

Berlin Civil Society Center

Joint Action Towards 2015 and Beyond

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OUTCOME

The Global Perspectives conference 2010 focused on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and how ICSSOs can devise joint strategies towards the full achievement of these Goals. To follow up on these discussions, the UN Millennium Campaign and the Berlin Civil Society Center have this year joined forces to kick-start the 2011 Global Perspectives conference with a pre-conference, under the title *Joint Action Towards 2015 and Beyond*. Burkhard Gnärig, Executive Director at the Berlin Civil Society Center, opened the meeting by thanking the Böll Foundation, the Venture Fund and the UN Millennium Campaign for their support in making this conference happen and the participants for their active engagement. He highlighted the fact that we all have a commitment in making the MDGs a reality and challenged the participants to find joint and complementary ways in fulfilling this obligation.

Under the heading, *The Millennium Goals To Date*, Corinne Woods, Director of the UN Millennium Campaign, underlined the need to strengthen the advocacy efforts on the MDGs and the critical importance of establishing partnerships between the UN and INGOs to develop a complementary advocacy agenda. She asked for input on how to strengthen the discourse on the MDGs in these challenging times, on the basis of the vision laid down in the Millennium Declaration. She also suggested that it is possible to accelerate progress on the MDGs, particularly by highlighting the equity and accountability components. On the same topic, Jeremy Hobbs, Executive Director of Oxfam International, described the context around the MDGs as having worsened since the Goals were developed. He reminded the audience of the climate, fuel, food and financial crises and also on the donor governments' financial cuts which will make existing aid pledges unrealistic. The momentum for the Robin Hood tax has, however, grown, which should be seen as a positive sign of the possibilities to raise social topics and achieve policy results. The challenge is to build a narrative around the linkages between education, health or climate change and economic progress. It is crucial that CSOs stick to the watchdog role with regards to more and better aid, also in light of the foreseen significant drop in aid in 2012. Finally, Jeremy warned about the risk that the focus on the post 2015 process will overshadow MDGs efforts during the next 4 years.

The subsequent discussion focused on the role of ICSSOs; on the one hand on how to channel the energy from the current worldwide protest and, on the other hand, on how to continue to focus on the fundamental tasks linked to achieving the MDGs. The conversation also explored how to include excluded, marginalized and local voices in the debate, as well as how to create a systemic and coherent agenda of what we want to achieve. It was acknowledged that, although crucial aspects on accountability and human rights were lost in the creation of the MDGs, the Millennium Declaration is a powerful document that should be used as the starting point for the process of framing the post 2015 debate.

Focusing on *Thinking Beyond 2015*, Corinne Woods pointed out that the post 2015 framework should be based on the values enshrined in the Millennium Declaration and the development challenges that have emerged in the last decade. Additionally, she underlined that the UN Development Group attributes great importance to the need to design a broad based, open and inclusive multi-stakeholder consultation process and to incorporate the outcome of these deliberations into the formal process. There is a need to outreach to developing and developed countries alike as the post 2015 framework will be heavily influenced by the Rio +20 process and its outcomes, in terms of setting Sustainable Development Goals and with regards to sustainable consumption, green economy etc. Moreover, she pointed out that the key priority at present is the advocacy with individual member states. On the same topic, René Grotenhuis, CEO of Cordaid, started out by stressing that a lot has been achieved in recent years with regards to the MDGs and that we should not forget to be proud of this. When moving on to develop a new framework, we have to acknowledge that several countries have changed and the perception of old frameworks such as the ODA is not necessarily used as widely anymore. In the new framework it is crucial to focus on inequality, on maximizing human and natural resources and on the issues of inclusiveness and ownership.

In the discussion with the plenary, the role of CSOs in enabling different actors to have a voice in the discussions was mentioned, as well as the need to ensure civil society representation in the formal process, particularly in the High Level Panel. It was pointed out that international CSOs have, to a large extent, strong links and presence at the community level. On this note, the tension between CSOs - on the one hand - enabling others to contribute to the process and - on the other hand - also putting forward substantive positions was pointed out. There was a consensus on the fact that human rights and equity should be central in any future framework and on the fact that the current MDGs framework should not constrain the design of a more ambitious and inclusive development strategy.

In the final discussion on the MDGs, it was pointed out that many CSOs have had reservations about the MDG framework to which they are being held to account. They also reminded the audience of the lack of consultations pre-MDGs. During the next few years it was felt that it will be important to build on success stories, especially on those results achieved through inclusive processes and approaches. The need for a coordinated approach was signaled for and the Berlin Civil Society Center offered to facilitate such a process. As part of the conclusions, there was a consensus on the importance of more joint work between the UN and CSOs and the next challenge would be how to translate this into a reality.