

Notes for initial remarks to the Informal consultations on the draft outcome document of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development (*)

UN General Assembly, Sixty-Second Session. New York, NY, USA, September 5, 2008

Mr Chair, my name is John Foster, I represent the North-South Institute of Ottawa, Canada and the Social Watch international network, and I am speaking today on behalf of the NGO Group on Financing for Development which includes 13 facilitator bodies around the world.

Introduction

With other speakers here today we wish to express our appreciation and to thank the co-facilitators, the representatives of the General Assembly and the staff of the Financing for Development secretariat.

We are concerned that we emerge with a far-reaching and decisive outcome. We do not wish to reduce the level of significance of the Doha Declaration and its impact on moving forward, we wish a bold, creative and yet actionable agreement. Civil society representatives returning from Accra indicate that the final result there involved additional rather than less language, and believe that this resulted in a balanced and successful text. We hope the same will prevail here.

Mr. Chair, the civil society organizations have prepared detailed proposals for the Doha outcome, and a summary of recommendations as well as a full document are available in the hall for any of you who have not yet received them.

The crisis moment

Mr. Chair, while we appreciate having such a wide-ranging text before us, we sincerely assess that it lacks the urgency of tone and challenge required by the current crises we face, whether on the streets or at family tables.

Here and at the Development Cooperation Forum we have heard of the 3-F crises – food, fuel, finance – and we know that we are at a tipping point, a pivot in which hundreds of thousands, millions, of people are falling back into poverty and extreme poverty. We are moving in the wrong direction.

Beyond this and even more fundamental is the global challenge of climate change, which leaves none of us unaffected. As well we have noted the stalemate in world trade negotiations.

(*) This statement was prepared on the basis of discussion among the NGO representatives at the negotiating session and on previously established recommendations to the process from the NGO preparatory processes.

We need not only recognize these crises but take advantage of that recognition in proposing bold responses. The Outcome Document must “raise the bar”, challenging governments and the public. We need to move to a global framework for economic reform with justice and equity, a framework which is lacking today.

Mr. Chair, we are pleased with several elements in the document. In particular we appreciate the effort to include gender dimensions. There is a great deal more to be done in this regard. The NGO Women’s Working Group has developed proposals which will be put forward at the appropriate times.

We also appreciate the attention given to emerging issues. We are ready to work with you in developing more adequate analysis and responses.

The work on systemic issues is essential. We very much appreciate the proposal to move further on reform of international decision-making in the major world economic bodies, but the reform process must go deeper and faster.

Selected specific concerns

Mr. Chair, to deal with the 3-F crises we have mentioned and with adaptation and mitigation of the climate challenge we demonstrably require significant additional resources.

Clearly, donors must meet and exceed long-established targets for ODA, but we need additionality far beyond what national budgets have and seem able to provide. We need to expand levies on the profits of globalization.

We are pleased that innovative measures are recognized in the draft document, along with the work of the Leading Group, but these references must be strengthened and made more specific. We call for specific support of measures including the Currency Transaction Tax, as put forward in the Secretary-General’s report to the April High-level Meeting of the ECOSOC with the Bretton Woods Institutions, UNCTAD and the WTO.

We support clear commitment to deal with odious and illegitimate debt and for an effective, orderly and fair debt workout mechanism. Debt relief must not divert from ODA.

We are pleased to support the enhancement of the expert Committee on Tax. Further we support the proposals heard earlier today for dealing with tax evasion.

The path to development must be inclusive. We firmly support explicit commitments to assure domestic policies prioritize employment creation in decent work as the best road to assure basic equity and just distribution.

World Conference

Mr. Chair we support the call for “a major international conference to review the international financial and monetary architecture and global economic governance structures”. We believe that such an even must be organized by the only truly universal body, the United Nations, not by the existing Bretton Woods Institutions. It should be organized on the same inclusive principles that govern the Financing for Development process.

On moving forward: the follow-up process

We strongly favour an ongoing follow-up process via a new institutional mechanism which is outlined in our detailed recommendations. It should be based in the U.N., meet periodically and frequently. It should be inclusive along the lines established in the FFD process. It should be backed by a strengthened UP Secretariat in Financing for Development and a strengthened intergovernmental counterpart to the Secretariat.

On Procedure

Mr. Chair, Monterrey pioneered the inclusion of civil society in these crucial deliberations. We wish to guarantee that the process of further negotiation of the draft outcome document continues to be effectively inclusive.

This is particularly important for southern and other NGO voices who come from outside New York.

We therefore recommend a further three day inclusive informal substantive negotiating session to further develop the text.

Conclusion

Thank you for your attention. Mr. Chair, the many civil society organizations involved with this process look forward to working with you for a successful and far-reaching outcome.