reach to the people at the grassroots. People are to be made partners of development. The approach of participation should be based on the principles of sharing but not on the principles of giving and taking.
- There is a need for the design of special programmes to the ultra poor to build up their capability rather than to make them dependent and to orient them to be migrant.
- Providing incentives to the private sector activities directed towards eradication of poverty.
- Supporting and promoting grass-root level NGOs to be involved in poverty eradication programmes.
- The women development division of the government is to be directed towards empowering women through animation programmes rather than involving directly in the programmes.
- Senior citizen of the country and the ex-military living in the villages are to be organized in launching programmes of poverty eradication.
- Informal groups of women prevalent in different parts of Nepal are to be strengthened to take the responsibility of poverty eradication programme to be launched in the villages.
- Indicators monitoring poverty are to be developed in each ministry.

#### *Productive Employment*

- Macroeconomic policy of the government should be directed towards creating more employment opportunities to the poor.
- Private sector should get incentive on the basis of the creation of employment opportunities.
- The effect of macroeconomic policy may not help to generate productive employment spontaneously due to imperfections in the market of Nepal. There is a need to develop special programme for the generation of employment.
- Banking facilities are to be promoted to the informal sector which will provide employment to a large section of the people.

- Liberalization and open economy may threaten the prospect of employment so the government has to be cautious in this regard.

### *Social Integration*

- Launching of mass literacy programme to raise the awareness of the people.
- Quality education is to be provided with the regularisation of school hours.
- Mass scale training is to be provided to youths.
- Creation of employment opportunities outside home will avoid immobility.
- Eradication of poverty will help in bringing social integration.
- Programme to check the disintegration process through development efforts should be designed.

### **Role of Non-Governmental Organization**

In the implementation of social development programme NGOs can play a vital role. But the culture of Community Based Developmental Organization (CBDO) has not yet developed properly in Nepal. Despite having a high growth rate of NGOs they are playing a limited role due to their concentration in the urban areas with a limited scope. There is the need for proper institutionalization and networking of NGOs in Nepal. However, their role is enormous in implementing the programme of action agreed in the Social Summit. NGOs can perform the following activities effectively if they are properly supported by the Government and International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs):

- Identification of the poor at the village level and to organize the poor to use the resources available at the village level.
- Launching village or community level development activities making it more cost effective and employment oriented.
- Introducing an animation programme to motivate local people for development works and to promote literacy.
- Animating the youth to develop reading and writing habits among the school children at the village level.
- Introducing savings groups and to launch income generating activities.

## Role of Private Sector

Private sector has been playing vital role in promoting employment, and through it helping to solve the problem of poverty. It has been instrumental in bringing some disintegration in rural Nepalese society due its concentration in some urban centres. This has accelerated the process of rural to urban migration. The interest of the private sector is more dominated by profit motive and it will be less interested in the works of social development. Hence it is essential to motivate the private sector to participate in the task of social development. The following task can be performed by the private sector:

- Providing contracts to small entrepreneurs to perform some jobs of the industry.
- Providing marketing channels to the products of small industries.
- Making available inputs and technology to diversify agriculture.
- Participating in the programmes launched by the government and NGOs. for social development.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion it can be said that the tasks of implementing the programme of action agreed in the Social Summit 1995 lie with HMG/Nepal. The government has to take immediate action in this direction. The importance of this Summit is enormous to poor country Nepal when the world community has shown their gesture to provide special help to the least developed countries. This has given a good opportunity to Nepal to augment her resources base to spend for social development.

## SELECTED REFERENCES

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