

A PRESENTATION BY DAVID TOLA WINJOBI* NATIONAL COORDINATOR OF GCAP/MDGs NIGERIA AT THE INFORMAL INTERACTIVE HEARINGS ON THE MDGs WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 14-15 JUNE 2010 AT THE UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS IN NEW YORK, USA

Your Excellency,

On behalf of the global civil society organizations (CSOs), I would like to commend your worthwhile initiative in crafting out this consultative strategy, despite your busy schedule, bringing together both the CSOs and the private sector in these Informal Interactive Hearings of the General Assembly in accordance with GA resolution 64/184 of February 2010. This timely measure, no doubt, as a welcome development, would provide a useful input to the preparatory process of the High Level Plenary Meeting (HLPM) on accelerating progress towards the achievement of the all the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 to be held from 20 to 22 September 2010. By extension, we also want to appreciate the UN Secretary-General on the launch of “Keeping the Promise” report in preparation for the same HLPM on the MDGs. We salute His Excellency’s declared commitment to act, to deliver and to make 2010 a “year of results for people.”

Collectively through our organizations, spanning all continents of the world and representing some of the poorest and marginalised communities, we have been actively engaged in the MDG process over the past ten years. Assuredly, we are also committed to working with your Excellencies in particular and the UN in general to ensure that the summit delivers clear and concrete results for people, and in particular, measures to realise the human rights of the 1.4 billion who continue to live in poverty.

In this instance we would like to make the following remarks and recommendations:

Remarks:

- There are still palpable traits of poverty, hunger, preventable diseases especially in the developing countries because governments have not done enough.
- More than half a million women die in pregnancy and childbirth every year: of these deaths, 99% are in developing countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, a woman has 1 in 16 chances of dying in pregnancy or childbirth, compared to a 1 in 4,000 risk in developed country. In a developing country, every minute a woman dies from childbirth.
- MDG 1 is crosscutting as achieving goal one could lead to achieving most of the goals of the MDGs.
- MDGs are achievable as there are copious human and material resources in developing countries especially in Africa. Indeed, some African countries are on track to achieving the MDGs. Examples are, Rwanda, Tanzania, Mali, Zambia, Mozambique and Ghana to mention but few. However, resources are being wasted and leaking into private pockets in some countries like Nigeria

where they import what they produce (e.g oil) and where corruption has further exacerbated the worsening poverty profile.

- MDGs are, without doubt, development focused but yet to be seen as addressing the issue of human rights. Many of our leaders in developing countries are yet to appreciate the linkage between human rights and MDGs as the fulfillment of any of the Goals of the MDGs is the fulfillment of some human rights of sorts. For example, the poor just like the rich have the right to life, dignity, access to public service and decent living according to Universal Declaration of Human Rights Articles 3, 21 and 25. However, either directly or indirectly, people are prevented from enjoying these rights as reflected in people dying of hunger, starvation and preventable diseases, while they also lack decent living as encapsulated in some targets of Goals 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the MDGs.

Recommendations:

Bearing in mind the timeliness and aptness of the theme of these hearings, *Building a better tomorrow: local actions, national strategies and global structures*, we hereby recommend as follows:

1. Our building a better tomorrow should start today by thinking globally and acting locally making use of all available resources within our reach to contribute to attaining the MDGs by 2015. Our local action could be adoption of Global System of Mobile communication such as telephony using sms text messaging to pass information on MDGs progress. While governments could inform the tax payers about MDGs progress, on the other hand, the CSOs and other stakeholders could adopt the same sms method to monitor governments' implementation of MDGs and send signals or whistle-blowing when there is a noticeable derailment from the tracks. Governments should be transparent and open their budgets for accountability. CSOs are ever ready to cooperate with the governments in holding the latter accountable and in tracking public expenditures on essential services and highlighting instances where money is going down the drain or not working according to the budget.
2. African leaders have to stop lip servicing and declare genuine commitment to the development of their countries by seriously fighting corruption to a standstill and building accountability mechanism. MDGs and grafts are strange bedfellows. Corruption is a monster militating against the attainment of MDGs in most of the developing countries as there are bountiful resources which, unfortunately, many of their leaders are not making to work for the benefit of the poor masses. What our leaders need is political will; political will to attain and or exceed MDGs, political will to fight corruption, political will to block wastage and seal the leakages through which public funds go into private pockets thus enabling an accountable, efficient, transparent, and result oriented management of resources to achieve the MDGs.
3. African leaders should be responsive to Goal 1. The fight against poverty should be tackled headlong with implementable policies. The eight MDGs are interwoven and cannot be separated as achieving one is directly linked

to achieving one or two of the others. However, Goal One is intrinsically linked to the remaining Goals, and if governments could be responsive to this Goal, it would go a long way in attenuating the attendant problems of the other goals. For example, a woman that is earning a pittance or does not have a wage employment (Goal 3) would not be empowered enough to improve her waning health (Goal 5) or the health of her child suffering from malnutrition (Goal 4) because she is suffering from poverty and hunger (Goal 1).

4. MDGs could be attained through Public Private Partnership (PPP) Strategy. Without mincing words, governments at all levels know that it is their primary responsibility to provide good governance through provision of necessary socio-economic amenities that would impact on the general well being of the governed while the non state actors are to complement the efforts of the governments. The development of a nation hinges not only on the government but also on individuals and organizations. Therefore, in the face of current global economic recession, governments alone cannot be solely saddled with the development of a nation because of development challenges. Hence all hands must be on deck to salvage the situation. Millennium Declaration is a global agenda. In order to guarantee the achievement of the MDGs, and overcome our global challenges, all stakeholders, including governments, private sector, and civil society must be included in global partnership for global solutions. In developing countries for example, attaining the MDGs through sustainable access to healthcare and other socio-economic services and products, for example, can be accomplished through public-private partnerships, where the government delivers the minimum standard of services, products and or care, the private sector brings skills and core competencies, while donors and business bring funding and other resources.
5. Rich Countries should fulfill pledge and be transparent to the developing countries. In line with MDG 8, we encourage the developed countries in their policies to develop further an open, rule based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial systems including commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction. Bilateral and multilateral trade agreements that are anti-poor, and that would throw the people into further poverty should be jettisoned. The negative impact of Free Trade Agreements on achieving the MDGs, specifically food security, employment, accessibility of health services and availability of generic drugs should be looked into. For example, the European initiated Economic Partnership Agreement should be critically examined before it is foisted on the African, Caribbean and Pacific peoples. China should be sincere in her economic relations with developing countries so as not to turn these countries into dumping ground of substandard products. As at August 2008, the overseas development assistance to developing countries stood at a mere 0.2% as against 0.7% being canvassed for. We believe the developed countries could do better in giving grant-in-aid to developing countries than this small figure otherwise achieving MDG 8 will be a mirage by 2015.

They should follow the guiding principles of the Paris Declaration on Aids Effectiveness, among which are ownership, harmonization and mutual accountability. They should assist in strengthening the capacity of national and regional institutions with special focus on resource management, accountability and transparency.

6. Workable Policy Strategies: Governments from developing countries could enact and be committed to implementing policies focusing on attaining MDGs within the next five years such as:
 - * Passing an executive order for free antenatal care in their health facilities towards reduction of maternal mortality rates.
 - * Including women in the dialogue and decision-making processes of the economic and financial summits.
 - * Funding programmes on gender equality and women's empowerment, especially programmes aimed at immediately alleviating poverty and hunger currently being experienced.
 - * Increasing to 15% national and state budget allocated specifically to health sector in particular while larger percentage should be tilted in favour of maternal and child health from now on.

Thank you.

Dr David Tola Winjobi is a human rights activist, an educational consultant, a professional counsellor, a gender analyst and advocate, a resourceful manager of human resources, a community development consultant, an in-depth researcher, and conflict manager. With a brief stint in CAFOD as policy advocacy advisor, he currently serves as the National Coordinator of "Make Our Money Work for Us" Campaign a.k.a. Global Call to Action against Poverty - the world's largest anti-poverty campaign and monitor of the implementation of Millennium Development Goals around the world. He is also the Principal Coordinator of CAFSO-WRAG for Development, an NGO that campaigns on the fulfillment of human rights, democracy and good governance, and human development. He has just been admitted to the Draper Hills Summer Fellows on Democracy and Development Program hosted by the Centre for Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law (CDDRL) at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University.