

A Fair Globalisation

Creating Opportunities for All

World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalisation

World of Work, Issue No.50, March 2004

Can globalisation change so its benefits are shared more equitably by people and countries? It not only can change, it must, says a new report presented to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) by the World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalisation. The Commission's report says building a fair and inclusive globalisation must become a worldwide priority.

“There is no point to a globalisation that reduces the price of the child's shoes, but costs the father his job.”

Contents:

Introduction

Divergent views, convergent voices

Addressing globalisation begins at home

Fair rules, equitable policies

Reinforcing the multilateral system: Improving the quality of global governance

Making it happen: Buy-in of multiple stakeholders

Further Information

A Fair Globalisation

Creating Opportunities for All

World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalisation

World of Work, Issue No.50, March 2004

“Seen through the eyes of the vast majority of men and women, globalisation has not met their simple and legitimate aspirations for decent jobs and a better future for their children.”

Introduction

A Fair Globalisation: Creating Opportunities for All - was issued by the *World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalisation* on 24th February 2004 in Geneva. It was launched by the Commission’s co-chairs – President Tarja Halonen of Finland and President Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania.

The report acknowledges that globalisation’s *“potential for good is immense,”* and that it *“has opened the door to many benefits promoted open societies and open economies, and encouraged a freer exchange of goods, ideas and knowledge.....”*

Nevertheless, *“there are deep-seated and persistent imbalances in the current workings of the global economy, which are ethically unacceptable and politically unsustainable”*, the report says. *“Seen through the eyes of the vast majority of men and women, globalisation has not met their simple and legitimate aspirations for decent jobs and a better future for their children.”*

“There is growing concern about the direction globalisation is currently taking,” says the report. *“Its advantages are too distant for too many, while its risks are all too real. Corruption is widespread. Open societies are threatened by global terrorism, and the future of open markets is increasingly in question. Global governance is in crisis. We are at a critical juncture, and we need to urgently rethink our current policies and institutions.”*

Juan Somavia, Director-General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), who originally proposed the Commission, said this was the first time there had been a systematic attempt to deal with the social dimension of globalisation. He added that the Commission was convened by the ILO to search for common ground and make proposals on issues which are today the subject of *“parallel monologues”*. *“This Commission provides a clear-eyed, common sense message of hope. Making globalisation fair and inclusive is difficult but doable, and is an urgent worldwide priority,”* he said.

Mr Somavia said the 26 Commission members¹ - including a Nobel economics laureate, politicians, parliamentarians, social and economic experts, and representatives of business and multi-national corporations, organised labour, academia and civil society – were “*broadly representative of the diverse and contending actors and issues that characterise globalisation today, and had accepted the challenge to analyse its effects and provide a series of proposals for righting its imbalances.*” Their report “*offers no miraculous or simple solutions, for there are none, but is an attempt to help break the current impasse by focusing on the concerns and aspirations of people and on the ways to better harness the potential of globalisation itself.*”

Among its prescriptions for achieving a fair and inclusive globalisation, the Commission proposes a series of coordinated measures across a broad front to improve governance and accountability at both national and international levels. These include:

- fairer rules for international trade, investment, finance and migration, which take account of all interests, rights and responsibilities;
- measures to promote core labour standards and a minimum level of social protection in the global economy; and
- new efforts to mobilise international resources to raise capabilities and meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Commission argues that a fair globalisation also depends on better national governance in all countries, and maps out the priorities for national, local and regional policies which can empower people to participate effectively in the opportunities of globalisation.

The Commission recommends that “*decent work for all should be made a global goal and be pursued through complementary national and international policies. This would respond to a major political demand in all countries.*” Addressing the need to accelerate employment creation in all countries would help to reduce social tensions within countries and economic frictions between them. The report calls for the “*enhanced coordination of macroeconomic policies to attain a more balanced strategy for sustainable global growth and full employment, including an equitable sharing among countries of the responsibility for maintaining high levels of effective demand.*”

Noting that one reason social goals, such as employment, fail to receive priority at the global level, is because international organisations with different mandates do not work together sufficiently well, the Commission recommends the “*Policy Coherence Initiatives*” be launched by the relevant international organisations to develop more balanced policies for achieving a fair and inclusive globalisation. The objective would be to progressively develop integrated policy proposals on specific issues which balance economic, social and environmental concerns. The first initiative should address the question of global growth, investment and employment creation, and involve relevant UN bodies, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and the ILO. Priority areas for other such initiatives include: *gender equality and the empowerment of women, education, health, food security, and human settlements.*

The co-Chairs of the Commission, Presidents Halonen and Mkapa, said, *“We believe a better globalisation is the key to a better and secure life for people everywhere in the 21st century. Ours is a critical but positive message for changing the current path of globalisation. We believe the benefits of globalisation can be extended to more people and better shared between and within countries, with many more voices having an influence on its course. The resources and the means are at hand. Our proposals are ambitious but feasible. We are certain that a better world is possible.”*

“Wealth is being created, but too many countries and people are not sharing in its benefits.”

Divergent views, convergent voices

The Commission examined a wide range of data during its 2-years of deliberations and concluded, *“The current process of globalisation is generating unbalanced outcomes, both between and within countries. Wealth is being created, but too many countries and people are not sharing in its benefits.”* It noted that work and employment are central to any strategy for widening the benefits of globalisation, and highlighted the fact that global unemployment has reached over 185 million people, the highest-ever recorded figure. In addition, it says the *“informal economy”* continues to grow.

It developed its conclusions and recommendations after listening to the voices of a wide variety of people in consultations held around the world over the last 2-years. In the 26 *“dialogues”* held in over 20 countries, the Commission sought not only to establish the facts, but also to encourage debate among a range of divergent and often critical views. Special dialogues were also arranged for business, labour and civil society to bring their perspectives to the table.

The Commission noted, *“In the kaleidoscope of opinions that emerged from the dialogues, there was also much common ground.”* This included a sense of insecurity and concerns about employment; in the words of one dialogue participant from the Philippines, *“there is no point to a globalisation that reduces the price of the child’s shoes, but costs the father his job.”* There was fear of threats to what one participant called *“traditional institutions, such as the family and the school”*, and worries about unfair rules biased towards the powerful. The Commission also found people expressing the need for a more effective State.

“There is a growing feeling that we live in a world highly vulnerable to changes we cannot control,” said one participant from Costa Rica, *“a growing sense of fragility among ordinary people, countries and entire regions.”* added another participant from Egypt when summing up the power of globalisation, *“We were sleeping on the shore when a big wave came.”*

Among the widespread concerns was migration, in sending and receiving countries alike. In addition to the *“brain drain,”* which undermined efforts to build national capabilities, participants said poor migrants from all regions often found themselves –

especially if they were women – driven into an illegal economy in countries of destination.

In all parts of the world, regional integration was seen as a route towards a fairer, more inclusive globalisation and there were repeated expressions of support for the United Nations as the best means of responding to the challenges of globalisation.

The Commission said that most participants in the dialogues believed that solutions were possible, and many were already actively seeking or promoting them. Whatever the negatives of the present model of globalisation, it was recognised that globalisation is a reality, and that it is necessary to adjust policy priorities to deal with it.

“The outside world can do without us, but we can’t do without it,” a Tanzanian said at a dialogue. Another participant in the dialogue in Poland added, *“If globalisation is a river we must build dams to generate power.”*

“Our vision of globalisation is anchored at the local level.”

Addressing globalisation begins at home

The report argues that a fair globalisation requires improvements in governance, both within countries and at the international level. Public and private actors in countries at all levels of development must be democratically accountable for the policies they pursue and the actions they take. The report goes on to say *“No country has a monopoly on good governance.”*

A first requirement is that each nation respects the needs and interests of others in formulating domestic policies. The report highlights the particular responsibility of those countries with the greatest decision-making power in international bodies to consider all interests, and to meet their international commitments.

Within countries, the benefits of globalisation can only be widely shared, and the adverse effects controlled, if the basic principles of democracy, social equality, human rights and the rule of law are respected. Sound institutions are likewise required to promote opportunity and enterprise in a well-functioning market economy.

The report calls for a more effective State with the capacity to manage the process of integration into the global economy, to strengthen the capacities of people and enterprises, to provide adequate social protection, and to deliver on key social and economic goals. An integrated approach is needed, and that means that economic and social authorities have to work together effectively. Strong institutions for dialogue and the participation of a range of interests are essential, based on representative organisations of employers and workers, and a vibrant civil society.

The report emphasises that the benefits of globalisation can only reach all people if the huge informal economy is brought into the economic mainstream by establishing and respecting property rights and the rights of workers, and by increasing productivity and access to markets.

“Our vision of globalisation”, says the report “is anchored at the local level.” It emphasises local policies, including defending rights to voice, culture and identity, and building up local production capabilities which can hold their own in the global economy while respecting local aspirations and priorities. Because what happens to their work and employment determines for most people whether they benefit or suffer from globalisation, the report argues that it is vital to promote employment and decent work, and calls for a new contract recognising the interests of both workers and employers.

The report points to a range of means and instruments which are available to governments and to social actors within countries, to enable citizens to participate effectively in the gains of globalisation, and to protect and provide assistance when adjustments are required. It calls for international organisations and wealthy nations to support national efforts to achieve these goals. That includes an international commitment to ensure the basic material and other requirements of human dignity for all, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The eradication of poverty and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) should be seen as the first steps towards a socioeconomic *“floor”* for the global economy.

“there is no point to a globalisation that reduces the price of the child’s shoes, but costs the father his job.”

Fair rules, equitable policies

Among its key recommendations, the Commission said global rules and policies on trade and finance must allow more space for policy autonomy in developing countries, adding, *“This is essential for developing policies and institutional arrangements best suited to their level of development and specific circumstances. Existing rules that unduly restrict their policy options for accelerating agricultural growth or industrialisation, and for maintaining financial and economic stability, need to be reviewed.”*

“The policies of international organisations and donor countries must also shift more decisively away from external conditionality to national ownership of policies,” the report says. *“Affirmative action is required in favour of countries that do not have the same capacities of those who developed earlier.”*

The report also says:

- ***The multilateral trading system should substantially reduce unfair barriers to market access*** for goods in which developing countries have comparative advantages, especially textiles and garments, and agricultural products. In doing so, the interests of the Least Developed Countries should be safeguarded through special and differential treatment to nurture their export potential.
- ***Fair rules for trade and capital flows need to be complimented by fair rules for cross-border movement of people.*** Steps have to be taken to build a

multilateral framework which provides uniform and transparent rules for cross-border movement of people, and balances the interests of both migrants and of countries of origin and destination.

- ***Global production systems have proliferated, generating the need for new rules on foreign direct investment (FDI) and on corruption.*** A balanced and development-friendly multilateral framework for FDI is needed, which takes into account all interests, rights and responsibilities, and to achieve that it will have to be negotiated in a generally accepted forum.
- ***Core labour standards, as defined by the ILO, provide a minimum set of global rules for labour in the global economy,*** and respect for them should be strengthened in all countries. Stronger action is required to ensure respect for core labour standards in export processing zones and, more generally, in global production systems. All relevant international institutions should assume their part in promoting these standards, and ensure that no aspect of their policies and programmes impedes implementation of these rights.
- ***A minimum level of social protection for individuals and families needs to be accepted and undisputed as part of the socioeconomic “floor” of the global economy,*** including adjustment assistance to displaced workers. Donors and financial institutions should contribute to the strengthening of social protection systems in developing countries.
- ***The international financial system should be made more supportive of sustainable global growth.*** Cross-border financial flows have grown massively, but the system is unstable, prone to crises and contagion, and largely bypasses poor and capital-scarce countries. Efforts to devise effective and equitable mechanisms for debt resolution should be intensified, so as to provide for fair allocation of responsibilities and burdens between debtors and lenders, alongside the acceleration and deepening of debt relief.
- ***A greater effort is required to mobilise more international resources to attain key global goals, particularly the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).*** The 0.7 percent target for official development assistance must be met and new sources for funding over and above this target should be actively explored and developed. If this target had been met over the last 30 years, an additional US\$2.5 trillion would have been available for development.
- ***Pointing to the absence of a global institutional framework with political authority to coordinate action on taxation, the report urges stronger measures to reduce tax avoidance and evasion,*** and highlights the potential of possible new sources of financing at the global level and other resource-raising schemes such as an the New Global Deal - [International Finance Facility](#), the reallocation of military expenditures to development assistance, and private, voluntary efforts.

“The policies of international organisations and donor countries must also shift more decisively away from external conditionality to national ownership of policies,”

Reinforcing the multilateral system: Improving the quality of global governance

“The implementation of reforms in international economic and social policy will require world-wide political support, the commitment of key global actors, and the strengthening of global institutions,” the report says. *“The UN multilateral system constitutes the core of global governance and is uniquely equipped to spearhead the process of reform. For it to cope with the current and emerging challenges of globalisation, it has to enhance its effectiveness and improve the quality of its governance, especially with respect to democratic representation and decision-making, accountability to people, and policy coherence.”*

Key recommendations in the report include a variety of measures to make the multilateral system, including the Bretton Wood Institutions (BWIs) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), more democratic and accountable to people, in its decision-making procedures, mechanisms for independent evaluation, and through parliamentary scrutiny of international policies. The report recommends a global parliamentary group to develop integrated oversight of the major international organisations.

At both national and international levels, the report highlights the need for greater coherence between economic and social policies. That requires governments to take a more integrated view of global policies and to address the social dimensions of globalisation more effectively in major bodies such as the G8, and the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

An important proposal in the report is for *“Policy Coherence Initiatives”*, which would engage the key international organisations in developing a common, integrated approach to key global concerns. The first of these would cover the issues of a global strategy for growth, investment and employment.

The report notes, *“The roots of the problem of global policy coherence lie at the national level.”* The Commission calls on heads of state and governments to ensure that in international forums, national representatives promote an integrated policy approach to economic and social matters.

“Affirmative action is required in favour of countries that do not have the same capacities of those who developed earlier.”

Making it happen: Buy-in of multiple stakeholders

The Commission stresses the responsibilities of all actors to respect universally shared values and principles and to contribute to the overall goal of a fairer globalisation, and calls for follow-up of its recommendations by a wide range of people, in government,

politics, business, labour and civil society. At the international level, the Commission notes that many of the proposals in the report should be addressed in existing institutions and forums which have the mandate to do so. But other issues require new forums for dialogue and consensus-building among all interests concerned.

It therefore proposes a series of multi-stakeholder “*Policy Development Dialogues*”, designed to bring all relevant actors together to work towards agreement on key issues, such as:

- building a multilateral framework for the cross-border movement of people;
- a development framework for foreign direct investment (FDI), which balances the rights and responsibilities of investors, host and home countries;
- corporate social responsibility for a fairer globalisation;
- globalisation, adjustment and social protection;
- global capacity-building in education and information technology skills to widen the benefits from globalisation; and
- gender equality as an instrument for a more inclusive globalisation.

The Commission also argues that a broader “*Globalisation Policy Forum*” is required, to bring together international organisations and other key actors and participants in global debates on globalisation and its social impact, and the design of global economic and social policies. It suggests that such a forum could also produce a regular “*State of Globalisation Report*”, and promote the wide range of research and data collection which is needed to support policy development.

The report will be discussed by the *ILO Governing Body* in March, and the Director-General will make proposals for follow-up in the ILO to its *International Labour Conference* in June 2004. It will also be submitted to heads of state and governments, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the heads of the main international organisations, as well as other inter-governmental bodies, and to key non-state actors of the global community. Each will be invited to debate the recommendations, and consider appropriate follow-up action in their own spheres of responsibility and institutional competencies.

In conclusion, the Commission report says that as a collective document, it is quite different from alternative reports each one of its members would have written individually, adding, “*But our experience has demonstrated the value and power of dialogue as an instrument for change. We are convinced that our experience can and should be replicated on a larger and wider scale.*”

“*This is an ambitious but realisable common sense vision,*” the two presidents say. “*The choice is clear. We can correct the global governance deficit in the world today, ensure accountability and adopt coherent policies that forge a path for globalisation that is fair and just, both within and between countries, or we can prevaricate and risk a slide into future spirals of insecurity, political turbulence, conflicts and wars.*”

Further Information

A copy of the report can be found on the ILO's website at: <http://www.ilo.org/wcsdg>

¹ Members of the Commission

The World Commission had full and independent responsibility for its report, and its members served in their individual capacity. It was composed of two co-Chairs: H.E. Taja Halonen and H.E. Benjamin Mkapa; nineteen members: Giuliano Amato, Ruth Cardoso, Heba Handoussa, Eveline Herfkens, Ann McLaughlin Korologos, Lu Mai, Valentina Matvienko, Deepak Nayyar, Taizo Nishimuro, Francois Perigot, Surin Pitsuwan, Julio Maria Sanguinetti, Hernando de Soto, Joseph Stiglitz, John J. Sweeney, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Aminata D. Traore, Zwelinzima Vavi and Ernst Ulrich von Weizsaecker; and five ex officio members: Bill Brett, Eui-yong Chung, Daniel Funes de Rioja, Juan Somavia and Alain Ludovic Tou.