

Transcription

Turning rhetoric into action - building effective partnerships to combat poverty and exclusion

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The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

Ms. Gemma Adaba (moderator), Representative to the UN, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions; **Mr. Abdul Alim**, Counselor, Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations; **Ms. Diana Alarcon**, Senior Advisor for Inclusive Development and Poverty Reduction, UNDP; **Ms. Patricia Bailey**, Activist, ATD Fourth World, United Kingdom; **Ms. Danila Boneva**, Human Rights Officer, NY Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; **Ms. Sylvia Borren**, Co-Chair, Global Call to Action against Poverty; **Mr. Eugen Brand**, Director General of International Movement ATD Fourth World; **Ms. Widney Brown**, Senior Director of International Law and Policy, Amnesty International; **Ms. Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona**, UN Independent Expert on the question of Human Rights and Extreme Poverty; **Ms. Angela Medina Castro**, Activist, ATD Fourth World, Peru [representing **Ms. Silvia Velasco Quispe**, Activist, ATD Fourth World, Peru]; **Mr. Matt Davies**, Activist, ATD Fourth World, United Kingdom; **Mr. Philippe Delacroix**, Special Advisor to the Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations; **Sr. Sujita Kallapurakkathu**, Superior General, Sisters of Notre Dame; **Mr. Kevin Locke**, Activist, Lakota Tribe and Bahai' International Community; **Mr. Manuel Montes**, Chief of Policy Analysis and Development, Financing for Development, DESA; **Ms. Tahirih Naylor**, NGO Representative to the UN, Baha'i International Community, and Chair, NGO Committee for Social Development; **Mr. Michael Nyangi**, Community activist and organizer, Kibera, Kenya; **Bro. Steve O'Neil**, NGO Representative to the UN, Marianists International and Vice Chair, NGO Committee for Social Development; **Mr. Jacques Petidor**, Activist, ATD Fourth World, Haiti; **Mr. Nikhil Seth**, Director of Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination; **Ms. Ingrid Srinath**, Secretary-General, CIVICUS; **Ms. Elsa Stamatopoulou**, Acting Director, Division of Social Policy and Development, DESA; **Ms. Julia Tripp**, Research Assistant & Constituent Coordinator, Center for Social Policy, UMass Boston; **H.E. Fekitamoelea 'Utoikamanu**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Tonga to the United Nations; **Mr. Quentin Wodon**, Lead Specialist for Africa, World Bank

Gemma Adaba: Good afternoon everyone. I think we are ready to start. I'm your moderator for this session. My name is Gemma Adaba, and I'm from the trade union movement. And sometimes I like to forget that I'm at the United Nations and to think of myself as being within a group of activist workers in the trade union movement. So can we imagine that for a little while, and I'll say good afternoon brothers and sisters. It is good to be here with you. And we have such a great, diverse group of people here for the commemoration of the 17th of October - the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. I think that what's special about today is that we think about the fact that we share a common humanity. And that we are all together in a common cause, and sharing for peace and sharing for love and sharing for inclusion. And we are all along some sort of a continuum, where at some point or another we've felt like we were excluded in some way or we lacked access in some way, and then we think about all the dimensions of poverty...that we want to

overcome. And there are dimensions about lacking access to well being, and that's what we want for ourselves and that's what we want for everyone. So we're coming together to share and to reflect on what it means to lack the basic things that we need to consider that we're happy, that we're in peace, that we have well being. And why is it that we live in a world where there is such a lack of these basic things. And being on the continuum, we're thinking in particular of those who are in extreme lack, the extreme of poverty and of exclusion, in all different dimensions in people's lives. And we're coming together with everyone, with those who have all different levels of this lack of access and lack of exclusion, and we are reminding ourselves that we are in solidarity with everyone. So what is unique I think about this event and the concept of the 17th of October, as was developed by ATD Fourth World, is coming together with people who actually have the experience of poverty so that they have an opportunity to speak and so their voices are heard. And that they can say that this is their day, and they are, in a sense, part of this common humanity. So that's part of the reflection of today. We would like to have a highly interactive dialogue, where we think about all the issues of poverty and the experience of poverty and how we can be agents of change. We don't want to just talk about poverty; we want to think of ourselves as agents of change. And we want to begin by asking Kevin Locke to reflect for us and to welcome the group. Kevin Locke is a member of the Lakota nation and a representative of the Baha'i International Community and we think it's very fitting that he should welcome us in a short prayer and song in the Lakota language.

Kevin Locke: Greetings friends and relatives. I welcome you all a warm, heartfelt handshake. It's a privilege to offer a prayer song. This is going to be an eagle song. As many of you know, the 1877 Continental Congress concluded by creating a symbol for the US. I think Benjamin Franklin advocated for the adoption of the turkey, another gentleman, Thomas Jefferson, did a lot of research and said as long as people have lived on this land, the eagle has been their symbol. So let me offer this eagle song. The eagle is symbolic of the ascendant nature of the human spirit- the innate capacity of the human spirit to rise to nobility. And the eagle songs that we have in my community in South Dakota, they depict the journeys of the eagle. This is a song of the eagle flying in the predawn darkness, and the eagle flies up and sees the night turning into day and it says, "I am the first to fly with the new day", and in other words this is what the golden eagle and the bald eagle say as they fly into the new day. And for me this is a good song, as we're striving to escape the darkness and come into the light. And it doesn't matter what you are—you can be a golden eagle,

you can be white, you can be black... and there are quite a few bald eagles here, too. I'd like to dedicate this song to all of us eagles. (flute playing and blessing)

Gemma Adaba: Thank you very much. This gives us a good and inspiring start to our afternoon. We think of ourselves indeed as escaping the darkness and rising into the light. And one of the instruments we have for this process is this document right before me, "Turning Rhetoric into Action: Building effective partnerships to combat extreme poverty and exclusion". And so that's the theme for our interventions and presentations today. How do we move from talk to action, how do we build partnerships, and how do we actually make a difference in terms of combating poverty. And this report has been put together, prepared by the ATD Fourth World, and I commend this to you. It contains a lot of information and case studies that we consider to be best practice moving forward in our joint efforts moving together to combat poverty. In terms of the format for today's event, we want it to be highly interactive. We want to hear from everyone. We want everyone to just think about their experiences of poverty and how we move together. What are the issues, what are the constraints, and how do we share effectively? How do we move forward? We would like to begin by recognizing the ambassador of Tonga who is with us. We would like our speakers to be brief, in order to make this highly interactive. So we'll begin by welcoming the Ambassador of Tonga. I believe that you have some experiences that you want to share with us.

H. E. Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu: Thank you. Firstly I'd like to thank our hosts for organizing this event on poverty, especially on participation with people living in poverty as part of the solution. And I'd like to talk about poverty in the region where I come from and how we can promote more engagement from our people as part of the solution for poverty reduction. And taking into account the interactive nature of today's event I will keep my observations brief and look forward to further discussion with the participants. The group of countries that I am representing today is a diverse region, with countries with a population of 1,000 up to a country that has a population of 6.5 million, with more than 800 languages in the region, in a region that is mostly subsistence-based with issues of agriculture playing major roles and some industry, logging and mining, and tourism. And the definition of poverty in our region is defined as inadequate levels of sustainable human development through access to essential public goods and services and economic opportunities. And how does this definition apply to the Pacific region? For people living in poverty

in the Pacific, many are concerned with issues of lack of access to land or cash crops, a lack of access to water and sanitation facilities, a lack of access to employment, health care, and consistent income. And the situation is particularly hard for people in the outer islands, where there is minimal infrastructure to provide people with the necessary support. Eradication of hunger and poverty is one of the Millennium Development Goals, and the poverty line assessment is based on living on less than a dollar a day. Many people in the Pacific region live under this poverty line. For example, the levels assessed by the Asian Development Bank, in 2005, for Timor-Lest, the GDP per capita is US \$550 and for Papua New Guinea is \$816. There are some other countries, also in the Pacific, that have very high per capita income, of \$7,670, but these figures tell us that many people are living in extreme poverty and these problems are complex and challenging. It's an issue that affects the growth of our region and the sustainable growth of our economy and social infrastructure. The UNDP has also set human and poverty indicators to track the development of these countries in factors such as income, access to employment, subsistence agriculture, fishing and other household economic activities, and overall the Pacific does not rank well in any of these indicators. In fact, according to UNDP assessment of the region's human development and poverty reduction, the region is showing worrisome signs of growing hardship and increasing dependency on aid. But despite this worrying trend, I would like to make a positive observation about the region in direct relation to today's topic, and that's the engagement of people living in poverty, the need to encourage their participation. In our region, people are participating in the fight against poverty through community involvement. One of the features of our region is the high community involvement, the strong safety network and net provided by immediate and extended families is one of the core reasons for the resilience of our people. There might not be much to spare in terms of cash flow, however the support they provide is indispensable and the strong family ties and community support helps to support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. It's also a way that income is redistributed in our communities, and it's a feature we must preserve in our fight in poverty reduction. One of the questions we must ask is how do we support the people who are supporting our communities. How do we make sure the regional policies and income generating activities do not weaken the fabric of these communities? As many of the policies encourage urbanization and internal migration of our labor force, this might weaken the strength of our communities and how do we strengthen participation at the grassroots level? We might not answer all of these questions today, but they all deserve our attention. Education as one of the Millennium

Development Goals is a key factor in poverty eradication. While basic primary education is achieved across the Pacific region, we need to encourage the push for greater localized education for our youth, particularly in schools in the vocational sector. As poverty increases and household income decreases, some of the countries in the Pacific are withdrawing children from the primary schools to work on vanilla plantations and other income generating activities. We also need to generate more employment opportunities in rural areas to avoid pitfalls of urbanization which might lead to sharp increase in income disparity. We also need to push for better access to healthcare in our region, healthcare is an important influencing factor in poverty eradication. The increase in population in urban areas has led to cramped living conditions which contribute to infectious diseases, such as TB, dengue fever, and malaria. Other infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS are also on the rise. Malnutrition among children is also a serious concern for the region. This trend in malnutrition is a result of lack of physical exercise, and the lack of access to affordable, nutritious food, and the social, economic background of the families. It is important for the Pacific to work with our donor countries, especially in the area of financing for development, as the lack of consistent funding for development will only exacerbate the problem of poverty in our region and we urge the countries to start the negotiating process again, as its one of the way in which our countries can participate in signing the international system of trade. And the voices of the people need to be heard and further delays will only exacerbate the problem. We urge our development partners to work with us to enhance the infrastructure of our region, to reduce our dependency on fossil fuels, as it is an enormous burden for the small island developing states, and to reduce our dependence on foreign foods. It is important to take into account the serious risks climate change poses on our region. Adaptation and mitigation are crucial to the survival of our region. It's also part of the solution to poverty reduction and the sustainable development of our region. And most importantly it's important to place the needs and participation of people living below the poverty line in the policies advocated and implemented by governments and supported by our development partners. It's the only way to ensure our approach is humane, sustainable, and effective. Thank you.

Gemma Adaba: Thank you very much. We certainly had a comprehensive look at the various dimensions of poverty—the policy challenges as well as the experiences of people. I particularly appreciate your call for the participation of people living in poverty in all consultations and policy making. What I would like to do now is ask some of our activists, who are actually on the ground

and actually working with people, to speak. So I have two such presentations, and then we'll have a round of interactive discussion in which I would ask you to respond to what the presenters have said. So I want to start with Ms. Angela Medina Castro from Peru to speak on behalf of Sylvia Velasco Quispe. And you'll speak on some guiding principles that you've used in Peru in terms of having a consultative process and participation with people living in poverty in terms of policy making and dealing with the challenges of poverty.

Angela Medina Castro: Good afternoon. I am Angela Medina and I come from Peru. I am representing Ms. Sylvia Velasco. Senora Velasco was denied a visa to be present today, but she prepared this testimony to participate in the consultation on human rights and extreme poverty.

“In Cusco last year, in June, members of the Fourth World Movement met with the association of Notre Dame, the trade union of household workers and community organizers. Together with volunteers of ATD Fourth World and the support of Doctor Silvio Compana, Ombudsman in Cusco, we organized a Consultation on Human Rights and Poverty. It was an important meeting for me, where I met new people, made new friends, and was able to learn about how other people were living. At the meeting, we spoke about our lives and we saw that all life is important and, for this we should continue organizing ourselves, to continue defending our rights and to demand that the authorities don't forget people living in poverty. Only if we are united can we make them listen and respond. At the meeting I liked to share with other people. Everything went by well and we were happy, passing time together, sharing a meal or doing an activity together, and all this united us and we quickly built trust and confidence. Because of this, we are able to be open and share about how we live, and we learnt how many families suffer alone, in the city and in the country, because of poverty. I liked it very much when we made a “khipu” (traditional Incan shawl with messages attached), which is a way that we express ourselves in the Incan culture. We spoke of our lives and hopes, and all that we want for our families and our children in the future, because we want very much that our children no longer have to continue with this miserable life. It was important for us to be in this event with Mr José Bengoa, expert on human rights, who spoke about how human rights are also for the poorest and how there are many people in the world fighting so everyone can have their rights. But it was very important that Mr Bengoa was there, because almost nobody listens to us and now he can be our ambassador and he will take our voice where he goes. After the first

meeting, we continued meeting, because we had shared so much of our lives and what we had learned about our human rights. We had seen that we should continue learning and growing, to encourage them to listen, and to take our proposals to the authorities. The poorest have the right to health, to education, and to work. Actually, we continue meeting, getting to know more families, and preparing ourselves in the “Uyarinkalusunchis” (meetings), which in Quechua signifies “listen to us”. Last week in Cusco we had a 3-day meeting with families from La Paz, where we joined to share and gain strength in the fight against poverty, during this month when we celebrate the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.” Thank you.

Gemma Adaba: Thank you very much, I want to pass it on now to Patricia Bailey who’s working on a project in the UK on peer research.

Matt Davies: I’m actually going to begin and then pass it to Patricia. My name is Matt Davies and I’m with ATD Fourth World in London. We’re working on a project in London and we brought along some reports which you can find on the table when you go out. It’s also case study number four in your reports. So the project was carried out over an 18 month period between 2006 and 2008. It was part of wider work that ATD Fourth World has done in the policy development field. The project was part funded by, amongst others, Oxfam GB. Our wider work has been bringing together, for a number of years, people living in poverty in London to give them the opportunity to have their experiences heard and acted upon by relevant practitioners and policy makers. “Voices for Change” involved training people living in poverty as peer researchers, to become spokespeople on behalf of those experiencing poverty. The peer researchers talked to people living in poverty in London, to ask them what support they needed to help them move out of poverty. I’m going to hand it over to Patricia, who was one of the peer researchers involved in the project, and she’s going to talk about some of the conditions we set out in the project to enable people to be fully participating in the project itself.

Patricia Bailey: We were motivated to be part of the project and become peer researchers by the thought of having a report at the end of it that explained what the project was about, that showed that people living in poverty could become researchers and make the Government realize that poverty is around us and how to solve it. It takes a lot for people living in poverty to get involved in

projects like this. Meeting people in the same situation as you as a peer researcher is strange. Nerves and confidence are the biggest obstacles. You need support and training to get over nervousness. You need to learn how to approach people, how you greet them to make them feel relaxed. As part of the project, one thing we did was to give the peer researchers formal training from professional trainers. We had training in confidence building, presentation skills, public speaking and interviewing skills. Another important thing was to have enough time to prepare. We needed to be well prepared before going out to ask the questions. And we spent a lot of time putting the questions together. To carry out the interviews, we learnt how to make each other feel relaxed. People didn't want us to probe into their lives. We said to them, "Just answer how you want to answer". We felt confident to adapt the questions and we felt prepared that people don't want to answer certain ones. To help us feel comfortable within the project, we had support from volunteers who were also working on it. If we had problems, we could phone up, for practical stuff like needing more tapes, or by giving encouragement or advice. What made it easier to cope was that we already knew the people at ATD Fourth World, as all of the peer researchers had been part of previous projects. As well as coming up with recommendations to improve the lives of people living in poverty in London, the peer researchers also gained personally from being part of the project. It gave us the confidence to go out and speak to people we don't know, for example people in authority we have to deal with, in social services, the Job centre, or the housing department. As a result some participants have started college courses, found work or gone on work experience placements, or are volunteering in their community.

Matt Davies: So, just to sum up for you then, "Voices for Change" was able to successfully enable people living in poverty to fully participate as peer researchers because of the conditions that were put in place. The time was taken to fully prepare with the researchers and also to offer them formal training. Support was also available to them. As a result of that, not only did the project come up with useful and well informed policy recommendations, which are in the report, but the project also generated positive outcomes for the peer researchers themselves. Thank you very much.

Gemma Adaba: Thank you very much Matt and Patricia. I think this is really inspiring to hear about people living in poverty being agents of change and engaging in the process, where they are able to gain confidence and make actual policy recommendations. Now we need to follow this

project to see how it evolves and to ensure that policymakers listen to the recommendations and be involved and apply the recommendations. We'd like to hear the follow up on this. We've had quite a rich range of introductions, from broad policy recommendations and challenges and then the issues of people actually on the ground, looking at their rights and entitlements and how they enact change. So let's open this up. I know that the Ambassador talked about the need for funding, government effectiveness, and redistribution, and these are all under the issue of funding for development. So I think this might be an appropriate time to ask Manuel Montes to shed some light on what you're doing in terms of financing poverty eradication.

Manuel Montes: Thank you. Well, first we should put this in some context. We've just come from a period of high growth, but the incidence of poverty didn't change at all. And now we're facing this economic crisis, of stagnant or even negative growth, showing that the previous pattern of growth was not sustainable. The poor people of the world were funding the consumption of the rich countries, and that is not sustainable. There is something wrong with this. The financing for development has provided a commitment between developing and developed countries to address and change this pattern. One of the commitments out of the Monterey consensus was that official aid should no longer be given on the basis of geopolitical considerations. That it should be given on the basis of shared responsibility to address poverty. It used to be based on the cold war, the competition between the east and the west. But now it's time to provide aid on the base on eradicating poverty. Unfortunately, this was not what happened during the period of high growth, and the issue now is what should happen to growth in the current climate. We know that the commitments in Monterey are stated as percentage of Gross National Income, but most governments still cut this first. Let me give an argument of why official government assistance should not be based on percentage of GDP. Since the crisis began, it has been the developing countries in the world that have still been maintaining the rate of growth. The recession has been in Europe. And stock markets have gone down here. One of the ways you can ensure that the boomerang effect doesn't occur, which is that a decrease in growth in developing countries will result in a decrease in developed countries as well, is to ensure that development assistance, as a proportion of aid, remains as a commitment of these countries. It is one of the ways to ensure that the boomerang effect is not a factor for developed countries.

Gemma Adaba: This is pretty much an open discussion now, but I do want to call Mr. Delacroix from the French Mission, since the French have played such an important part in the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty as one of the official sponsors of the day at the UN.

Philippe Delacroix: Thank you. I am very happy to be able to participate in the commemoration of the International Day and I would like to thank ATD Fourth World and DESA. The 17th of October is a day when everyone renews their commitment to eradicate poverty. This is a commitment by France, but also the other 26 members in the European Union and I'd also like to say how important the participation of those living in poverty is. I'd also like to say I'm happy to have heard these presentations this afternoon. It was good that there were people from Tonga and Kenya and Peru, but also the United Kingdom, to remind us that poverty is not only a problem for the developing countries but also for those considered to be the most privileged. I also think it is important that we are meeting at the same time as the Second Committee on food security, because this is a time when there are growing clouds in the international community with many challenges; the food crisis, energy crisis, financial crisis, and the threat of climate change. These lead to an accumulation of vulnerabilities which are felt most by the poorest who are the least responsible for these crises. France has always insisted on given priority to the eradication of poverty in the United Nations, whether in the domain of development, or in the domain of the defense of human rights, the two of which are linked. In the field of development, as we have spoken about financing, members of the European have reconfirmed their commitment to financing for development. Some countries have reached the 0.7% of GDP, but unfortunately not all countries have achieved this. Of all members in the G8, France and the UK contribute the highest percentage of GDP to international aid, but we still haven't reached the target. At the conference in Doha we will have the opportunity to renew our commitment. In the position taking by France and European Union in all of these international conferences there has always been the concern that the poorest be associated with decision making processes, and that the measures taken by the international community benefit the poorest. Concerning food security the European Commission has proposed an addition 1 billion dollars to boost agriculture. One of the priority objectives is to support small farm holders, especially in Africa, to support the base of small producers. In the preparation for Doha we have insisted on micro financing, credit and insurance with allow the poorest to create their own enterprises and come out of poverty.

Regarding the field of human rights we congratulate the appointment of the new independent expert on the question of extreme poverty and human rights, Madame Sepulveda, who spoke on the occasion of the renewal of the mandate last June. I am proud that France took the lead on this resolution. In the resolution the Human Rights Council reminds us of the importance of giving to people living in poverty the means to participate in all the aspects of political, economic and social life. Madame Sepulveda was mandated to study to means by which this participation can be promoted, in which the rights of the poorest are fulfilled. We are very interested for hear her recommendations. I would like to underline the participatory approach that lead to the development of the UN Draft Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, the text of which is currently under consultation. And we should be mindful of guaranteeing the participation of people in poverty in a seminar organized by the High Commissioner that will take place on the Principles in Geneva in early 2009. We should also have this participatory approach in mind here in New York, particularly as we are currently discussing the implantation of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017) in the General Assembly, and the process leading up to the Doha Conference on financing for development. It's true that with the current financial crisis there is a mortgage on the capacity of industrialized countries to maintain their level of development and we need to be cautious that this level does not decline. Also I am thinking of the next, the fourth conference on the PMA (least developed countries), the date of which will be decided soon. I would like to finish by thanking the activists of ATD Fourth World and their Director General. I think they follow the work of their founder, Joseph Wresinski, in a remarkable way, in partnership with a network of international and local NGOs, in industrialized countries as well as in the poorest countries. I am very interested in the document that ATD Fourth World has prepared for this roundtable and a toolkit to allow the effective participation of people in poverty in consultations, conference, seminars and events concerning them. We are interested to see a consolidated version of this guide in 2009. You can count of France and the European Union to continually promote the participation of the poorest and the possibility for them to have their voice heard at the UN and in international conferences. Thank you very much.

Gemma Adaba: Thank you very much. I want to open it up now for a varied dialogue among the participants. I'd like to recognize Nikhil Seth next.

Nikhil Seth: There are three points I'd like to make in my intervention. I want to start by thanking ATD Fourth World for this background document and for coordinating this event. I'd like to talk from my personal experience, both in rural India in my youth and later in Delhi. I grew up in a small town in the 60s in India. My village was a satellite site for surrounding villages, in a poor agricultural area, and when I think about what were the major interventions that have changed things there over the past 50 years, it was water, electricity, and roads. The roads allowed the area to change to sugar cane production and electricity allowed to bring in processors. The needs of people living in poverty are so different, depending on where you are from, and we have so many choices of implementation. The point really is that the poor need to have a say, as the areas are completely different. Also, in terms of the quantity of aid, the discussion on aid quality is equally important and the poor's presence in discussions on aid quality. Secondly, my experiences in Delhi reflect the innovative nature of implementation in urban areas. For example, public institutions, schools in Delhi, open their doors to the poor after they are done with business. So the poor can sleep there. So, the schools close at 5 and the poor are welcome to come and rest there at 6. There are many active rights-based approaches and innovative approaches to help, but the thing to do therefore is not to come up with generic solutions, which is common in general forums like the UN, but to develop innovative solutions that work in the community. Finally, I want to talk on the issue of quality of aid. I am a director in ECOSOC, the Economic and Social Council, and we want these voices to come up from the ground level to inform us. We all know that the whole issue of aid has been that it was given under political and procurement conditionalities, and its only the executive parts of government that control aspects of aid and we need to move away from that. Representatives need to have more say, in both recipient and giving countries. These institutions aren't involved in evaluation or deciding about aid. So if you really care about aid influencing who it should, then they need to have a say in how it's done and give feedback. How do we involve the poor, so their voices are heard in policy discussion at the government level and at the UN? That's what we're trying to do. When we look at the Millennium Development Goals, we want in the national processes all of these people to be clearly involved. So sensible policy making is enriched by their voices coming up to the policy level. Thank you.

Magdalena Sepulveda: I'd like to speak to the importance of this report. I think often participation

is highlighted, but the poor aren't actually given a meaningful role. Frequently also the process is hijacked by some local elites, and marginalized groups like minorities and women are excluded, those marginalized even within the group of poor. And discrimination and marginalization prevent their participation, and so we need to work against this discrimination as well. So when we're talking about people living in poverty need a voice in design, implementation, and evaluation, we're not saying that they need to take part in all the technical aspects and policy formulation. But rather that they need to take part in designing benchmarks and objectives to be used for design. So when the policymakers are reviewing options, the implications for various groups can be transparent and presented in a clear manner so those living in poverty can understand their options and be heard. I also want to comment on what Mr. Montes said in terms of the official development assistance. It is quite crucial what he said, and if we look at the numbers from 2006, there was a fall by 4.5%, the first fall since 1997. I'd like to make a comparison. In the same year, military expenditure increased by 6%. This is a 45% since 1998. So now we're facing a food, economic, and financial crisis, it is crucial that money going to reduce poverty is not taken away. We need to raise our goals and encourage governments not to cut money going to poverty reduction when times are tough. Thank you.

Sylvia Borren: Thank you very much and congratulations to ATD Fourth World for organizing this. I want to go a little further than some of the speakers I have heard up until now. It seems there is a long term worldwide consensus that poverty is bad and that we want to end it, and there are many examples of how we have the money. There's the example of the guns and the example of the recent Wall Street bailout. For me it is so cynical that we were begging in Rome for the food crisis and got 8 billion, and now there are 3 trillion available for the top of the pyramid. I'd say go dollar for dollar at the top and at the bottom and then we'd have the Millennium Goals met and so much more. There are so many examples of how to do serious participatory aid, and while there is corruption and problems, this conversation shows how there are innovative ways to change. I do not have a doubt that we know how to change the situation, we have the agreements, and we have the money. So what is going wrong? I think we must not have the serious will, and I think it's a matter of power relationships. I have one I'd like to mention, which is the gender power analysis. Still in many reports I don't see enough gender analysis, of water and food and environmental situations, and women's involvement. There are also many incoherence and contradictions within

governments. There are many governments, including my own, Holland, and, France, where we have the good words but still unfair trade and dumping of agricultural subsidies. Yes, I'm sorry. We haven't solved these situations. The European Commission is standing listless on education and health, and if we know one thing we know that we need education and health. And the education of girls is one of the best ways to achieve what we want. So, somehow, we have to get rid of the incoherence both within our governments and within the corporate sector. And we the people also need to stand up, as the stand up event tries to get 1% of the world's population to stand up against poverty. But with the stand up event, we are having major problems breaking through to the mainstream media; the mainstream media is still not interested. It's amazing, all these people taking the situation into their own hands and still the message is not getting out. I think my most important point is, each of us should take seriously the pledge of the standup and change the power of the relationships where we see them in terms of gender, coherence of our lives, our consumptive lives in terms of stopping negative competition that's happening in this building as well, at the UN between silos of policy (which are actually causing frustration about what is needed in poverty). We have the means to do it, the words and the agreements and somehow we're not finding the serious commitment and will to do it. And this is my plea to all of you - the child that dies, dies today. When the banks are failing somehow so much money can be found in matter of weeks, but when the children are dying it cannot be found. I find it to be the biggest ethical problem we face in the world today. Thank you.

Gemma Adaba: The next person is Mr. Abdul Alim from the Mission of Bangladesh.

Abdul Alim: Thank you madam and thanks also to ATD Fourth World for all the excellent papers that they have presented before us. Just to make a few points...the first point is the discourses on poverty will remain incomplete without looking at the basic statistics and where we stand in terms of poverty alleviation globally. A recent World Bank study has found that the level of poverty was significantly undercounted. In 2005, the understanding was that globally we had 940 million people living in poverty but now it is actually understood that it is 1.4 billion people which is five hundred million more than what was actually estimated. What has been added from 2005 are new emerging challenges like the food crisis, climate change, and energy crisis and of course the financial crisis. So if we factor into all these new and emerging challenges and their consequences and we take into account that the World Bank figures are steady, then we realize where we stand in terms of

alleviating poverty and it actually underlines the necessity of action at the global level. The second point that I'd like to raise is the success story that Bangladesh has to tell; I think we have a good story to tell. In 1990's, the poverty level was 60%, now I think in 2005 we have reduced it to 40%. What was the success story? What were the reasons behind this success story? I think our success story had basically 3 phases. First, one of the very successful government policies that was very participatory, was developed comprehensively by involving all the relevant stakeholders and creating a good partnership with the private sector, the civil societies, and the NGOs. There are around 20,000 NGOs that have been working in Bangladesh that are working in close partnerships with the government and the government is using this network to provide their different programs and services. The second phase of our success story is micro credit and non-formal education. These are some homegrown ideas that Bangladesh can take and develop. There are around 10 million beneficiaries of these micro credit programs and it has significantly transformed our society. The third one is a partnership with the trade sector that has significantly contributed to poverty alleviation, particularly among poor women. So these are the 3 phases that are contributing to our success stories. But now what are the constraints that we are facing? These are basically due to our domestic efforts. The partnerships that have time and again been committed from the development partners are not been implemented. Let's look at the Overseas Direct Assistance - we are not getting significant amount of support from the partners. This stands somewhere around 1.2 to 1.5 billion for around 150 million people so you can imagine how much we're getting from our partners. And it terms of trade although the Monterrey commitment was to provide full duty free and quota free market access, I think few countries have given us duty free and quota free access and the larger markets have yet to give us duty free and quota free market access. This also applies to other tools for financing for development like foreign debt investment, like debt relief. We're good performers so we're not eligible for Debt Relief Under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (*HIPIC*) Initiative and MDRA Initiatives, so they are penalizing the good performers.

Another thing I wanted to highlight is the asymmetry and imbalances at the global system. For a long time, we have been talking, the developing countries have been asking to correct these imbalances, but it was hard to do so. Now that there is this financial crisis, the developed countries are now talking about how to revitalize the financial architecture. The system has very tactfully created in such a way that capital is now being moved from developing to developed countries. It is

now more than 700 billion dollars – I think it's around 760 to 770 billion dollars at the end of 2007. There are huge gaps of capacity in developing countries so I think we need to look at how to reformulate the international financial architecture so that these imbalances could be addressed and I feel that the current financial crisis will help the international community to make that correction. For the final point, I would like to quote a Professor Yunus who actually had a dream to convert poverty into a museum. We actually dream in this same way to turn poverty into history, but for that to occur we need a stronger partnership. Although there has been a commitment as I have mentioned earlier it has not been implemented and I will conclude with Sylvia. I think what is lacking significantly is the political will - the good will from the policymakers and also the significant lack of awareness among the taxpayers in the developed countries. I think that the media and the international community as a whole can contribute and play a great role in terms of awareness building among the taxpayers of the developed countries and the political decision makers because I believe that this kind of discussions in the broader form will bring us to a solution. Thank you.

Quentin Wodon: In a way, what we have here is an example of the difficulty of true participation because we have had a few examples of life stories and testimonies and have had discussions on many, many different aspects but not real dialogue actually. And I think the first thing we have to do, is to realize that even though we might call for participation, all organizations do that, we are actually very far from that and how difficult it actually is. We talk, for example, about the need for participation to inform policy choices. This is extremely difficult. We know it through our work, governments know it when we are preparing poverty reduction strategies, and some of them do a very good job at doing consultations, but they do not actually inform policy choice. One of the reasons why is because of consultation types. Participation actually achieves two things. It achieves a better awareness of the plight of the very poor, which is very important. It can also help to strengthen the very poor in their communities and that's also very important to give them a better voice, but it doesn't achieve actual choices or real information about the trade-ups that are involved in policy and in a way I think we are kidding ourselves in calling for participation for informing policy. That's the ultimate goal, but I think, more realistically, what we're going to achieve from participation is perhaps 2 or 3 things. The first one is that we can understand better what the real life impact of a policy is. Now what I mean by that, let me give you an example, when we're doing lots

of work at the UN, at the World Bank where I am, on the impact of the food crisis on poverty, and we can put numbers on that and the numbers are dramatic, but the numbers will never tell you what actually happens in the life of a very poor person. And Eugen Brand from the International Movement ATD Fourth World, explained that very clearly that somebody has to go buy a ¼ of an onion instead of an onion, or that people have to cut completely their healthcare spending. So the first point of participation is to better understand the consequences of the policies that governments and international organizations make. The second point is as important, and it is to understand the potential unintended consequences of policies. What I have in mind is, programs that were designed to do something good, but then in the end, had many negative impacts. And actually talking to the very poor can help us achieve that to be at least aware of what might go wrong.

The third thing is re-strengthening participants and communities that will actually help us decide at the cultural level, at the UN level, or at the World Bank level, on what kind of policies to implement. That is the goal but the work that we have to do is just tremendous. And the last point that I wanted to make is that this meeting is supposed to be about how do we actually achieve true participation, right, and to me there are many, many different ways of achieving participation, the fact that we may have some people living in poverty participating in meetings like this is very good, but that is just one way. The fact that there is true qualitative research, true participatory research done on the impact of policies on countries, that is another way. The fact that we systematically try to catch the subjective perceptions of people which are very important is another way. And so far I think what we have to get down to is what are the concrete means that we can actually develop, at the World Bank for me, at the UN for others, in different countries, so that step by step we get these building blocks so that otherwise we have cross-purposes with very different levels of understanding, a dialogue but not true interaction. But just to conclude, I think that we can call for participation, but to achieve real participation, is a very, very hard job and we are far from it and we have to realize that before we go ahead and try to improve it.

Ingrid Srinath: I have to say, I felt a very strong resonance to what Sylvia was saying. Perhaps I'm a very impatient person and as much as I find the very stories, the testimonies, the examples, the case studies, the personal experiences heartwarming and sometimes heart wrenching, definitely inspirational. I'm also really, really tired of yet another meeting where we have yet another set of

testimonies from yet another set of people, from yet another set of suggested changes; in fact these changes for the worse. We have less development assistance than we had 5 years ago. We have more people living in poverty than we had 5 years ago. We have 3 trillion dollars found for a bailout when we couldn't find less than a percent of that for the Millennium Development Goals. To me fundamentally, what seems to be happening at every level is policy making there is not the genuine belief that poor people, marginalized people, women, children, the disabled, etc. not only can participate, but must participate. That it is a right, that it is an entitlement, not a privilege. Right here, starting here at the UN, where participation by civil society is a privilege. Last week at the World Bank participation by civil society was by invitation only and that is very much a privilege and not a right. If we're not going to believe that what Nikil calls basic rights approach from the grassroots level all the way up to this building right here, then this is not going to change. And while we can talk to policy makers, we can talk to national governments, we can talk to international institutions, my real plea is it civil society. I think we need to get it clear in our own heads that one, the only way that communities and individuals are going to be able to get their rights is if they're first aware of what their rights are and that in our zeal to solve the immediate problem to get the starving child fed, to get the homeless person shelter, to get the vaccines out there to get the schools built that we need to put at least some of our effort, some of our resources into human rights education. That's one.

The second is, while we're doing our various programmatic stuff which is all critical, it's all urgent stuff, we also need to spend just a little time and attention on defending the rights of civil society itself. In CIVICUS' work for example, in 2007 alone, we tracked 87 countries that passed legislation that narrowed the rights of civil society. The UK just had a narrow escape when the House of Lords defeated extending detention, but 87 other countries did not have that narrow escape. Progressively, thanks to the War on Terror and now because of these new crises, we're seeing the space of civil society getting further and further constrained. If as a group we're not going to put some attention into that aspect of it things are only going to get worse. And finally, we know what works, its here. There's nothing you've heard today that you haven't heard before. If we're going to get this right, we're going to have to get out of our narrow little boxes, whether the boxes are thematic issues, or geographies, or race or gender and start to collaborate more fruitfully. Collaborate within civil society first perhaps and then maybe collaborate across the sectors as well.

And demand our rights to be in these forums and demand our rights to be in the policy making forums that every stage. So to me, this is my plea. Can we focus just a little, less than 1% is what it's going to take time attention resources as governments, international institutions, as regional institutions, and as civil society on the rights and health and welfare of civil society itself? It's a right to have participation, not a privilege. Thank you.

Gemma Adaba: Thank you very much. We've had quite a very rich discussion and as far as I know, we have some very faithful ATD Fourth World scribes that are capturing all of this. That is my understanding and my hope because it has been rich and because our objective is also to bring into the work of building a toolkit for participation and for best practice. So that will be very helpful so I won't have to try to summarize all that I just heard. But I want to say that there are some points that we really have to reflect on and think about. And let me just sort of highlight a few that struck me. The whole idea of what participation actually is and is it effective and how do we actually define effective participation. We all want participation, we think its very important, we think it's a key to turning things around in terms of poverty eradication in terms of voices of people actually living in poverty to actually be heard but how does this actually work in practice. Does it lead to meaningful changes in policy? That is something that one needs to think about. One of the things I've heard, and I'm thinking about madam Sepulveda's claim that in fact the participation can often times be very formalistic. It's a formality to say that we have consulted, but there is no real mechanism to feed it into discussion and this is not real in a sense. I think this is what Ingrid is saying, that it is a right to participation and getting this participation to result in changes to inform policy, but there is something that is lacking. And so we know that's important and as Sylvia is saying, while we know this, we have the knowledge, we have the commitments, we have the words, we have the best practice, we have the money, but it's not happening, why is it not happening, and she says the power relationships.

Now I would also add, that it is the greed and it is linked to the power relationships, because those who are holding onto the power, through political and economic power, won't let it go. So they won't have systems that are distributive in terms of goods, we know that we need public goods like education and health and infrastructures that will, as Nikil said, make such a big difference in village settings and in improving incomes and we know that we need these things and these are

public goods. But those who are in control of the goods, make them private goods. They are not public goods and there are no real commitments on the part of those who have the power to share the resources and to make them public for everybody. They are captured. So as madam Sepulveda was saying the capturing of information, the capturing of space, the capturing of political and policy space, and the use of that for small groups of people and not for the wider public good. It seems to me on that policy making level, that is something that is critical, that we have to deal with and then you constrict the place for civil societies and it's not surprising that it becomes very difficult to make improvements in terms of poverty eradication. It seems to me that we need the mobilization of people, we need these movements of people -people living in poverty, people who want change - to find ways to shift and gain a consciousness in terms of the public good. And that brings us, I'm sorry Manuel Montes left now, to this other issue of policy coherence because policy coherence needs to be centered around the concept of shared humanity and public goods. You need a very good regulatory framework that is transparent so that people don't just keep capturing all the wealth, money, and resources, but you have ways of sharing information so it's there. As Sylvia says, it's out there, but it is captured and it is concentrated. Making the decisions, deciding where to put the money and when and what sort of crisis needs \$700 billion and what sort of crisis needs \$8 billion - they make those decisions, we don't get to make those decisions even if we sit in policy forums and talk about how terrible experience of living in poverty is. So there are critical things in these power relationships and how we get to make the decisions in the public interest and in the interest of people living in poverty. I'm just leaving you with those thoughts and we'll break for 15 minutes and we'll come back at 4:50. Thank you.

Gemma Adaba: Okay, our format for this part is to have one presentation and then we go into, then we continue the interactive dialogue. And for the interactive dialogue, I have quite the list of speakers, so I would ask you all to be a little bit disciplined. Get the points in, get the interactive dialogue. We're really going along quite well, quite smoothly, as it has been going up until now. So I would like to ask about Jacques Petidor to give us some idea about Haiti, and what's happening there in Haiti. We're really quite concerned about a number of things, so please, let's hear from Jacques.

Jacques Petidor (translated from French):

The participation of the poorest, a reality. *‘Poverty is having the same dreams as everyone else but having no means to achieve them; it’s to be treated as less than nothing and having to accept it. Only the poorest know injustice, all the negation of human rights, all suffering from extreme poverty. Only they know what must change in the hearts and minds in the structures and functioning of our democracies, their message is not marginal but essential ... prophetic.’* Joseph Wrésinski.

The participation of the poorest means that they are present in the front line in the daily struggle for dignity and justice, and in a type of relationship based on partnership. Within the concept of partnership we find a whole process creating a framework of trust between people of significantly different social, economic and intellectual origins. What ATD Fourth World calls the merging of knowledge is in fact learning based on an exchange, and partnership between interlocutors on both sides – those that have and those that don’t have a certain knowledge.

For three years we have had the experience of preparing a foundation of the Movement in Haiti. This experience did not leave me the slightest trace of doubt of the ability of the poorest to be agents of their own destiny. The direct witnesses of extreme poverty themselves bear the entire philosophy of the ATD Fourth World Movement, they remain the main source of inspiration for the struggle of Father Joseph Wresinski, who is an important reference to the subject in question today. "This is a relationship of equals regardless of social background, a relationship of sincerity and a search for understanding. The poorest have experienced relations of humiliation, rejection or exploitation, and instantly feel when this relationship is different."

The contribution from the participation of excluded people influences the thinking and action in the Movement. The Call to Action "Ending Extreme Poverty, a Road to Peace" which came out of a seminar in Montreal in 2006 and was signed by a multitude of people around the world, is the perfect illustration of the realization of the ideas of the poorest people at the highest level. The content of the call is a reflection of the reality of families in extreme poverty. Today serious progress has been made in research on partnership with the poorest and their participation begins to exceed the ATD Fourth World Movement. The presence of academics and other sectors like the media has been very profitable in giving greater exposure given to the thinking of the poorest. By

its regularity, October 17 becomes the best place to measure progress, a strong moment for self-assessment and to tell society what it means to live in extreme poverty.

To pretend to change the world without the inclusion of these millions of men and women who are the first to suffer the consequences of human rights violations is an illusion. The patience, modesty and solid trust that we have to learn from the poorest are values that we need to cultivate before we can reach real partnership. Being together, working and learning together, is the setting which builds and develops this partnership. Each October 17, the poorest and those who are in solidarity with them bear witness to poverty and exclusion in our shantytowns in Haiti and throughout the world, and speak of the path of commitment they follow to transform their world. Thus, there is pedagogy of participation which can be summarized in a few words "learn and act together." The participation of the poorest is not wishful thinking; it is being consolidated every day, because it appears increasingly manageable when seen as an ethical obligation to safeguard peace at the heart of our human family.

Gemma Adaba: Thank you Jacques for that passionate intervention. And for reminding us how to learn together and to be totally committed to poverty eradication, to bringing ourselves out of poverty, bringing people out of poverty.

Sujita Kallapurakkathu: My brief sharing today comes from over 20 years of living with, experience with, sharing the lives of the most impoverished women in North India – Bihar. Over 33% of them are illiterate, and the abysmal sex ratio is 919 women to 1000 men shows where they are. I will in brief explain the methodology we have used in working with women. I chose to talk about women because no empowerment of civil society is possible when 50% of that civil society is silent, voiceless, and absolutely cut off from the mainstream of life. I believe that if you empower them and educate them, then society will change. I do believe I speak from my own experience; I went there as a young sister, very well trained, and ready to revolutionize and change the world. In no time I realized, just close your mouth, open your ears and listen to the people because you have no clue what poverty is. So what I learned from the people is to listen with respect and learn from them what their definition of poverty is – it's not yours and mine. It is not necessarily only food they are looking for, water they are looking for. The number one poverty I experienced among them

and through what they expressed to me, is lack of human dignity - we want to be considered human beings – and I think that is the key. Our group made a list of words that came from these women and the basic one was equality- treat us like human beings, we are human beings. The words we collected from these women, which later we could use as teaching, learning materials for women, were developed into textbooks to educate women. Gender inequality, denial of opportunities, having no control over their body, their labor, and having absolutely zero title to anything in life, including their own bodies - I don't know what more extreme poverty we can have in this world. This total exclusion and continuous insecurity from all sides makes them among the poorest of the poor in the world. So when you talk about participatory approach I think it begins with getting into the trash, the dirt, the filth of poverty for at least some time, to understand how it smells, how it feels, how you are touched by it, so that when we listen we are not listening with our theoretical knowledge, but from power within to transform. So I think the first step towards participation is to get into their shoes a little more than what we are doing. We cannot participate with people who are unequals, those who are strangers. Our effort is to first establish relationships with people and come to that 'we' feeling because every person who enters a village often enters with a desire to exploit, whether it is for knowledge, for work, for writing your thesis, for whatever – in order to establish credibility or partnership. It is not 'I have this project from World Bank, from UNICEF, or from the government of India, Bihar, so now *I* will get *them* to participate and to do what *I* want'. This is not participation. When that 'we' feeling comes, the women begin to identify issues. Let them identify what hurts them, where it hurts them and begin from there; they have the wisdom, they have the knowledge within them, they are illiterate but they are not stupid. So how do you exploit their wisdom, their indomitable courage to keep living to survive? They are survivors and I think I was absolutely educated by them. So this is where we must begin - they begin to define what poverty, and what aspect of poverty we need to deal with. The second step is that we should create collectives of common experiences that say 'we are poor'; 'I am poor' has no power, but when you say 'we are poor', then that collectivity of women who are poor, begins to reflect on their own situation and then asks 'why are we poor?' Not one woman alone can do this; there is no single person in this. There begins the participatory approach, going to the roots of poverty together. It really is amazing how much they know about why they are poor. I have beautiful stories of women coming together to create a new awareness of poverty and then searching for the root causes of it themselves – this is a participatory process. You are there to help only if there is a need, otherwise

you simply there to listen. Poverty is not individual, it is structural, and we help to analyze with them the socioeconomic political structural aspect of poverty. For example, we have placed more than 33,000 women in thrift and credit groups and they have been doing very well, however, I believe the real radical change will not come when structural solutions are found, as poverty is a structural problem and we need to build structures of inclusion that will lead to systemic change. Women need to be empowered not to serve the existing economic and political systems, rather to challenge it. Empowerment is a dynamic process, because it aims to change present power relationships. We often ask the women what kind of power are you looking for - more of the same? The only thing is the exploiters will be different. So we have often worked with this aspect of changing the definitions so that they begin a new way of exercising power and authority in changing. We have injected into the system even things like teaching women karate when their stomachs are empty because even if they are hungry they can still do karate. This is important because self-confidence and that belief that I am human being must prevail, not fear. So to do this, we have many activities that help them develop their self-confidence. I have more points but for the time being I shall wind up. Poverty is being insecure, but how do you bring them to security? Not in a few months, not in a few years, but over a generation. Structural transformation takes time and one day their children will be more secure than they are. I have fear of short-term solutions because the cycle of poverty will not change. So education that empowers people – the education of women and children, especially the girl-children, is the key to poverty eradication and we have been working with more than 80,000 women and we have seen that it works. Women and empowerment works. So I believe that women will be the key players in poverty eradication. Thank you.

Gemma Adaba: That was very very inspiring. So next on my list is Elsa.

Elsa Stamatopoulou: Thank you very much Chair. It is for me a very moving moment to hear these messages of hope from around the table, and also messages of healthy impatience combined. It's a very good thing. I want to say how much I want to recognize the historic contribution of ATD Fourth World in bringing forward their advocacy the issue of extreme poverty as a human rights issue. I was working with The Office of the High Commissioner when ATD commemorated for the first time this day. We did that together – the Office of the High Commissioner and ATD. So from the beginning when talking about human rights, it was ATD that had this vision to bring to share.

And madam Chairman, as I told you during the break, I am very inspired by the word you used in your opening, the word well-being. The concept of well-being is comparable to the concept of development, especially as I wear two hats as Chief of the Secretary to the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The concept actually of well-being goes in my mind, to the heart of participation, because what makes people happy, what makes a person or a community happy, is up to the person or the community to define. This is often what we call self-determined development and I think the Sister was talking very much about this just a moment ago. I would like to say that in department, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; in particular the Division for Social Policy and Development is very much devoted to the issue of participation. I will not hide from you the fact that often times, even within the UN it is hard for us, who are the guarantors, so to speak, of the social agenda, to make others understand that the very point of doing a project is participation. It's not actually to provide food, it's participation that is the outcome, and it is difficult for us to make it understood, even amongst our UN colleagues, so I would just like to mention that. So what we have done is to prepare some case material, all of us have done case studies, and one of the things we did last year was to issue a volume on Participatory Dialogue to Ensure a Safe, Stable and Just Society for All. Also, in August, we published a Resource Kit on Indigenous Persons Issues, which mentions and advocates for participatory development processes for indigenous people based on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. The other thing I want to tell you is - because I just came back from Siberia on Monday, and I am a little bit dizzy - there was a meeting there, an international conference about participation, so that is what people were talking about there. And so in our work, we monitor participation. So what I would like to throw out is that this is part of this effort that we are all doing. How can we monitor participation? For example, we have been doing the monitoring for the MDG country reports prepared by the governments themselves every year on where are we on the MDGs. And we monitor to see to what extent, for example, in particular cases of one of our offices, that indigenous communities are involved. We also monitor how the UN system does that. And you know we have seen the participation gap. I mean not in all cases, there are some good cases which we will bring out through this and we are very happy because governments look at these reports that we publish every year and they actually like that somebody is watching, is studying their reports, their MDG country reports. We try to see, did you mention the issues, and ok, if you didn't mention the issues, let's look at this. Did you involve the people by any chance? So I wanted to share this experience as well. So in other words, what I want to say is that

nothing is new about the concept of participation you can find it in the fundamentals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I would like to share just 5 thoughts with you. The first thing is, a thing that other people around the table have been said, is that we need to capacitate people for participation, so first providing education, basic education, securing basic needs, in order to create the basic enabling environment for participation. The second point is I would like to bring in culture, because participation is also about dialogue with the state and its institutions and the broader society of the disadvantaged group. And so this means that the state and its institutions need to be culturally sensitive to the communities that are disadvantaged because the approaches we take to poverty eradication have to also be culturally sensitive. As the ambassador of Tonga mentioned through development efforts we should not undermine the fabric of our communities. The third point to make is of course, to promote participation we can use Amartya Sen's concept of development of the capacity of individuals to realize their full potential which also, as I called before, self-determined development. And the fourth point is, as Ms. Sepulveda said very eloquently, poverty should also be regarded in the human rights context as a state of exclusion and discrimination, and for this reason we have to say that the answer in terms of inclusion has to be reflected in laws, policies, and budgets. Also inclusion means capacity building, because I must say, in various parts of the world where I have been talking about this issue, you often see its not just lack of political will and greed - it is also that, but it's also lack of capacity on the part of public administrators and of the communities concerned to build the dialogue on that. And the fifth point to make is that participation is also important for building a society for all, as we call it, in the social agenda. People have human rights and responsibilities and we often regard people living in poverty and those whose rights go unfulfilled as those who are mere beneficiaries of development efforts and we forget that they also want to carry responsibilities in society. And as I make this point, I think that's where the point of asking a civil society which is in solidarity and has an understanding of the most disadvantaged is crucial. And I will finish my points by appealing for efforts to monitor participation in policy making. Thank you.

Danila Boneva: Thank you very much chair. My name is Danila Boneva, I'm from the Office of the High Commission on Human Rights and I would like to make one point and that is to link the fundamental principles of accountability and transparency with the fundamental principles of participation. This is mainly to answer the concerns about the meaningfulness or the defectiveness

of participation. We will not have an effective meaningful participation, unless we ensure that decision-makers in governments, in international organizations, whether in the UN or in the international financial institutions, are actually accountable for the policies that they design, implement, monitor or evaluate. We all know that participation is a basic principle in development programming and if you open the manuals of any of these institutions you will see that it's one of the fundamental principles of the way we should do business. At the same time, when we go to the field, what we see is a different reality. It's the reality that we don't have the time, or we don't necessarily have the will, or we don't have the capacity to engage with the meaningful participation of the poor and other excluded groups. So therefore one of the most important tools and ways to engage with the poor on a long-term and sustainable basis, is to ensure that decision-makers are actually accountable for the quality of the policies that they are actually developing and implementing. And this will also partially answer your question about power imbalances and changing power relationships between those who have voice and can make decisions and the others who are on the receiving end of the relationship. In terms of the quality of aid and the comments that were made by our colleague from ECOSOC recently at Accra there was renewal of the Paris Declaration and Principles and there is for the first time, a reference to human rights as a way of improving the quality of aid. And those fundamental are key in improving the quality of aid, but I would also like to go back to Elsa's point about the capacity of public administrations. It is also not only a question about corruption, and unwillingness to engage with the poor, it is also a question about having the capacity to do this – to negotiate with the international organizations or with bilateral agencies. When I was actually working in the field and I was wearing a different hat, I was part of a development organization, one of the main concerns when we were talking about administering or planning was the concern that they don't actually have the capacity to sit with their international counterparts and negotiate the assistance which tremendously impacts their own national budgets. As you know in a lot of countries up to 50% of the budgets on a yearly basis are dependant on official development assistance. One of the main concerns that governments had was having the right knowledge and skills in negotiating in the terms, conditions, which we are receiving. And of course, this leads again to the question of the quality of participation of the poor, if the governments themselves cannot have the quality and the voices at the negotiation table, what about those excluded in those societies. Lastly, I would like to point to another level of exclusion, and this is the exclusion of the human rights community from some of the key policy debates that

are happening at the international level, on such important issues as the food crisis and climate change and not just inside the UN but outside the UN as well. And its concern I feel is shared by a lot of the human rights activists and NGOs. When we look for example at the food crisis and the right for food, the food crisis has been here for years and years. We have been talking about over 800 million people being affected by it and now it is more than 900 million people affected by it. Nevertheless, we have all started to awake to this problem during the course of this year when there were experiences of riots and other political difficulties in other countries around the world. So it's really time we question ourselves and really look into the issues and say, why are we only now considering the food insecurity and the food crisis as an international issue with an international agenda as this was not the case before. I would like to conclude with this, although it is a little bit negative thought at the end, but I would like to claim actually for more inclusion of participation of the human rights community itself in the global debates on issues such as climate debates and the food crisis among others of course. Thank you.

Widney Brown: Thank you. My name is Widney Brown and I'm with Amnesty International, and I want to acknowledge that Amnesty International is relatively new to the debate on poverty. We are looking at a campaign on human dignity that looks at how human rights violations drive and deepen poverty. And one of the things we are talking about as a central theme in this campaign would be the issue of participation. The first thing I want to say is I'm hearing a lot about how hard it is to do. And I think it's important to just step back a moment and not overcomplicate it. In a disabilities rights community, when they were negotiating The Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities they had a simple slogan, "Nothing about it, without us". Now if the us excludes, as opposed to includes, it's a problem, but in the end we need to keep our eyes on the principle that nobody should be making decisions about people living in poverty if they are not at the table fully engaged. And this comes to the point that I want to make that I have not heard today, which is being fully engaged and armed with the information they need to be able to have a meaningful ability to participate in the conversation. It's not enough to have a seat at the table; you need to have the information so you're not having that dialogue with your government, with development agencies, with international financial institutions where you're working from an information deficit. And the right to information is a right that is immediately demandable and it's how you hold actors accountable for what they're doing. So you can look at it from the point of view of when you

actually have an impoverished government that feels like structural adjustment policies are being forced on it that does not actually allow it to protect the rights of its own people. If that information is apparent, then it can actually be challenged. By the same token, if you have a corrupt government that is negotiating concessions with an extractive cooperation that is going to lead to devastating consequences for the people, where the extraction is going to take place and there is no attempt by that government to ensure that they benefit from the profits and are protected from the devastating impact, then that information needs to be out there. And this goes for information that is accessible in a timely manner and is not merely printed, because for instance, if you are working with people who are illiterate then it won't be there. But it does mean that we need a civil society that demands accountability from governments and other actors about information. A general demand is for accountability and media independence. Going back to Amartya Sen, one of the first things he said that really captures what human rights has to say is, when you have a free media then a government cannot allow a famine. There can be a food shortage but if you have the information a government needs to find a way to feed its people. Well we need the same sort of model on information that there is no excuse for the governments and other actors not to be responsive, but if you don't have the information you can't make the argument. And the last thing I want to say, is being a law-based human rights organization, we talk a lot about justice and accountability and one victory that we can claim in which civil society did play a role is that in this General Assembly there will the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Covenant on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which is one more way in which we can demand accountability from states and other actors. Thank you.

Eugen Brand (Translated from French): We have mentioned the ATD Fourth World Movement several times but I just wanted to say that we wouldn't be here together if it weren't for the large commitment of many organizations, NGOs and also people here from the UN and government representatives. I just wanted to say that. I am always struck when very poor families come out of such meetings, they don't say to us 'we were well listened to'. Neither do they say, 'for once we were able to tell them what we think'. I am always struck by seeing the responsibility of men, women and children who suffer so much, who suffer so much from violence, and their concern to evaluate these types of encounters in terms of 'have we really reflected on this together'. When we speak of participation, one of the first possible responsibilities that we have, with our partners, is to be precise about what participation consists of. From the point of view of people in extreme

poverty, it's not just a question of consultation, or being right or wrong, or to have a voice which commands, but rather to think together, and to merge our knowledge, from one to another, and to say that *we* are people that have know-how. At this level I would like to make two comments. The first is that we are disappointed about how many initiatives exist already today around the world in this field that aren't really known – and from which we do not draw ideas for what we can do, or methodologies and pedagogies of action, to learn together and share between people in poverty and others. The second thing I would like to share is a concern that that we don't dare to say enough how much it is difficult to think together, between people in extreme poverty and other people. And also how we are not prepared for this dialogue. Its certainly not schools which have prepared us for that. Thinking of those who have never been able to go to school, or to those who can't go further, we see that schools may separate us. We have the responsibility to say that we need to make the necessary conditions to be able to think together. This is nevertheless very difficult. Because it's about seeing the nature of one another, what is the link? And to reflect for example with people in poverty and the police – you can well imagine the consciousness needed to understand the nature of the relations which exist between these groups. We can say the same thing at the level of social workers, or at the level of our organizations. And also the need to understand the other person's logic, from his or her point of view. And also to take into account the risk that each person takes. People in poverty are taking a risk when they enter into a dialogue with us. But those who have public responsibilities also take a risk because the world doesn't really expect this dialogue, because we already know so much about what needs to be done, and also the ATD Fourth World Movement has this danger too, to think that it already knows how to react. Where we are present in neighborhoods in the global north and south we are confronted on a daily basis with this difficulty of learning and reflecting together.

When people haven't been able to organize their thoughts, or when they have just a few words in front of people with several hundred words, how can we create the conditions for a real dialogue in which we understand really what the other person puts behind his or her words? What I put in the word human rights is not the same as Mrs. Orlando who I spoke about this morning. Therefore there is a responsibility to say this difficultly because if we fail in this fantastic push for participation, it's the very poor who will pay for the failure. They will be accused of not being capable, and we will repeat to them that they need to educate themselves before we are able to do

something together. When in fact the issue is to educate ourselves together, to rebuild our logic and to rebuild logic together.

We have the responsibility to look within our own countries to find out what public places already exist for reflection between the poor and non-poor. And when I say people in poverty it's in the context also of organizations and associations which have been freely chosen by people in poverty to express themselves, as the UN Draft Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights say. What universities exist which have opened spaces where we no longer do research on the poor, but where people in poverty are active agents, on an equal footing, and can bring their knowledge? What money today is going to create these types of spaces, private or public, where we can learn from one another about how to think together? The last point which is a responsibility which has already been said and gives much hope from the UN and at the level of the High Commissioner and also I different countries is to advance the mechanisms at national and international level that allow us to accompany policies from their conception and at the moment when we, above all, evaluate policies together.

Michael Nyangi: In my opinion, we talk of participation today but the reality is that we are still very far from it. From my own view, we need to be able to identify the right people to work with. If we do not participate with the right people, then very little can be realized. I like talking about facts, and let me say this, when we talk of poverty, it includes many people –there are people who are poor who live below the poverty line and in the middle class. Let me say something about the rampant poverty levels. I feel that instead of giving someone food for decade after decade, the best thing to do is to teach this person how to get food for himself. This is a major problem affecting us and I see it as a critical situation. What I do is run a micro finance project in Kibera and the fact is when I went to the Embassy to get a visa; I had a very, very difficult time because I was coming from a slum area. However, thanks to Amnesty International who worked very hard on my behalf, on the day I went to get my passport, I was given my visa the very same day. Those who are poor are sidelined, and if you can involve them in participation, than change can be realized. Let me tell you one thing, when I was coming here, I was escorted by almost 100 people who escorted me to the airport, more than 100. They were very, very happy that one of them is going to United States,

New York City, something that they never have believed could happen. Let me say this, the some of the NGOs talked about people having money, and that is a reality, but they are using their money the wrong way. When I talk about suffering that is happening in Kenya, I find that most of the big NGOs have offices, but they are very far away. If you are a poor man and you are supposed to go there – you must either hire a taxi or you go using a personal car, which is not possible for those of us who are poor. I feel it is the time that the NGOs and those that are willing, the donors, etc, to start working directly with the Community Based Organization's - that is community-based organizations, which are organizations that are registered by the people in the slums.

For example, I talked about running a microfinance project which was started in 2003. I never got money anywhere, but I was motivated. When we talk of reducing poverty, we should also talk of creativity. The banks that we have globally have very high interest rates, and poor people cannot be given loans because they will not be able to repay them. When you go to bank to ask for the loan, poor people are unable to meet the requirements that are needed for the application process, because they ask to you to give them bank statements and slips, which we do not have. We have many microfinance organizations, but the problem is that sometimes they give money to people and then this money is just getting lost, and when the money is lost then poverty is increased. I think that if you give money to the right people, then this money will keep on growing and poverty will be reduced. Let me talk now about my microfinance business. When we are identifying people to whom we will give the loan, we go through several interviews and steps. For instance, we want to see the place that the person is going to conduct business. Let me give you an example. Recently, there was an organization from the United States that donated \$50. Andrew, from the 10-10 organization, came to Kenya, and gave me the \$50. I then took the money and gave it to a very poor woman in my microfinance project. When Andrew returned to Kenya recently, we went to visit this woman, and I am happy to report that is has made a great deal of progress. So in my own view, if we identify the right people to work with, then poverty can be reduced, and if this cannot be done, then poverty cannot be reduced. So let us team up and work with the people who are very poor. Let us work with them, let us identify these smaller Community Based Organizations that are in the slums. If we work with these people, we can reduce the number of people in poverty, because it is the people living in poverty who understand the most, when it comes to poverty eradication. Thank you.

Gemma Adaba: Thank you very much we are entering into some interesting experiences and discussions, but unfortunately we are running out of time. So I want to appeal to the last group of speakers to try to be very brief I would say 2 minutes each.

Janice Wood-Wexel: Thank you very much, I will be very brief. I'm Janice Wood-Wexel, I'm the main representative for the International Association for the Schools of Social Work and I chair the NGO Commission on Mental Health here at the United Nations. I've heard a lot of very wise things today from a very many articulate people. I especially want to commend those that have mentioned women. I do that because when you're talking about poverty you're largely talking about women. Women are the population at risk. Certainly we don't just single out women; men also suffer as do boys. It is women largely though who are the population at risk. I have two points to make, one has to do with mental health of course, and one has to do with women. When we talk about women, it isn't just a human rights issue, it's a smart issue. If you ignore women, if you don't include women, if you don't have them participate at every level, then social development fails. We have known this since the late 70's, early 80's. If we choose not to recognize the information that's been there for many, many decades, we do so at our own risk. We keep exacerbating poverty when we talk about women in the family or just talk about the family it is a euphemism for women who are holding that family together and the community together. When we talk about small farms in Africa, we're talking about women, aren't we? And when we talk about micro credit, it is women that have been the most successful in that area. We've also learned from the early days of Paulo Freire, who was a Brazilian educator for the poor that you had to include women and you had to include the marginalized and you had to have them participate at every level. This isn't news. I have to agree with what Ingrid had to say earlier – we keep reinventing the wheel. She didn't put it that way, but that's what we do. And we've got to pay attention to those things that we've known for a long time. When we talk at the Committee on Mental Health about mental health, we're talking about well-being, which you mentioned Elsa, which is so very important. I've studied on 5 different continents on successful women's projects that are human rights-based. Every one of them required just as Mohammed Yunus programs required, that you work with the individuals and the small groups first to build confidence first. Certainly Sister Sujita, spoke articulately about that earlier so when we

talk about it at the UN, we're talking about well-being within the context of social and economic conditions largely. Thanks.

Julia Tripp: I've heard a lot of wonderful things. I'm a community advocate for a grass-roots organization for people who have been homeless and there is so much that I want to say, but I couldn't get a word in earlier because the conversation is at such a level that it was very hard for me to contribute. At this point, since we must stop, I want to say this. One, there's a group of people that I feel are constantly marginalized, often overlooked and it is the African Americans in this country. Someone said its not just developing countries that have this problem of exclusion, it's definitely happening in the African American community. And I'm here today, I really want to state that we need to figure out how to have this kind of dialogue. To think things that are happening within that community are a reflection of their abject and absolute exclusion. Today I work not only in research around poverty issues but also what is called a certified peer specialist within the mental health field, to work within a peer-support model, which means we are examples of recovery and how to live well with whatever ails us and especially, in particular mental health. And right now, I'd like to say there's a state of emergency as far as the crisis in the African American community around mental health issues and we're not making way for them to be included at any level that will help to overturn the over-prevalence of them in so many arenas, such as over-prevalence in the jail system, homeless shelters, and people living with HIV/AIDS as well as mental illness. That being said, a lot of the ideas and strategies that people put forth today are so important. It is my belief that not only should we have the experience of people with poverty monitoring policies and practices, but that they should have the last word. It should be a close to the circle, close to the loop and have them approved by us as well as them. How do you take a community or a level of society that has power and disarm the fear that I think that drives them. It's not just the greed. It's the fear that 'what will happen to me'. And I think, 'how do we disarm that?' And that's all I can say.

Tahirih Naylor: Thank you so much. It's really difficult to come at the end of such a rich discussion. I'm going to be speaking on behalf of the NGO Committee on Social Development and I want to say how happy I am to be a part of this important discussion. We see our role at the UN to uphold the standard that was set in Copenhagen to try and emphasize people-centered development and I think that's really what we're talking about today - how to keep people centered in all our

development efforts. It sounds like what we've all been speaking of is a change in paradigm where we in looking at development, try to change our focus from developing the best projects and programs that we can, but to try and create environments where international institutions, and members of civil society provide the resources to build the capabilities of the individuals to develop themselves, to take hold of what they're already doing to survive and create and contribute to the development of their communities. I think that's really the thing that we're most concerned about here. I wanted to emphasize one other point that was made by our dear friend here from Haiti, Jacques about learning. I think we have to see this as a learning process. Some have said, we already know all this and that we're just repeating it, but it seems to me that to really engage in looking at what true participation is we have to be willing to listen and to learn and to have an attitude of learning as we approach the development of these programs and policies. The last thing that I want to say is that we've been talking a lot about the theme of social integration as we're approaching the Commission for Social Development and thinking of how to include and integrate many different types of people. I think that we have to be confident that as we include more people, there are going to be questions about the systems and the systemic issues that underlie the ways that we approach development. We can't just expect that we include people or have participation without needing to transform the systems that we're a part of and to really welcome their voices in that process of transformation. So thank you for allowing me to participate. I think it's been a fantastic discussion.

Steve O'Neil: Thanks to everyone for organizing this very important Round-table. To conclude I would just like to respond to Mr. Wodon's comment earlier this afternoon about how difficult it is to really try to include the people living in poverty in a meaningful way in these dialogues with policy formation. And I just want to point to again, this very important contribution that we have in front of us - this document that I found very enriching and hopeful. I think that one of the ways that participation can occur is if each party does not try to take on this burden themselves. If they understand that true participation will happen in a realistic partnership, and I take to heart Ms. Srinath's comment about civil society, we have to be proactive in trying to help facilitate the ground-based organizing. So I thank Michael again from bringing up CSO's. The importance of CSO's, the community organizing, and the capacity building must be pursued in order to provide

the training for people to have meaningful participation and dialogue. And if that partnership is realized, it is not that difficult. So that's mainly what I wanted to share. Thank you.

Gemma Adaba: Well, thank you very much. We've come to the end of what has been a very rich discussion and I think it's a very good learning experience for all of us. We have to recognize the work of ATD Fourth World in all of this, in putting this together. I think that it's a tribute to you that you've brought such a diverse group together and we've managed to have a rich discussion. We take away a number of lessons and I think one powerful one for me combines Sister Sujita and Eugen. First of all, are we really creating genuine spaces for dialogue between different groups of people – particularly the poor and those who are not so poor? Are we really creating genuine spaces for partnership, dialogue and genuine learning processes? As Sister Sujita said, you can not go with your prejudged ideas or policies and so on, but really go to listen. And I think this brings us to the heart of the matter as Michael said, and that is to be close with the community and in working with community-based organizations so there is a lot that we need to think about. Another area is that we need to link the global with the local or the global policy making and getting that to fit into be very relevant at the local level. So as I said, our great friends at ATD Fourth World will continue the process of refining this toolkit and bringing in a lot of the ideas that we've heard here today. And that something that will be best practice in all of these areas where we hopefully can move forward in terms of finding effective ways and strategies for poverty eradication. So once again, thank you very much. We've had a good discussion and I think that we'll all go away enriched.

