

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

By: Shoaib Sultan Khan
November 8, 2010

Subject: **Human Development Forum Agadir, Morocco**
November 1-3, 2010

A rather endearing invitation from Soulaiman El Hajam, who I had met at the CDD Conference at Beijing last year, saying your “dazzling presentation” at Beijing prompts me to invite you at the Human Development Forum being organized by the Ministry of Interior of the Kingdom of Morocco under the patronage of His Majesty King Mohammad VI.

My presentation may not have been dazzling but the Forum indeed was with over 1800 delegates and participation of the Government of Morocco at the highest level with Ministers attending all the sessions, especially Minister of Interior and Minister of Finance being in the forefront. The commitment of the government to the National Initiative for Human Development (NIHD) launched by the King in 2005, was quite apparent. The Forum was organized to formulate the next phase of NIHD at a projected allocation of US\$ 3.6 billion, after completion of first five years.

The profile of the Forum could be judged by the participants of the first plenary session presided by Governor State Bank of Morocco with speeches by Director General IMF, Finance Minister of Morocco, Vice President of World Bank (Dr. Shamshad Akhter) and President, Islamic Bank.

The DG IMF (Dominique StrausKahn) lamented loss of 30 million jobs during the global financial crisis and the challenge of meeting 400 million jobs in the future. In his view, employment of the youth was at the core of world stability and solidarity of nations. He questioned how G20 could plan for 167 countries that were not there. His mantra was employment first, employment second and employment third. He openly admitted the follies of structural adjustment and assured IMF's policy of responding to the country specific situations.

The President of Islamic Bank (Sheikh Ahmed Mohammad Ali) advocated financing by banks of endowments (auqaf), public goods, micro insurance etc.

Dr. Shamshad Akhtar was eloquent in advocating microfinance and mentioned the Pakistan experience through social mobilization. She has been overseeing the progress of NIHD in Morocco from the World Bank angle and made many useful suggestions for incorporation in the next phase. In fact at the end of the Plenary Prof. Patrick Paul Walsh of Ireland, who was sitting next to me, observed that Dr. Shamshad's speech was the best of the session. Prof. Walsh of University College Dublin, Ireland also expressed interest in forging collaboration with N-IRM and would be writing to me in this regard. I do hope Chairman and CEO NIRM would find it of interest and worth their while to pursue the matter.

I was quite amused during the Q&A session, Governor State Bank never let an opportunity go in putting the Finance Minister in the hot spot. I was reminded of the friction between Dr. Shamshad and the Adviser Finance in Pakistan.

An interesting presentation was by a French Social Philosopher Edger Morin on Human Development. He observed the term was vague and not as precise as health or education. He tried to define it as personal skills development within a living community and made an impassioned plea not to ignore and downgrade traditional wisdom and human potential for lack of literacy or formal education. It was indeed music to my ears. This was a warning to those who think without literacy nothing can be achieved by a human being.

The former Prime Minister of Peru (Luis Solari), Minister for Water, Power & Forests of Guinea (George Delamon), Minister of Human Rights Yemen (Ms Amat Soswa) also spoke in the session on Human Development. Amat Soswa made a special reference to the contribution of Dr. Mahboobul Haque to Human Development.

In the Q&A session, a number of comments, observations and questions were asked from the representatives of communes and municipalities and civil society organizations. Sustainability should be achieved without losing the Moroccan culture and way of life. There was need for a new set of indicators for Human Development, more suitable, more refined taking into account, impact of globalization and westernization. A plea was made for due recognition of the emergence of volunteerism.

The second day was devoted to six parallel Panel Discussions. As Soulainman was in Panel 2 discussing Targeting and Universal vs Targeted Approach, he put me in that panel. I presented the Pakistan and Andhra case studies and how targeting took place. In case of India, the Backward Classes and Minorities became the focus of the programme and in Pakistan initially communities themselves did the targeting now it has been improved and refined by introduction of the poverty scorecard.

However, two divergent views emerged on targeted or universal approaches. The two academics on the panel made a strong plea for universal approach which was strongly contested from the floor who questioned the wisdom of not identifying the vulnerable and the marginalized.

At the end of the session, a number of commune representatives came to me and expressed their appreciation and asked for further information for which I referred them to the RSPN website.

It seems that it was not only Soulainman who liked my presentation at Beijing, many of the World Bank officials attending the Forum were also at Beijing and confided to me that my presentation was very well received at Beijing. Mohamed Medouar who is posted at Rabat by the Bank and is overseeing the NIHD had detailed discussions with me about the second phase of NIHD which the Bank is going to support. He also wanted an evaluation of the current phase of NIHD which is completing five years. He was most interested in the Micro Investment Plan exercise and toyed with the idea of undertaking it in one commune to get a feedback from the communities before incorporating it in the next phase. I offered assistance in both areas as and when he got in touch with me.

Rauf had fished out my NFR of the visit to the Kingdom in 1993 along with a World Bank mission which undertook a seven days trek through High Atlas Mountains. Agadir is a tourist paradise. It was amazing to see how the Moroccans have westernized themselves without giving up either the religion or the culture. Even the highest officials and international events were so organized to project Islam but done in a most subtle and unobtrusive way unlike the jarring way back home.