

REFLECTIONS ON THE GLOBAL CONTEXT FOR THE US FOREIGN POLICY FOR CHILDREN INITIATIVE - *Michael Gibbons, American University*

Building on the thoughtful global trends survey shared Friday by Sean, I would like to offer several additional points germane to the children's agenda:

MAJOR SHIFTS UNDERWAY:

DEMOGRAPHICS:

- The world under-30 population is the largest in human history, and population growth rates remain highest in the lowest income regions of the world
- Africa will eclipse South Asia and China as the most populous region by 2050, making the 22nd Century the African Century in people-power terms
- The populations of the world's wealthiest (North American, European, Asian) countries are aging, setting up perilous wage-earner to pensioner ratios that slow productivity
- The US, one of the largest, wealthiest and most powerful nations, is struggling through a profound demographic revolution, moving from a majority white Euro Christian polity to becoming a majority non-white non-Euro polity, with non-white population growth higher than white growth
- Young people around the world are better connected and informed than ever before in history, and generally they are frustrated and out of step with their governing elders

GLOBAL POLICY PARADIGMS:

- The UN-Bretton Woods-post-colonial democracy and capitalism frame for international relations which traveled through and beyond the Cold War is wobbling as Sean said
 - Democracy is shallower, more performative and more driven/captured by elite power actors
 - Crony capitalism/extreme economic inequality is the norm in practice
 - Global governance and civic accountability has waned
- The SDG frame is a powerful progressive vision which was nominally endorsed by most UN member states but just at a time when UN influence and great power commitment are waning and bad examples are ascendant
- Many (most?) young people around the world embrace an SDG-like progressive frame as their shared vision of a world fit for children and youth, but they feel their elders are not committed to this vision in practice

GREAT POWERS/GLOBAL INFLUENCERS:

- The new nexus of global power in the 21st Century is not the post-WWII or Cold War matrix. Instead it is the cluster comprising the US, China, the EU, the World Bank, capitalist corporations and investment firms, Russia, the Canada-UK-Australia-NZ-Japan set, India and Brazil
- By power is meant projecting influence in the global arena through military, economic, people power and policy/ideas influence
- Of these, only the EU and the UK, Canada, Australia, NZ, Japan set align with the 21st Century progressive SDG frame in domestic and foreign policy terms
- Public policy in China, Russia, India and Brazil is decidedly nationalistic, anti-rights, anti eco-sustainability, and pro-crony capitalism and economic inequality (despite the fact that the youth populations of all these countries yearn for different policies)

- The US, the post WWII guardian of the modestly progressive agenda, is wobbling badly and its current domestic and foreign policy is anti SDG/progressive values and agenda
- The World Bank and corporations/investment firms do not embrace an SDG like progressive frame, either in policy or practice, even as control of private capital in the world is consolidating in fewer hands and corporate political power is growing in the current era of extreme deregulation

IMPLICATIONS FOR US FOREIGN POLICY ADVOCACY FOR CHILDREN:

- As the US children's foreign policy lobby, we need to embrace and promote with other foreign policy lobby networks the SDG-like progressive paradigm, siding with the young people of the world (we need not and should not call it the "SDG frame" in the US)
- We need to lift up US and international youth voices who yearn for this progressive vision of a "world fit for children"
- We need to go beyond elite issue advocacy to engage in civic organizing of youth constituencies in the US and collaboration with local organizing efforts in other countries so young people can express their political demands of their governments more directly, forcefully and confidently
- To be relevant to young people in the world as it is evolving, this coalition should adopt this progressive vision as the shared Big Frame within which our template of inclusive whole child issue advocacy is undertaken
- Ambassador Fineberg, Sean and I see in the advocacy leaders assembled in this coalition-forming group a next generation that can rebuild a more progressive consensus and vision of a "world fit for children",- we stand ready to help, and we encourage adoption of a bold vision by this group!