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The Preliminary Report of  
the APA Secretary-General  
on  
Alleviating Poverty in Asia



## Background

The first meeting of the Sub-Committee on Alleviating Poverty in Asia was held on 12-13 June 2008 in Jakarta and considered the report of the Secretary-General and adopted its Report including the resolution to be submitted to the Executive Council. (APA/EC1/2008) The Executive Council met on 8-9 October 2008 in Tehran and approved the Report of the Sub-Committee. The Third APA Plenary met on 27-29 November 2008 in Jakarta and approved the resolution on Alleviating Poverty in Asia. (APA/Res/2008/02)

The resolution decided to mandate the Sub-Committee to continue to work. It further decided to strengthen coordination among international and regional organizations such as ADB, ESCAP, IDB, and the relevant NGOs active in this field, to provide technical support to the implementation of the APA Plan of Action on Alleviating Poverty. The resolution requested the Sub-Committee to expedite and report the possible establishment of a Poverty Alleviation Fund in Asia. It also requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report for consideration of the Sub-Committee.

On 18 January 2009, in accordance with the fifth operative paragraph of the Third Plenary resolution, the Secretary-General communicated and consulted with Member Parliaments seeking their views on the implementation of the above-mentioned resolution. In particular, the Secretary-General raised specific questions with regard to best practices



employed by the government in the field of poverty alleviation, the role of the parliament in overseeing the activities of the executive branch in the field of poverty alleviation, the possible cooperation with parliaments in Asia or in other continents on poverty alleviation schemes, the poverty alleviation fund and the possible contribution of the government to the Poverty Alleviation Fund in Asia.

Moreover, on 18 January 2009, in line with the second operative paragraph of the said resolution, the Secretary-General communicated with the heads of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), and the United Nations Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) seeking their views as to how the APA can benefit from the technical support provided by these institutions to the implementation of the APA Plan of Action on Alleviating Poverty in Asia. It was emphasized that as a parliamentary institution, the APA is interested to confine its poverty alleviation activities to policy making and therefore welcomes the opportunity to exchange views, at different levels, with those institutions on the significant role the Asian parliaments can play in poverty alleviation schemes. The Secretary-General will inform the Member Parliaments of the results of his consultations with these institutions.

The present Report is submitted to the Sub-Committee for its consideration



## **Introduction**

The world still suffers from poverty despite the fact that efforts have been underway, particularly during the last twenty years, to address this problem and find ways to alleviate poverty worldwide. The current global financial crisis has complicated the already difficult situation resulting in more unemployment and the increase in the number of the poor all over the world.

In the 2008 Report of the Secretary-General on Alleviating Poverty in Asia, contained in document SG/Rep/2008/03/Rev.1 of 2 June 2008, the idea of a National Poverty Alleviation Strategic Plan (NPASP) was introduced and the role of parliaments in its development, implementation, and evaluation and monitoring was discussed. The Secretary-General is of the opinion that the content of his 2008 Report are still relevant and need to be further studied in view of the fact that the Third APA Plenary Session resolution calls for the strengthening of the role of parliaments in all phases of NPASP.

## **Strengthening the Role of Parliaments**

In addition to the provisions of the 2008 Report, in particular the Proposition 6 on proposals for joint programs of information and experience exchanges within APA, the Secretary-General holds that the following steps may be taken to strengthen the role of parliaments in all phases of NPASP.



## NPASP Development, Implementation, and Evaluation and Monitoring

In defining the role of parliaments in the process of developing NPASP, the APA may also establish contacts with parliamentarians from other continents to benefit from their experiences in this regard. In the implementation phase, mass media such as radio and television may be utilized in order to further increase public awareness. In the evaluation and monitoring phase, relevant specialized agencies may be consulted to help parliaments design a better evaluation and monitoring mechanism of NPASP.

## Advisory Groups

The idea of establishing advisory groups to provide technical advice to the Sub-Committee in a time-bound implementation of the Plan of Action on Alleviating Poverty is mentioned in the first operative paragraph of the 2008 resolution. The advisory groups may include specialists from countries of Member Parliaments dealing with poverty alleviation programs. Members of relevant parliamentary committees may also participate in the meetings of these groups in order to shed more lights on the role of parliaments in poverty alleviation programs. The advisory groups may consider different phases of NPASP and come up with specific recommendations for effective involvement of parliaments in NPASP processes.



### Coordination among International and Regional Organizations

In order to strengthen coordination among international and regional organizations dealing with poverty alleviation, the Secretary General believes that through holding joint meetings, workshops and seminars with organizations such as ADB, ESCAP, and IDB, Member Parliaments can benefit from the experiences of these organizations in promoting the role of parliaments in poverty alleviation. Moreover, the APA may invite major international NGOs active in this field to exchange views, individually or collectively, with Member Parliaments on poverty alleviation.

### Exchange of Views on Best Practices

Through sharing and exchanging views on their best policies and practices in the field of poverty alleviation, Member Parliaments can deal more effectively with poverty. The exchange of best practices among Member Parliaments can be done at three levels. First, the best practices of the executive branch of Member Parliaments including its focal point dealing with poverty alleviation program can be identified and exchanged. This can be done through providing the APA Secretariat with the relevant information and data to be placed on the APA website which will be available to all Member Parliaments. Second, the best practices of Member Parliaments within NPASP may also be sent to the Secretariat to be placed on the APA website. Third, coordination meetings at the continental level may be held in which each country is represented by a delegation comprising of the focal point of the executive branch and parliamentarians from relevant parliamentary committees and best practices are exchanged.



### Poverty Alleviation Fund in Asia (PAFA)

The 2007 APA resolution on Economic and Sustainable Development called for a feasibility study to be made on the Anti-Poverty Fund. During the Sub-Committee deliberations in 2008, references were made to the Fund, however, no conclusion was reached as to how to follow up this very question. The Secretary-General is of the opinion that the Sub-Committee may continue further discussions on the practicality, and feasibility of PAFA. Furthermore, discussions may focus on the purpose, objective, activities and scope of PAFA. The Sub-Committee may also address the important question of financing the Fund. An Advisory Group may be established to provide technical advice to the Sub-Committee to address the above-mentioned points. The Advisory Group may take into consideration years of experiences of governmental and non-governmental organizations dealing with the provision of assistance to the poor and come up with specific recommendations.

### UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The UN has identified a number of goals to be achieved by 2015. The first goal deals with poverty eradication. While efforts are underway by governments to deal with the problem of poverty worldwide, there is a complimentary role that can be played by parliaments to meet the UN Millennium Development Goals. The parliaments can help strengthen national efforts to alleviate poverty in accordance with the MDG. In this context, the Sub-Committee may discuss the role of parliaments in the



adoption of policies and programs in line with the MDG. Moreover, the oversight function of the parliament with regard to anti-poverty efforts undertaken by the executive branch may also be addressed.

### **Recommendations**

Bearing in mind the above-mentioned points on strengthening the role of parliaments in poverty alleviation schemes, the Secretary General presents the following points for consideration of the Sub-Committee:

1. Establish "Advisory Groups" as need arises to provide technical advice to the Sub-Committee. Parliamentarians from relevant committees may also participate in the meetings of these groups.
2. Organize, in cooperation with the governments, joint meetings, workshops and seminars with regional and international organizations and major international NGOs active in poverty alleviation programs in which parliamentarians can benefit from experiences of these organizations in promoting the role of parliaments in this regard.
3. Establish contacts with parliamentarians from different continents to exchange views and share experiences in poverty alleviation schemes.



4. Establish a network of best practices at the levels of focal points and parliaments. APA Secretariat may serve as a channel for exchange of information regarding the best practices.
  
5. Consider the practicality and feasibility of PAFA. Moreover, the purpose, objective, activities and scope of PAFA may also be discussed. An Advisory Group may also provide technical advice to the Sub-Committee on PAFA.
  
6. Discuss what role Member Parliaments can play in the implementation of MDG.