

Communiqué
The Reality of Aid Global Meeting,
Paris, 22-24 June, 2005

In the post-911 era, the security interests of donor countries are increasingly dominating international relations, with grave consequences for people living with violence and poverty. Viewed as threats to donor nations, poor people and "failed states" are being treated as tools of donor security, and long-standing social and political struggles are being narrowly defined with the rhetoric of "terrorism". Conflicts are being depoliticized (e.g. treated as "threats" to security, without reference to systemic and root causes), and urgently needed efforts to resolve violent conflicts, eradicate poverty, and fulfill human rights are being undermined.

International human rights obligations are again being subsumed by geopolitical interests – particularly, the "war on terrorism". Contrary to the current focus on donor security and stability, International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law must be the guiding framework for international assistance.

Heads of State and Government from across the globe will be gathering in New York in a Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly from the 14th to 16th of September to consider measures to strengthen the UN's response to the Millennium Declaration through UN reform and renewed commitment to the principles and targets of the Declaration. Guided by the Secretary General's proposals in his report, *In Larger Freedom*, this Summit will address the inter-related challenges of conflict, security and development.

Reality of Aid global civil society organizations meeting in Paris on June 22-24, 2005 called upon global leaders to urgently address the following concerns:

A. Unaccountable and undemocratic International Financial Institutions (IFIs) are playing central roles in conflict and post-conflict societies instead of UN development and economic institutions such as UNDP and ECOSOC. Increasingly, the IFIs are pooling donor funds and coordinating donor relations with host governments. At the same time, IFIs broker the often odious debts of conflict-affected and poor countries, increasing their power with national governments. The result is the imposition of the "liberal peace", focusing on conditionality linked to the privatisation of services, the promotion of Foreign Direct Investment, export-led growth and integration with the global economy. These impositions by IFIs undermine democratic processes and disadvantage the poor.

1. The UN must be reformed and strengthened to play the principal role in international engagements in situations of conflict. While formally a part of the UN system, the IFIs must implement significant reforms, including democratization of the institutions' governance, before their role in conflicts is further expanded and institutionalized.
2. Donors must ensure 100% unconditional debt cancellation for all of the world's poorest countries, including but not limited to, post-conflict societies, while upholding self-determination and human rights in designing and implementing economic programs in affected countries.
3. Imposed conditions are incompatible with democratic governance. Any terms in an aid relationship must be fairly and transparently negotiated with participation of and accountability to people living in poverty and in line with the principles of international human rights law.

B. The tools designed to assist and support those living in poverty and affected by conflict, namely Official Development Assistance (ODA) and various approaches to peace operations, are being used increasingly in efforts to protect Northern security. At bilateral and multilateral level, ODA is being re-defined to include donor-driven security expenses and diverted to countries and sectors of priority for donor security interests, often against the security interests of local populations.

3. Official Development Assistance (ODA) must maintain a clear mandate for poverty eradication, the Right to Development and the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). ODA funds should be focused in countries where poverty is a primary concern. Military assistance or resources for military training and peacekeeping operations should come from outside ODA budgets and be subject to full transparency and democratic accountability in donor and recipient countries.
4. Humanitarian assistance funds should be distributed according to principles of International Humanitarian Law, proportionality and needs assessments, in line with proposals under the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative.

C. Conflict and poverty-affected people are being treated as objects in strategic decisions aimed at protecting the powerful from perceived threats. In some contexts, such as the Mindanao region in the Philippines or Colombia, this has resulted in a less effective donor response and a perpetuation of conflict and insecurity.

5. Donors must recognise that democratic national actors, in consultation with local civil society working for peace, are the owners and drivers of conflict resolution. Donors should support and strengthen civil society capacity to deal effectively with conflict prevention, civilian crisis management and post-conflict situations. Donors and local governments should support the negotiation processes and implementation of peace agreements with wide stakeholder involvement.
6. All actors on the ground should have an obligation to document human rights violations and crimes against humanity, and bring these to the attention of appropriate multilateral bodies including the International Criminal Court (ICC).

D. Approaches to resolving situations of violent conflicts are frequently repressive and militaristic, focused on quick impact and short-term fixes, avoiding complex issues of democratic governance through technical solutions and ignoring long-term sustainable local civil society peacebuilding efforts.

8. Donors should invest more in early warning and conflict prevention as an alternative to the reconstruction of societies devastated by armed conflict. Donor assistance to African Union or other regional bodies' peace and security architecture should also reflect a holistic strategy to assist conflict prevention and peacebuilding capacities – and should not become a fig-leaf for inadequate action by the international community, as evidenced in Darfur.
9. Donors and local governments alike should work with local stakeholders, including civil society organizations, to analyze and address the root causes of conflict. Where possible, stakeholders committed to peace, including advice from neutral parties, should be brought in to analyze these root causes.