

Advancing Good Governance Seminar

June 13, 2014 – 12:30-1:45pm

Closing Plenary: Governance and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, with Outcome Statement

As 2015 approaches, and upon reflecting on the success of the Millennium Development Goals, delegates of the Advancing Good Governance Seminar have looked for ways to ensure that good governance is represented in the post-Millennium Development Goals agenda. In order to do so, they have decided to draft an outcome statement addressed to the President and President-Elect of the United Nations. Currently, it is unclear whether good governance will be featured in the post-Millennium Development Goals agenda, if it appears at all.

Key Points from the Session

- 1 Governance is crucial to successful development.** The evidence is irrefutable that good governance improves development outcomes: good governance means higher income, less inequality, more foreign direct investment, lower infant mortality and higher literacy rates.
- 2 Good governance is anti-corruption by another name.** “Corruption” is a sensitive term that politicians avoid because it highlights governmental failure for a problem they deem irresolvable. Why draw attention to one’s own failure and why set a goal that is unachievable? By couching such efforts as “good governance,” politicians avoid this.
- 3 There may be alternative explanations for the exclusion of good governance from previous agendas.** Goals should be measurable and evidence-based, in order to determine whether they have been met. Governance is neither. Further, “good governance” is a Western concept, which may not translate well in such cultures and imposing the Western understanding of “good governance” may be disrespectful of non-Western cultures. Finally, even though good governance is not one of the explicit Millennium Development Goals, it is contemplated in their text.
- 4 Good governance must be ingrained in culture.** When citizens know their rights and are empowered, they reinforce their rights and the government’s accountability to those citizens improves. Culture may take a generation or more to change, which it is imperative to instill values of accountability, transparency and good governance now.

Emerging Questions

- 1** Should good governance itself be a formal development “goal,” or should it instead exist as a theme woven throughout the entire agenda?
- 2** Is there value in calling “good governance” goals “anti-corruption” goals instead?
- 3** How do we measure the success of good governance as a goal, if it is included on the agenda?