

10th June 2011

Sri Montek Singh Ahluwalia
Deputy Chairman
Planning Commission
New Delhi

Dear Sir,

Subject: Our comments on the Approach Paper to XII Five-Year Plan – Southern Regional Consultation in Bangalore on 10th and 11th June 2011

Analysis of earlier Plans' failures and achievements needed: We have gone through the draft Approach Paper circulated for this consultation. We would have liked to see an analysis of what earlier Plans have failed to achieve and a delineation of the reasons thereof. If the focus on GDP growth rates, set as the goals of earlier Plans, have failed to bring about satisfactory levels of 'inclusive growth' through the 'trickle-down theory' then the focus and analysis should have been on these aspects.

Inclusive growth through human development to be the overall Plan target: Since GDP growth rates are comfortable now, the goal of the Five-Year Plan should no longer be expressed in terms of the GDP growth rate to be achieved in terms of capital investment, etc. It should rather be expressed on the rates of poverty reduction to be achieved, if inclusive growth is really the intention. It is time we made the paradigm shift to ensure that GDP growth happens through human development. It needs to be also emphasised that investing in human development is not merely a 'welfare' activity that the country can ill afford, but that it is an investment that results in higher rates of GDP growth through the enhanced capacities and empowerment of those currently marginalised.

Targets to be set for human development: The goals should be further detailed in terms of targets to be achieved in human development indicators, i.e., in literacy, life expectancy and purchasing power. **(The MDGs to which India has committed itself don't seem to find a mention anywhere and there is no discussion anywhere about how the poverty line is to be determined).**

Outcomes-based strategies within time-frames to be set: The human development indicators in turn should be set in terms of outcomes of, for instance the % of children completing compulsory education, % drop in IMR and MMR, % of population earning a living wage, etc. Specific strategies with qualitative and quantitative indicators to measure outcomes within definite time-frames should be outlined for meeting these targets rather than 'wishful vision statements' which seem to abound in the current approach paper,

except for certain sectors such as forests and environment where specific targets have been set.

Lack of focus on crucial sectors: We are surprised that just three lines have been devoted to crucial sectors such as agriculture, which is in deep crisis, and education and health, and no discussion on the crucial right to food, while other less important sectors have been given many pages. The framework and emphasis throughout seems to be on physical rather than social infrastructure, on PPPs rather than a rights-based approach to fulfilling basic needs as a state responsibility.

Rights-based approach needed: The Plan needs to focus on:

Right to Food (including issues related to production of food and nutritional security)
Right to Housing, along with Right to Water and Sanitation
Right to Education
Right to Health
Right to Adequate Livelihood and
Right to Social Security

Earmarking of funds for minimum floor levels: The Plan needs to estimate the cost for provisioning minimum floor levels for each of these to the entire population over the XII Plan period, prioritising their fulfilment for those currently deprived, and earmark the funds necessary for the same from the Consolidated Fund of India.

These are our preliminary remarks which we wish to further elaborate in greater detail shortly. Hoping our concerns will be addressed in the next version of the Approach Paper.

Yours sincerely,

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