



OUTREACH

THURSDAY 23RD

Millennium Development Goals, the UN five-year review Building Partnership for Sustainable Development

Recommendations from UK stakeholders

On 22 June 2005, Stakeholder Forum organised a one-day conference in London on the five-year review of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The conference brought together eighty participants from environmental and development non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unionists, government representatives, academics and the private sector. The objective of the meeting was to assess the implementation of the MDGs, in particular environmental commitments, and to put forward recommendations on actions that need to be undertaken by governments for the Millennium Development Declaration to achieve sustainable development. With the UN General Assembly Hearings with civil society taking place in New York on 23 and 24 June 2005 in preparation for the UN five-year review, the conference was a timely opportunity to include participants' recommendations in the consultation process currently taking place in New York. Felix Dodds, Stakeholder Forum's executive director, is participating in the discussion with governments on environment and development issues, and will base his intervention in the General Assembly hearings on the outcomes of the London conference.

Discussions in the workshop sessions produced recommendations on the following areas: trade, biodiversity, energy, human settlements and water. Participants proposed amendments to the Draft Outcome Document of the MDG Review Summit released by the UN General Assembly President on 3 June¹ and made statements on issues that the draft outcome fails to address. The workshop discussions reiterated the fact that the MDGs are interconnected and that MDG7 on environmental sustainability contributes to achieving the other MDGs.

This issue of *Outreach* provides a synopsis of the discussions and recommendations that came out of the conference and aims to contribute to the consultation process, which currently involves a limited number of civil society representatives.

Trade

Participants to the workshop session on trade agreed that the UN General Assembly Draft Outcome Document did not deal with the main problems regarding trade.

New text proposed

The world's natural resources are finite, and current economic growth is therefore not sustainable. The current trade system is based on the flawed assumption of a perfect market system with perfect information.

¹ The Draft Outcome Document can be found on <http://www.ngocongo.org/ngomeet/millplusfive/GADraftOutcome0605.doc>

The three pillars of sustainable development are social progress, economic growth and environmental protection. Growth in GDP has hitherto been given priority over the other pillars of sustainable development. Multinational corporations and business lobbies have considerable economic and political power over the outcome of trade agreements.

Therefore:

1. A paradigm shift is urgently needed regarding the concept of economic growth; priority must be given first to environmental and social justice and then to economic growth. This is proposed as follows:
 - Replace GDP as a development indicator and include Genuine Savings or Green Net National accounts.
 - Establish a monitoring framework to identify the risks of trade agreements for sustainable development.
2. Northern countries must change their patterns of consumption and production in order to assume more of the burden that Southern countries currently bear.
 - Encourage, identify, manage and protect sustainable rights of use of the natural resources.
 - Encouragement of diversification in the production of goods especially in vulnerable economies.
3. A fairer and more democratic trade system needs to be complemented by domestic international accountability. In particular:
 - Developed and developing countries should have equal representation in trade agreements as well as equal influence in decision making with regards to issues such as trade liberalisation.
 - The gap must be closed between promises and behaviour regarding trade negotiations by ensuring that decision makers are held accountable at the national and international levels.
 - Developing countries must be able to protect and support their agricultural, industrial and services sectors.
 - Labour rights and gender equality must be included in trade agreements.
4. A legally binding international framework should be created for multinational corporate accountability and regulation (including lobbying activities). This body would also monitor and enforce government compliance with social, environmental and economic obligations.

Human settlements

Recommendations

The Draft Outcome Document does not adequately address human settlements, water and sanitation. Although the rights to adequate standards of living and water have been agreed, the document does not deal with these issues. Participants called on the need for the MDG review process to look at the significant impact of unsustainable living conditions on the achievement of the MDG requirements overall.

- Local governments have a key role to play in working with communities, and this role needs to be strengthened by building their capacity to support community and local decision-making. The needs of people that are most marginalised, particularly in displacement and resettlement situations must be addressed by putting emphasis on their participation in development policies.
- The objective is not merely to improving the lives of not only those within slum conditions but also to find adequate alternatives to new slum formation.
- National development strategies need to address human settlements.
- Massive urbanisation in rich countries has produced unsustainable human settlement policies.

Amendments

An additional section should be included in the draft outcome document on the Habitat Agenda commitments and on coherence between internationally agreed frameworks.

Additional paragraph on water:

“Ensure that the access to water is a fundamental right and to be treated as a public good not to be privatised. WE commit ourselves to facilitate access to water for all in quality and quantity (minimum 40 litre per person per day), as well as to the preparation of national integrated water management and water efficiency plan by 2008.”

-Paragraph 13: “Global partnership and development”: reference should be made to the inclusion of locally based and generated statistics, participation, and decent employment opportunities.

-Paragraph 26: The Draft Outcome Document cannot claim to meet “the special needs of Africa” without making reference to human settlements, water, sanitation and hygiene.

-Paragraph 32: add the need to protect women during conflicts.

Biodiversity

Key priority issues

- To recognise the value and importance of biodiversity and environmental sustainability to development and meeting all the MDGs as an overarching principle.
- To ensure that environment is mainstreamed into national strategies and plans
- To commit a proportion of new official development assistance (ODA) to achieving environmental sustainability, recognising its centrality to sustainable development and achieving all of the MDGs.
- To establish and use green accounting processes in national planning and decision making – GDP should be replaced with national accounting systems that recognise the depletion of natural and social capital.
- To bring in the 2010 Biodiversity target that is missing from MDGs.

Participants also offered support to the World Conservation Union (IUCN) priority issues:

- Ensure that environmental sustainability, and the existing national plans and strategies that articulate investment priorities for it, are mainstreamed into national planning frameworks for growth, poverty reduction, and each of the other MDGs.
- In line with the above, donor governments should re-commit to achieve the 0.7% ODA target, at a minimum and commit to invest a proportionally larger share of *new* ODA flows to achieving environmental sustainability; and recipient countries should commit to the equitable and effective use of ODA.
- Recognise and integrate the contributions of ecosystem services to household and national economies as well as the economic and livelihoods costs of environmental degradation, and commit to better developing and using better measurement tools and decision-making frameworks to facilitate this.
- Recognise the Biodiversity 2010 target adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development as a critical milestone to achieve MDG7 and the rest of the MDGs by 2015.

Amendments to the Draft Outcome Document

Section 1: “Values and Principles”

Importance of biological diversity to sustainable development

The section of the report *In Larger Freedom* reiterating the need to address environmental degradation if the MDGs are to achieve their targets should meet the approval of those concerned with promoting a sustainable development agenda. This statement must be clearly reiterated in the outcomes of the review conference: Failure to invest adequately in MDG7 will, through accelerated degradation of the essential ecosystem services upon which they depend, undermine our ability to achieve each of the other MDGs.

Section 2: "Development"

Add new paragraph:

"Recognise the critical function of environmental resources to maintaining and improving lives of all, especially the poor. In response to the contribution of the "Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)" with respect to ecosystem services key to the MDGs, ensure that:

- Recommendations of the MA are taken up and acted on by Governments and relevant stakeholders
- Environmental needs are mainstreamed into ODA policy – particularly at a national level through for example PRSP processes
- Environmental gains and losses are accounted for in macro-economic terms in development decisions (so called "green accounting")
- Capacity for wise use of natural resources is built, particularly at the local community level
- The management of oceans, wetlands and water resources, forests and biological resources (including key areas for biodiversity) are taken specific account of in development decisions."

Paragraph 99: system-wide coherence

System wide coherence is needed to ensure an ecological balance between people and nature. Environmental sustainability is the basis for all life so must be central. Strengthening International Environmental. Governance should aim to achieve this.

Recommendations

Global leaders should:

- Recommit to Rio Principles, including the precautionary principle to safeguard against harmful side effects and damaging cumulative environmental impacts of new technologies such as GMOs.
- Ensure a balanced approach to (industrial) development where the vital role of ecosystem services are restored and maintained. Without environmental sustainability, development will not be sustainable.
- Recognise the economic sense of maintaining and conserving biodiversity, particularly in the long term – political and governance systems need to value biodiversity and natural systems (ecosystem good and services) in decision making. to be properly valued.
- Value and integrate local and indigenous knowledge in planning and decision-making including in preparation and implementation of national strategies and plans. This should recognise the intrinsic, cultural, spiritual values of wild nature as well as its direct and indirect values to local livelihoods.
- Support the development and use of better and more relevant indicators for sustainable development – useful at the national and local level to ensure progress is not eroding natural capital or losing social capital.
- Re-stress the three principles of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) - i) Conservation ii) Sustainable Use iii) Fair and equitable sharing of benefits and highlight the importance of integrating the CBD's programmes an policies into development policy and programmes.
- Ensure a full and effective fourth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) that reflects the increased scope of work requested of the GEF, and deliver on wider commitment to support the programmes of the CBD. The Global Environment Facility supports projects related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants. It is thus a key international financing mechanism to achieve MDG 7 on environmental sustainability as well as

the other MDGs, and the General Assembly should recognise and support the on-going negotiations for the GEF's fourth replenishment.

- Support the recognition of the positive contributions of the NGOs, civil society and the private sector. However, recognise that these are very different sectors in terms of their genesis, roles and what society expects of them. Civil society merits a separate focus, but also greater attention needs to be given to the private sector, addressing the enhanced role and responsibility that it has in today's world. The world community needs to take the opportunity of the Summit to clearly lay down its vision for the private sector highlighting its direct and indirect (e.g. through procurement) impacts on sustainable development.

Water

Recommendations

- Facilitate affordable access to safe water and sanitation for all and accelerate the preparation and implementation of national integrated water and water efficiency plans in the context of basin-wide integrated water and resources management mechanisms (IWRM).
- Ensure that the health and economic benefits of water are included in the economic valuation of it as a service. Economic assumptions are only partial, and environmental and social concerns may take precedence.
- Ensure that the cost of providing water and sanitation services and the source of this funding are transparent and sustainable.
- Ensure IWRM and poverty reduction strategy papers engage local NGOs and community-based organisations in the decision-making processes, build capacity, and allocate resources, while also incorporating a gender perspective in all these areas.
- Improve access to water through a balanced approach to large-scale projects, ensuring stakeholders' participation in decisions related to these projects.
- Developed countries Heads of State should agree to double aid to water and sanitation by 2010 within the context of an overall doubling of aid flows, and also direct at least 70% of water and sanitation ODA to Least Developed and Low Income Countries.
- Promote regulated stakeholder participation, where each stakeholder offers their stakeholder knowledge, with benefits split equitably.
- Clarify who is responsible for water and sanitation at national government level, and hold them accountable is crucial. Decentralisation should be promoted with the necessary budgetary resources and accountability for stakeholder engagement.
- Environmental data should be used to decide action for the long term as well as the short-term.
- Countries that are facing water stress should seek to learn from those that have already adapted well.
- Pollution prevention, the maintenance of existing infrastructure, and the planning of new developments should promote water efficiency.

Energy

One million people die of malaria each year. 1.6 million people die each year of indoors cooking from using local biomass. Therefore, MDGs relating to energy cannot be merely restricted to climate change as is

currently the case in the draft outcome document. Energy underpins the MDGs; its use and production is critical to human security and to health. The use of energy needs to be prioritised according to basic human needs.

The provision of energy has to be driven by an appropriate framework at the local level to facilitate changes.

People who take decisions should be provided with a reliable information source to identify the effects that their actions are likely to have on the environment.

Principles to guide decisions on energy to ensure sustainability:

- Conservation efficiency
- Social justice and equity
- Low risks
- Incentives for innovation and integration
- Accountability and transparency
- Diversity

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