

EVALUATION OF OUTCOMES OF THE SUMMIT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 20 to 22, 2010

The United Nations Summit on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) concluded on Wednesday 22 September, 2010, with the adoption of the Summit Outcome Document - [Keeping the Promise: United to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals](#).

Trade Union participation in the Summit

A trade union delegation led by ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow, participated actively in various events at the Summit, while some participants engaged in dialogue with their government representatives, to signal the keen interest of the trade union delegation in seeing real and accelerated progress aimed at achieving the MDGs by 2015, particularly with respect to poverty eradication through decent work and social protection.

This was also the key message communicated by Sharan Burrow to Round Table 4 of the Summit on 21 September, devoted to the theme: “Emerging Issues”. (For Burrow’s speech, as well as other presentations by representatives of Civil Society, go to: http://www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?page=amdg10&id_article=2998)

Burrow also spoke at a number of side events, namely, an ILO /Realizing Rights event on “*Accelerating Achievement of the MDGs through Decent Work*”, an ITUC/SOLIDAR Event entitled “*Decent Work and the MDGs – Keeping the Promise*” and an ITUC/UBUNTU event entitled “*Innovative Financing for the MDGs: A Precondition for Success*”. ...

The Outcome Document of the Summit – Structure and Content

The 81-paragraph Outcome Document adopted by the 140 Heads of State and Governments present at the Summit is structured into 4 main parts:

- A PREAMBLE or Political Declaration affirming Member States’ resolve to make every effort to achieve the MDGs by 2015, working within the context of the policy and normative framework of the UN, including the conclusions of its major Conferences and the provisions of its treaties, particularly the human rights treaties.
- An APPRAISAL of progress and setbacks in achieving the MDGs, signaling, in particular, the multiple crises and their negative impacts, and resolving to benefit from lessons learned for the replication and scaling up of best practice on a number of fronts including:
 1. Adopting forward-looking macro-economic policies that incorporate productive employment opportunities;
 2. Promoting universal access to public and social services and social protection floors;

3. Implementing social policies and programmes, including appropriate conditional cash-transfer programmes, and investing in basic services for health, education, water and sanitation;
 4. Respecting and promoting all human rights;
 5. Enhancing opportunities for women and girls and advancing the economic, legal and political empowerment of women;
 6. Working towards greater transparency and accountability in international development cooperation, in both donor and developing countries.
- A PLAN OF ACTION which sets out general principles, followed by specific action plans for each of the 8 MDGs.
 - CONCLUSIONS which reiterate the resolve of Member States to stay engaged in the process to 2015, while conducting annual reviews of progress at the level of the General Assembly, with a major mid-term review in 2013.

Trade unions welcome decent work commitments

In reviewing the Outcome Document, trade unions have welcomed the sections devoted to MDG1 on poverty eradication, since employment, decent work and social protection are recognized as central to poverty eradication. Member states have, in effect, committed themselves to adopting coherent macroeconomic policies consistent with the pursuit of “job-intensive, sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development to promote full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women, indigenous people, young people, people with disabilities and rural populations...” [para 70 (d)]. Of equal importance is their resolve to “promote the Global Jobs Pact as a general framework within which each country can formulate policy packages specific to its situation and national priorities in order to promote a job intensive recovery and sustainable development.” [para 48], and their recognition of the importance of social protection and “universal access to social services” for the achievement of the MDGs [para 51]. In what is a first for a UN Summit Outcome Document, Member States recognize the need for involving employers and workers’ representatives in [designing and implementing] initiatives on employment and decent work [para 70 (d)].

As regards **action plans on MDG1**, priority areas include youth employment, creation of inclusive financial services, ensuring women’s equal access to these services, investments to support small-scale producers, with a view to enhancing decent livelihoods in the rural and agricultural sector, and achieving food security. It is noteworthy that contrary to the IFI-inspired policy prescriptions of the past, the emphasis in this outcome document has shifted to local production as the model for sustainable development, rather than export-led growth.

As regards **MDG 2 (Achieve universal primary education)**, trade unions in the education sector will be pleased that the Outcome Document recognizes the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All (2000) as central to measures for promoting universal primary education, asserts the need for predictable development financing through international cooperation, supplemented by innovative sources for

education financing. Trade unions will note that their lobbying efforts bore fruit, in that the Document recognizes the need to move beyond universal primary education to focus on the transition process to secondary education and vocational training, and relevant skills acquisition for entry into the labour market. The document, however, stops short of the call made in the Trade Union Statement to the Summit which had advocated for removing “barriers to educational and transitioning opportunities at all levels”, that is, including the tertiary level. The Document does call for the removal of all barriers to girls’ education, and for a priority focus on issues of recruitment, training, professional development, employment and conditions of work of teachers.

Measures to achieve MDG 3 on gender equality and the empowerment of women must take full account of the relevant policy and normative framework, according to the Outcome Document, notably The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Structured discrimination in the world of work must be addressed, including pay inequity, and the failure to recognize women’s unpaid work in the care economy. Serious efforts need to be made to ensure that women benefit from measures to generate productive employment and decent work, and support measures need to be put in place to enhance income earning capacities and opportunities for women living in poverty.

As regards the health MDGs, the Outcome Document endorses the Secretary General’s new initiative: the Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health, and recognizes the need to develop and strengthen national public health systems as a prerequisite to achieving MDG 4 (reduce child mortality), MDG 5 (improve maternal health) and MDG6 (combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases). The Document asserts the need to develop adequate health workforce plans that pay attention to training, recruitment and retention. It encourages measures to address the loss of skilled health personnel through migration, including adherence to the World Health Organization code of practice on the international recruitment of health personnel.

On MDG6, the Outcome Document calls for the strengthening of international cooperation to combat HIV/AIDS, and for predictable long-term financing through the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and through innovative financing mechanisms. The Document asserts the need to address the stigmatization and discrimination of people living with HIV, but fails to acknowledge the workplace dimensions of discrimination, and the need to adopt workplace approaches to addressing discrimination as well as providing treatment and care in keeping with the ILO Recommendation on “HIV and AIDS and the World of Work (June, 2010), as called for in the Trade Union Statement to the Summit. The Document recognizes the need to reduce vulnerabilities and risks of women and girls through structural interventions that target behavioral change, including the adoption of rights-based approaches that promote “... the empowerment of women and adolescent girls so as to increase their capacity to protect themselves from the risk of HIV infection.” [para 76 (b)].

On MDG 7 (environmental sustainability) the Outcome Document calls for comprehensive and coherent planning frameworks that address environmental degradation, bio-diversity loss and climate change. It affirms the UNFCCC as the intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change. It

calls for strategies for new and renewable energy sources, low emission technologies, and sustainable patterns of production and consumption. But the document fails to acknowledge the need for just transition policies to address labour adjustment in the process, as called for in the Trade Union Statement.

In addressing **MDG 8 (a Global Partnership for Development)**, Governments committed to strengthening their global partnership for development through a holistic approach based on the principles of policy coherence as stated in the Monterrey and Doha Declarations on Financing for development, i.e., ensuring an enabling environment for the achievement of the MDGs through adequate and effective aid, fair trade, attention paid to debt issues, support for domestic resource mobilization, socially responsible FDI and innovative sources of funding for development. The Document recognizes the work being done on a Financial Transactions Tax (FTT), but falls short of endorsing it, as called for in the Trade Union Statement to the Summit.

Conclusions – ITUC deplores the lack of firm measureable commitments in the Summit Outcome Document, but welcomes the progress on decent work, social protection and social dialogue

In general, it may be said that the Summit Outcome Document is comprehensive in the range of policy measures and strategies it outlines for achieving the MDGs by 2015. However, the language of the Document can be characterized as pious affirmations and promises; and it would be difficult to measure concrete progress, and to hold governments accountable to their commitments on this basis. Given the serious reversals in countries' capacities to achieve the MDGs with the onset of the crises, and the need for accelerated progress if they are to be achieved by 2015, what trade unions were hoping for was firm, measureable and monitorable commitments, including the decent work indicators. But the document does advance the labor agenda within development policy, and in particular advances decent work by having a good social protection component, as well as the recognition of workers' representatives in the process and the need for social dialogue. Compared to the 2005 Summit Outcome Document which had devoted one short paragraph to decent work, this represents considerable progress. The corresponding sections of the 2010 Summit Outcome Document provide leverage points which trade unions can use to advantage in trying to ensure that their governments remain committed to the MDGs, with a priority focus on the decent work/social protection dimensions of MDG1 on poverty eradication.