

Issues paper on Shared Responsibility

The Millennium Declaration lists several fundamental principles and values deemed to be essential to international relations in the 21st century. These include the need for shared responsibility amongst all nations of the world for the betterment of both North and South alike. In particular, it stresses that responsibility for managing worldwide economic and social development, as well as threats to international peace and security, must be shared among all nations of the world and should be exercised multilaterally. To that end, the United Nations, as the most universal and most representative organization in the world, needs to play a central role.

To help translate this common approach into effective national and international action, countries will need to lend increased focus to the objectives contained in the Millennium Development Goal #8 on Developing a Global Partnership for Development.

With regard to the target of developing further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system, while some progress has recently been achieved by developing countries in gaining greater access to markets, many goods that are important to their economies, such as clothing and farm products, are still heavily taxed. Greater political determination is needed to bring about a reduction in trade barriers so that developing countries may progress further towards this target.

Another critical objective is the need to deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt. Future debt payments for 29 heavily indebted countries have fallen by \$59 billion dollars since 1998, bringing their debt service to less than 7% of export earnings. Yet, for many poor countries, even this reduced level is too high. Moreover, several countries that remain potentially eligible for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative are kept out of the running by conflict, poor governance and arrears in payment.

Greater cooperation must take place in addressing the special needs of the least developed countries, landlocked countries and small island developing states. Aid to developing countries has increased steadily to \$106 billion since 1997. Debt relief has accounted for over half of this increase since 1997 and three quarters of it since 1995. However, this relief, while welcome, will not necessarily release more money for poverty reduction. Similarly, emergency and disaster relief, also a large part of the increase in aid, does not address long-term development needs. The 50 least developed countries now receive about one third of all aid flows, and donors have pledged to double aid flows to Africa, where most of these countries are located, by 2010. Only 5 countries-Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Luxemburg and the Netherlands have met the United Nations aid target of 0.7% of GNP, although 11 more European Union countries have pledged to do so by 2015.

Concerted worldwide action is sorely needed to develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth. Since 1995, the number of young people

throughout the world has grown by 135 million. During the same period, the number of unemployed youth has risen from 72.8 to 85.7 million. Youth now represents half the world's 192 million unemployed. Without sufficient employment opportunities, many young people grow discouraged and feel worthless. This presents an especially urgent challenge for developing countries, home to 85% of the world's youth. The integration of youth into the labour market is critical for future growth and for arresting the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Access to affordable essential pharmaceutical drugs, particularly for treating HIV, is critically important for developing countries. For this target to be achieved, countries must work closely with pharmaceutical companies to provide adequate access. Between 2001 and 2005, the number of people on antiretroviral therapy in low and middle-income countries increased fivefold, from 240,000 to 1.3 million. The scale-up was most dramatic in sub-Saharan Africa: from 100,000 at the end of 2003 to 810,000 just two years later. Unfortunately, the target set in 2003 of reaching at least half of those in need of therapy has been missed, and antiretroviral drugs reach only one in five globally.

Collective efforts must also be made to ensure that the benefits of new technologies, particularly ICTs, are made available to all. On an encouraging note, telecommunications growth has been particularly strong; the number of subscribers to fixed and mobile telephones rose from 530 million in 1990 to almost 3 billion (almost half the world's population) in 2004. However, by the end of 2004, only a mere 14% of the world's population was using the internet, with a huge digital divide still separating developed and developing countries. While over half of the population in developed regions had access to the internet, only 7% did in developing regions, with less than 1% in the 50 least developed countries.

As it can be seen, there is a need for a real cooperation between the developed and developing countries, and between the rich and the poor worldwide.