

ANNUAL PARLIAMENTARY HEARING at the UNITED NATIONS

Towards Economic Recovery:

Rethinking Development, Retooling Global Governance

Statement by Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

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President of the General Assembly,
President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I warmly welcome you to this year's Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations.

Your attendance reflects the growing cooperation between parliaments across the world and the United Nations.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union has done a remarkable job in mobilizing parliaments to contribute to the development work of the United Nations, as seen most recently in parliaments' support for the MDG Summit in September.

I know that many of you have been working tirelessly in support of the MDGs through your legislative work. I thank you for your dedication, and I also ask for your continued hard work in coming years so that we can achieve the goals by 2015.

Excellencies,

Today we come together to discuss the options for rethinking development and retooling global governance.

The title of this hearing reflects a growing awareness of the changing international landscape. Business as usual will no longer work.

The world economy is entering uncharted waters. Weaknesses in major developed economies continue to drag the global recovery and pose risks for world economic stability.

With much attention focused on immediate global imbalances, there is little strategizing being done on long-term global economic dynamics and how to harness them for advancing world peace, security and development.

It is a crucial time for governments to communicate their short- and long-term needs to each other – and not stay isolated in their national silos.

You, as parliamentarians, have gained much knowledge and insight from the recent economic crisis. We need your experiences to inform the economic priorities and strategies of the international community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To stimulate this discussion, allow me to share the UN's perspectives on a key issue on today's agenda – that of global economic governance.

The crisis directed attention to global governance mechanisms. We have seen the G20 move onto the centre stage of economic policy coordination.

While the group has helped prevent a worsening situation, it has drawn criticism about its exclusive membership.

The G20 needs to be more consultative and inclusive. Only then can it bring about long-term economic changes that work for and benefit all countries – developed and developing.

We need parliaments to work with the UN in conveying this message of inclusiveness to the G20 governments.

I want to stress that the G20 can and should complement the UN's work. This has started to happen in the development arena. At the Seoul summit the G20 included international development issues in its deliberations for the first time.

We need to see many more G20 discussions on development because goals like poverty eradication, improving child and maternal health and gender equality are intertwined with a stable economic future.

Members of Parliament,

The pathway to a secure, peaceful, inclusive and prosperous world is through sustainable development.

In this regard, I was pleased to note that the theme of sustainable development is on today's agenda.

Although the concept of sustainable development has been with us for some time, there are misconceptions about it.

Sustainable development is not only about the environment. It is an integrated approach that ties together economic, social and environmental goals.

Only sustainable development can eventually help all of the 1.4 billion people who live in abject poverty today.

I know that you are with me on this idea; I don't mean to preach to the converted.

But I want to emphasize that we need your support in creating sustainable development solutions and in implementing them.

You, as parliamentarians, are close to the heartbeat of your governments' development priorities and to your governments' purse strings.

We count on you to guide and educate your colleagues and ensure that sustainable development policies and programmes are prioritized.

I also ask for the support of parliaments as we prepare for the Rio+20 conference on sustainable development in 2012. The General Assembly has set forth three objectives and two themes that will anchor the event.

The objectives are to renew political commitment; assess progress made and gaps in implementation and identify new and emerging challenges.

The two themes are - a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and the institutional framework for sustainable development.

Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon has designated me as the Conference Secretary-General for Rio+20. As 2012 draws closer, we need your input and suggestions on how to maximize the success of this conference. We need global participation for this event. Only then will it have a strong and lasting effect on global development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing, I reiterate how good it is to see so many of you here today. Although the economic news is still gloomy, it is an exciting time for the UN and for national parliaments.

Indeed, we have entered a new era. The harsh lessons of the recent past have altered fundamental assumptions about economics.

We must seize this moment and ensure the economic directions and policies of the future have the best possible effects on development.

I invite you to strengthen the relationship between the UN and parliaments through continued support of United Nations initiatives on your home fronts.

Thank you and may you have a productive meeting.