ADVISORY LETTER

FINANCING THE INTERNATIONAL AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ADVISORY COUNCIL ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
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Foreword

The international community is expected to adopt a new agenda for sustainable development this year. The United Nations is convening an international conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in July 2015 to reach agreement on the important question of how to finance this new agenda.

The financing requirement will be substantial. Not only will developing countries have to take measures to improve their tax systems and reduce capital outflows, but additional sources of finance, both public and private, will be needed. Because of the scale and diversity of the financial resources involved – and the concomitant importance of measuring results – efforts will have to be coordinated internationally. There are concerns about the ability of the current global financial system to cope with this challenge.

Given the importance of the issue, the Netherlands Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) has decided to issue this advisory letter. It builds on previous AIV advisory reports[1] and is meant to serve as an input for preparing the UN conference in Addis Ababa.[2] It was drawn up by the AIV's Development Cooperation Committee, with substantial contributions from Professor Hans Opschoor, Professor Joyeeta Gupta, Frans Baneke and Professor Rolph van der Hoeven, and with assistance from Pim de Keizer and Jessica Schonewille (trainee). The AIV adopted this advisory letter on 28 April 2015.

1 AIV, 'Unequal Worlds: Poverty, Growth, Inequality and the Role of International Cooperation', advisory report number 80, The Hague, September 2012; AIV, 'New Paths to International Environmental Cooperation', advisory report number 84, The Hague, March 2013; AIV, 'Improving Global Financial Cohesion: The Importance of a Coherent International Economic and Financial Architecture', advisory report number 89, The Hague, June 2014; AIV, 'Development Cooperation: Beyond a Definition', advisory letter number 25, The Hague, May 2014. See also UNEP: 'Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication', Nairobi, 2011.

2 Preparatory discussions will be held during the intergovernmental meeting of 13-17 April 2015 and 15-19 June 2015. A meeting will also be held with the assistance of the World Bank in Rotterdam on 21-22 May 2015 to discuss any outstanding matters in the final document.

I Introduction

For the past 15 years, the international community has committed itself to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a generally accepted policy framework. These specific development goals were concerned chiefly with poverty reduction and were to have been achieved by this year (2015).

Only partial success has been achieved in this regard, and a new international agenda is being negotiated for a broader, comprehensive framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Eradicating poverty will remain a key aim, but maintaining the climate and the living environment will also receive considerable attention, as will aspects of human rights and the rule of law. Together, the SDGs represent an agenda with universal goals for both industrialised and developing countries. The goals call on all countries to take responsibility nationally and internationally for putting an end to poverty and building sustainable and peaceful societies.

Meeting the agenda's higher ambitions will make considerable demands on financial resources. The switch to sustainable development is expected to cost developing countries alone several hundred billion US dollars a year in the decades ahead.[3] These resources will have to be drawn from the national budgets of developing and developed countries, foreign direct investments (FDI) and other private sources such as remittances by migrant workers to family and friends in developing countries, official development assistance (ODA), and new and additional funding over and above ODA and intended for environment-related expenditure.

Industrialised countries provide approximately USD 130 billion a year in ODA which, however, falls short of their commitment to allocate 0.7% of their Gross National Product (GNP) to development cooperation. Remittances tend to be three times as high, but the figure differs from one country to another. Direct foreign investments are a major source of external financing for many developing countries. However, their link to the new sustainable development agenda is still uncertain. A recently introduced source of finance for climate-related investments is the Green Climate Fund. To date, the intention of setting aside USD 30 billion a year for the Fund increasing to USD 100 billion in 2020 has resulted in the mobilisation of USD 10 billion.[4]

The need to find new and additional funding is therefore self-evident. A detailed consideration of this issue is beyond the scope of this advisory letter. Much has already

3 See 'Report of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Finance', final draft, August 2014, see: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/documents/ICESDF.pdf>.

4 Press Release, 10 December 2014, Green Climate Fund, see: <http://www.gcfund.org/fileadmin/00_custo ocuments/Press/release_GCF_2014_12_10_austria_pledge.pdf>.

been published on the subject in recent years.[5] It is important that developing countries enhance their domestic resource mobilisation by improving their tax systems, seeking ways to make optimal use of remittances, and encouraging the private sector to participate in the sustainability agenda. There is undoubtedly also a need to rekindle synergy between public and private actors by means of innovative instruments.

These matters are considered in brief in sections III and IV of this advisory letter. Section II first looks at the importance to developing countries of preventing the outflow of capital. Capital outflows involve large sums of money. Section V describes the growing need for international coordination as the expected pooling of public and private financing sources will give rise to increasing complexity, making it more difficult to manage funds and fulfil reporting obligations. Section VI presents recommendations on how to consolidate coordination in an international context.

5 See, for example, UNDP ‘Innovative Financing for Development: a new model for development finance?’, Discussion Paper, January 2012, see: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/development_cooperationandfinance/innovative_financingfordevelopmentanewmodelfordevelopmentfinance.html>; ‘Report of the Secretary-General’s High-Level Advisory Group on Climate Change Financing’, 5 November 2010, see: <http://www.un.org/wcm/webdav/site/climatechange/shared/Documents/AGF_reports/AGF%20Report.pdf>; UN Secretary General (2011), ‘Report of the Secretary-General on innovative mechanisms of financing for development’, see: <http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/66/334&Lang=E>, UN DESA 2012, ‘World Economic and Social Survey 2012: In Search of New Development Finance’, E/2012/50/Rev.1 ST/ESA/341, see: <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wess/wess_current/2012wess.pdf>; and Innovating Financing for Development (IFFD) Leading Group 2010, ‘Globalizing Solidarity: the case for financial levies’, see: <http://www.leadinggroup.org/IMG/pdf/1-_Globalizing_solidarity_2010.pdf>.

II Capital outflows from developing countries

Foreign direct investments by international companies in developing countries are generally an important source of employment, growth and development. However, they can also trigger an outflow of capital if the companies concerned seek to take advantage of tax benefits elsewhere. A significant proportion of the outflow is actually illicit. In sub-Saharan Africa, capital flight of this kind is thought to have amounted to nearly 6% of total GNP over the past ten years. The Washington-based Center for Global Development estimates that the 20 poorest countries in Africa lose as much as 10% of their GNP to transnational crime, tax evasion and corruption.[6]

Illicit flows are not the only harmful capital outflows: profits on private investment and payments of interest on foreign debt are also transferred from developing countries. Profits totalling USD 486 billion were transferred from developing countries in 2012, while the interest paid by developing countries on foreign debt amounted to USD 188 billion.[7]

Overall, the capital flowing out of sub-Saharan Africa exceeds the amounts of ODA flowing in.[8] The outflow raises questions, as the industrialised countries systematically receive more than they provide in aid. Moreover, natural resources in developing countries are systematically undervalued.[9]

6 UN, 21 January 2015, 'Preparatory Process for the 3rd International Conference on Financing for Development Elements', see: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/FfD_Elements-paper_drafting-session.pdf>; Global Financial Integrity claims that nearly 80% of the illicit flows are due to the incorrect pricing of goods and services, see: <http://www.gfintegrity.org/report/2014-global-report-illicit-financial-flows-from-developing=countries-2003-2012/>. See also AIV, 'Crime, Corruption and Instability: An Exploratory Report', advisory report number 85, The Hague, May 2013, pp. 62-74, and: <http://www.africaprogresspanel.org/sub-saharan-africa-loses-5-7-percent-of-gdp-to-illicit-financial-outflows/18/>; and Center for Global Development, 'Why Beyond Aid Matters', Washington, September 2014.

7 Eurodad, 2014,'The State of Finance for Developing Countries 2014', Brussels, see: <http://eurodad.org/finance_for_developing_countries>.

8 Boyce and Ndikuma have calculated that USD 816 billion flowed out of sub-Saharan Africa between 1970 and 2010. This almost equals the combined development aid and foreign investments received in the same period, USD 659 billion and USD 306 billion respectively. See: 'Capital Flight from Sub-Saharan African Countries: Updated Estimates, 1970-2010', PERI Research Report, October 2012.

9 'Foil Vedanta, 'Copper Colonialism: British miner Vedanta KCM and the copper loot of Zambia', January 2014, see: <http://www.foilvedanta.org/wp-content/uploads/FV-Zambia-report.pdf>.

III Remittances

Remittances (money transferred to their home country by family and friends working abroad) are an important source of income for many people. In 2014, total worldwide remittances were worth USD 583 billion, some USD 436 billion of which was remitted to developing countries.[10] The Pew Research Center has calculated that remittances made up between 5% and 8% of low income countries' GNP between 2003 and 2012.[11]

There are significant disparities among countries, especially among low income countries. Bangladesh tops the list, receiving USD 15 billion in 2013. Nepal and Tajikistan received USD 5.4 billion and USD 4.1 billion respectively. The flow of remittances into these three countries was five to six times higher than the combined inflow of ODA and foreign investments. In Kenya and Uganda, too, remittances are an important source of income (USD 1.3 billion and USD 1 billion respectively in 2013) but they are worth less than ODA and foreign investments: about half as much in Kenya and a quarter in Uganda. Remittances to other low income countries are not as high but are still an important source of income.

Remittances are attractive and relatively stable sources of capital that have the potential to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development. Although they are private funds which are not directly intended to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and are not susceptible to coordination by governments, they can encourage investment in basic services such as health care and education, and in agriculture, thereby generating improvements in their quality. However, because they have an inflationary effect, this can make it more difficult for the very poorest to benefit from those services. Moreover, the increased consumer expenditure that may be brought about by remittances among certain classes can also increase resource use and pollution.

One concern is the high cost of transferring money to developing countries. In sub-Saharan Africa the average bank costs of a remittance was 12% in 2014. Technological advances such as e-vouchers and e-wallets may improve the situation so that international financial resources have a greater development impact in rural areas too. As a source of pension and health insurance funding, remittances could also be linked to inclusive financing.

10 See: 'Migration and Remittances: Recent Developments and Outlook', World Bank, 13 April 2015.

11 See: 'Changing Patterns of Global Migration and Remittances', December 2013.

IV Innovative financial instruments and financing sources worldwide

A distinction can be made between innovative instruments and innovative sources of finance. The former are used to mobilise the latter.[12] The funds mobilised can then be used to finance sustainable development activities.

Innovative instruments include new forms of tax, such as carbon tax and financial transaction tax, royalties on oil and gas extraction, mining royalties, etc. Another innovative instrument might be the abolition of subsidies that have undesirable effects, such as fisheries subsidies that cause overfishing. Other examples include instruments that can be used to organise new forms of market creation, e.g. emission allowances or payment for ecosystem services, risk sharing and risk insurance.

To a greater or lesser extent, all these instruments depend on a tax base related to sustainability criteria such as the ecological footprint. Social and ecological costs are passed on in prices in order to transform incentives and market forces and thus influence the behaviour of producers and consumers so that sustainable behaviour is rewarded and behaviour that does not contribute to sustainable development is discouraged.

However, the use of these instruments may entail certain risks. Market forces may be introduced in a context in which it is premature or even undesirable to do so. These interventions, moreover, can have a serious regressive impact on the purchasing power of certain groups.

Another type of instrument aims to blend public and private capital flows in order to attract additional funding. An ad hoc partnership, for example, can be set up to carry out an SDG-related project or programme. To encourage the mobilisation of private sector funds, it is desirable to put in place a financial architecture that promotes the provision of long-term rather than short-term capital and also supports government policy – including ODA funds – that seeks to enhance the investment climate and reduce risk. One way to achieve this is to use public funds to mitigate risks in markets that are still viewed as uncertain by the private sector, such as the renewable energy market. In exchange, private partners can be required to fulfil conditions to ensure social and ecological returns. It should be noted that pooling public and private funds can create uncertainty regarding the use of public funds to earn a profit. This increases the need for good accountability and the reporting of results.

12 European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, EU Accountability Report 2014 on Financing for Development, 'Review of progress by the EU and its Member States', Brussels, 3 July 2014, SWD (2014) 235 final, PART 1/5, see: <http://ec.europa.eu/archives/commission_2010-2014/piebalgs/multimedia/pdf/eu-accountability-report-2014-on-financing-for-development_en.pdf>.

V The importance of coherence and coordination

Besides their intended effects, SDG-related interventions may also have side-effects. Effective coordination at policy level is therefore essential. In view of the scope of this advisory letter, this matter is not examined further here. However, the inconsistencies expected from the combination of different funding flows (financial system incoherence)[13] are considered below. They include:

- possible friction between social and financial returns, or the achievement of social and ecological goals versus profit maximisation;
- conflicting interests between borrowing and, depending on the degree of concessionality, a rising debt burden that may be counterproductive for a country's longer-term development;
- the deterrent effect that improved regulations designed to increase the stability of the financial system (e.g. capital adequacy standards) can elicit, reducing the provision of credit and risk capital.

In view of the projected scale and diversity of the financial resources involved and the complexity of implementing the international agenda for sustainable development, an appropriate mechanism must be found to measure results, prepare reports and account for expenditure. To promote *policy* coherence, a High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development has been set up. It reports to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the UN General Assembly.

Appropriate structures are still being sought for *financial* coherence. Which organisation or institution is the most suitable – and best equipped – to carry out this task? Or should several institutions, coordinated at multilateral level, be involved?[14] A comprehensive oversight system is required with instruments that provide an insight into how funding flows are used to achieve sustainable development goals and ensure access to – and inclusivity for – low income countries and relevant sectors and groups.[15] As explained in its advisory report number 89, the AIV is a strong advocate of a multilateral approach.

13 See: 'Report of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Finance', final draft, August 2014.

14 This again came to the fore at a recent meeting of ECOSOC with the World Bank, IMF, WTO and UNCTAD, which concluded that: 'to address those concerns (of coherence, coordination and cooperation in the financing for sustainable development context), strengthened multilateralism would be needed' (concluding observations by the President of ECOSOC, New York, 14 and 15 April 2014, A/69/83–E/2014/71). See also: 'Financing for sustainable development in the global partnership beyond 2015', UN, January 2013, see: <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/untaskteam_undf/thinkpieces/21_thinkpiece_financing_development.pdf>.

15 See: 'The Road to Dignity by 2030: synthesis report of the SG on the post-2015 Agenda', par. 92ff, 109, UN, 2014, and: UN CDP Policy Note 'Global Governance and Global Rules for Development in the Post-2015 Era', UN DESA, June 2014.

Moreover, the AIV believes it is important to seek not just ‘horizontal’ coordination at international level, but also coordination at national level with input from various sections of society (civil society organisations, private institutions, businesses, research consultancies, etc.). In the Netherlands, this could take the form of, for instance, regular consultation between the government and representatives of the private sector and non-governmental organisations. The Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation could perhaps take the lead in this.

VI Recommendations

The forthcoming Financing for Development conference in Addis Ababa will seek agreements on the financing of the international agenda for sustainable development. The AIV makes the following recommendations:

- The Netherlands should make a strong case for financial coherence to be a recurring theme of consultations on financing for the international agenda for sustainable development.

- To make international financial flows more transparent, the Netherlands should press for frameworks to be devised to produce as clear a picture as possible of all relevant financial flows, including ODA and other official aid, private flows and capital outflows (including illicit outflows).

- International and national tax regulations should be strengthened to tackle international tax avoidance and evasion and illicit flows. In this respect, the Netherlands should voice its support for the further operationalisation in respect of transfer pricing of ECOSOC's Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters.

- The Netherlands could offer its expertise and financial support to strengthen the domestic financial situation of developing countries by improving their tax collection capacity, accountability and the transparency of capital outflows.

- The Netherlands should use its position to urge for the monitoring and coordination of financial flows for the future agenda for sustainable development to be embedded at multilateral – UN – level. This could take the form of annual consultation with the institutions directly involved, such as the IMF, World Bank and UNCTAD. Such coordination could be organised under the auspices of ECOSOC, parallel to (or as an explicit part of) the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development that reports to the UN General Assembly.

List of Abbreviations

AIV	Advisory Council on International Affairs
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
GNP	Gross National Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
ODA	Official Development Assistance
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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** Joint report by the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) and the General Energy Council.

*** Joint report by the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) and the Advisory Committee on Aliens Affairs (ACVZ).