

## CONCORD Cotonou Working Group/Beyond 2015 European Task Force - Joint Briefing paper

### PUTTING PEOPLE AND PLANET FIRST: BUSINESS AS USUAL IS NOT AN OPTION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE POST-2015 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

#### **CONTEXT: Towards a post-2015 sustainable development framework**

As the deadline for achieving the MDGs draws nearer, people are increasingly concerned with answering the question 'what next'? There is both unfinished business and new business to be dealt with when we look beyond 2015. Climate change, growing inequality, food insecurity, demographic change, resource constraints, an unsustainable growth, consumption and production model and the financial and economic crises pose complex and interrelated challenges that must be addressed in order to realise the human and environmental well-being and development objectives that have been enshrined in the UN Charter, international law, norms and agreements. The politics of development have changed significantly since the MDGs were designed in the late 1990s: the geo-political balance of power has shifted, inequality is deepening, poverty is taking on new dimensions and the actors tackling - and creating - development challenges have changed. Implementing the MDGs has taught us valuable lessons on what works and what does not. It is now time to move beyond the traditional development cooperation agenda and identify and address comprehensively the true root causes of the key challenges that the world is facing today.

#### **Global Process and Timeline**

- The Open Working Group has finalised (July 2014) its proposal for a set of Sustainable Development Goals and Targets. This, along with the Report from the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing (ICESDF), will be used by the UN Secretary General (SG) for the preparation of a synthesis report.
- The European Parliament will adopt an own initiative report on the Post2015 agenda in November 2014.
- The release of the UNSG's synthesis report, due towards the end of 2014, will mark the beginning of the intergovernmental negotiations. A high level Summit will take place in September 2015 with a view to adopting the post-2015 sustainable development framework.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Financing for Development will take place in Ethiopia in July 2015. The EU is expected to present its vision regarding appropriate means of implementation for the global partnership by then.

#### **The Joint ACP-EU Declaration on the Post 2015 Development Agenda**

We welcome the efforts by the ACP and the EU to agree on a shared vision for the future sustainable development agenda in the joint ACP-EU Declaration of June 2014. This declaration is a strong foundation for building consensus around an ambitious and, universal post-2015 sustainable development framework both among EU and ACP countries, reflecting the spirit of the ACP-EU partnership, and with other like-minded countries. We praise the commitment of both parties to work together towards the achievement of shared ideas within the international negotiations.

***OUR VISION: A just, equitable and sustainable world in which every person can realise their human rights, fulfil their potential and live free from poverty.***

#### **ISSUES AT STAKE**

1. **Scope of the post-2015 sustainable development framework:** The Joint ACP-EU declaration addresses many of the major issues at stake in the post 2015 framework. Now is time to scale up these statements of intent and come up with a truly transformative and universal agenda contributing to poverty eradication and sustainable development for this and future generations. ACP and EU parliamentarians can play a role in ensuring key issues are maintained and strengthened in the upcoming negotiations.

To be successful, the post-2015 framework must be **universal** while guaranteeing that planning and implementation are locally owned to ensure lasting development outcomes, as experience with the MDGs has taught us. This calls for a framework that allows for priority-setting and implementation at the national or sub-national level as appropriate. CONCORD-Beyond 2015 European Task Force (ETF) and the CONCORD Cotonou Working Group (CCWG) call for a "universal" framework in which every country commits to make improvements in every goal area but the nature of the improvement must necessarily be tailored at country level to ensure ownership and relevance. The principle of common-but-differentiated responsibility (CBDR) should be applied at more detailed levels of the framework (such as target and indicator levels) in order to contextualise the response to a country's situation and to reflect differing historical contributions to current challenges. Every country will therefore have a series of obligations for which they will be held accountable. While the principles of country ownership and CBDR are rightly stressed in the joint declaration, further efforts are needed to operationalise them. In addition a clear statement is needed that all states have both a national and collective responsibility to advance this agenda and to strengthen a **people centred approach** at all levels.

We fully support the importance that is given in the ACP-EU declaration to completing the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals. When looking at the current MDG framework, it is useful to retain the positive aspects of concrete, measurable and time-bound goals, targets and indicators. However, a future framework must reflect our greater understanding of the complexities involved in addressing global challenges, including the risk of increasing inequalities and the necessity of living within planetary boundaries. It will thus be important to focus on 'zero goals' in the areas of human development, for example, and to ensure that future economic systems serve people and planet - not the other way around.

In terms of the thematic scope of the future framework, Beyond 2015 ETF and CCWG support a more comprehensive approach that include policy areas that impact significantly on the achievement of global sustainable development objectives, which capitalise on the links and synergies that exist between policy areas and build on the key principles of human rights (such as participation and empowerment, equality and non-discrimination, accountability), governance and sustainability (including all three dimensions - namely social, economic and environmental).

Therefore we are pleased to see in the joint ACP-EU declaration the emphasis on basic living standards; reduction of inequalities; sustainable management of natural resources with the ecosystem services they provide; good governance, equality, equity and respect for human rights that include gender equality; and peace stability and freedom from violence. . We also welcome the integration of climate change as a cross cutting issue of the future framework.

We believe greater efforts should be made to consolidate inter-linkages within the framework and create structural change, transformative processes and the enabling environment necessary for people to see their rights realised. For that to happen, it will be necessary to move away from issue-based thinking – where symptoms - such as poverty or conflict and fragility – are the focus and towards an approach based on root cause analysis. That clearly implies a need to usher in new thinking, new paradigms and a new system based on equality, social justice and sustainability, ecological carrying capacity of our planet, empowerment, participation, responsibility and accountability. **Business as usual is not an option.**

**2. Accountability** - Appropriate, independent and rigorous accountability mechanisms pertaining to all actors are crucial for the success of achieving goals and turning aspirations or 'commitments' into obligations. This is also central to democratic governance and the respect for human rights. The importance of accountability is acknowledged in the joint declaration but ACP and EU countries should provide clarity on how they foresee the establishment of rigorous and transparent accountability mechanisms. A mix of these will be required and where suitable accountability mechanisms already exist, they should be strengthened and used. On the other hand, where the framework covers issues where there is a gap in effective mandatory accountability mechanisms, such as in the area of corporate transparency and accountability, new mechanisms will need to be put in place.

**3. Policy Coherence for (sustainable) Development** (PCD) is fundamental to the success of the future framework. This requires that all actors, in both North and South, ensure that policies in any sector do not negatively impact on people's perspectives for progress or the realisation of their rights and, ideally, support those objectives. There are few policy areas which have no impact on developing countries in one way or another, while negative effects of a policy generally hit the most marginalised people on the planet hardest. PCD potentially addresses this critical global "accountability gap" more than any other policy instrument and could be further promoted by the ACP and EU to ensure that progress towards current and future sustainable development objectives is not undermined by other policies at the national level. Mechanisms will need to be established to make a reality of PCD, including binding regulations, a monitoring mechanism and a means for redress. Some of these mechanisms should be global, while others may be national or local.

### **Recommendations**

We ask ACP and EU Parliamentarians to:

- Continue supporting the call for an ambitious, transformative and universal framework, based on the principles of common-but-differentiated responsibility and country ownership.
- Raise the level of ambition adopted in the Joint ACP-EU declaration on Post-2015 further by challenging national leaders to put forward bold and practical proposals, focusing on empowering the poor, marginalised and disadvantaged, and set up national participatory processes related to the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. The future framework must, at the very least, focus on a spectrum of issues encompassing human development and well-being, social and economic inequalities, economic and environmental sustainability and good governance, including of natural resources.
- Capitalize and make progress on the joint ACP-EU declaration, ensuring that transformative processes, which focus on the underlying structural, root causes of poverty and human rights violations, are incorporated in the proposals for the next framework and that the people centered approach is strengthened.
- Call for improved accountability for all actors and for rigorous mechanisms to be put in place at all levels.
- Promote Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development as fundamental element of a successful framework

We highly recommend that ACP and EU Parliamentarians champion all these points with their governments in the follow up to the adoption of the joint ACP-EU position and the upcoming start of intergovernmental negotiations

**It is vital that policy-makers and all concerned stakeholders put aside their own interests and work to ensure a progressive, comprehensive and effective post-2015 framework, in order to create a just, equitable and sustainable world in which every person can realise their human rights, fulfil their potential and live free from poverty. To do this will take courage, collaboration and conviction. But it is eminently possible.**

For further information, please visit <http://www.concordeurope.org/> or Tel +32 2 743 87 99