



POSITION PAPER ON THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Adopted by the Board of the European Youth Forum in June 2010

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) were adopted ten years ago and, at the time, represented a tremendous step towards putting a holistic vision of development high on the international agenda. They brought hope that the lives of billions of people all over the world could be improved. However, despite being realistic, time-bound and measurable, their achievement is still a distant aspiration. There has been some clear but inconsistent progress, with some regions, such as Sub-Saharan Africa or some parts of Asia, lagging behind on some of the goals. Also, inequalities have increased within countries, even in the Global North. Along with new challenges that have arisen, the global food and financial crises, as well as climate change, if not addressed adequately, threaten the haphazard progress that has been made. These challenges have far and long-reaching consequences, which will particularly impact young people as well as future generations.

In light of the forthcoming High Level Plenary Meeting on the MDGs in September 2010, the European Youth Forum wishes to highlight some key measures that need to be taken in order to both rescue the MDGs and recognise youth as a key global partner.

Stepping Up Efforts

The European Youth Forum reiterates the need for the international community to address funding gaps and fulfil its commitments. It must increase the level of aid to reach the target of at least 0.7% of GDP, and define clear, annual Official Development Assistance (ODA) plans to reach these targets, as well as the aid quality obligations following the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action. An innovative form of financing also needs to be identified to achieve the MDGs. Debt relief, public-private partnerships and a global financial transaction tax should particularly be considered.

Evaluations show that some goals or specific targets within goals will require an increased effort, and fast-track measures must indeed be taken. However, the European Youth Forum wishes to highlight the interdependence of all goals and issues, and the need for effective policy coherence. Because of their cross-cutting aspects, two issues in particular will need to be mainstreamed into all goals, rather than simply tackled separately: gender equality and environmental sustainability.

In order to achieve real equality, gender equality must be integrated into all other goals, both to ensure that progress in other areas is not made at the expense of women, but also because empowering girls and young women is a prerequisite to achieving the MDGs. Specific emphasis should be put on decent employment and working conditions, education and on achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Governments must respect every woman's right to own property, to work in the formal sector and to invest in her family.

The European Youth Forum also acknowledges that climate change is the biggest threat to our livelihoods and the future of young people and a truly sustainable approach must be taken to achieve the MDGs, so as to ensure that climate change does not undermine the efforts and compromise the needs of the younger and future generations. The impacts of climate change have particularly been felt by the world's most vulnerable people, as it has been exacerbating serious problems such as hunger and access to water. The international community therefore

needs to adopt the fair, adequate and legally binding climate agreement that was expected in Copenhagen, and to allocate additional financial resources to address climate change.

Youth as a Key Global Partner

Accountability and governance are key in order to achieve the MDGs. In this respect, goal eight on the global partnership needs to stress citizenship and democracy as factors in achieving the MDGs. Only when the global population, and particularly young people, have and feel ownership of the measures taken, can there truly be sustainable development. The global partnership must therefore take youth into account as an important partner.

The European Youth Forum would like to emphasise the need to link the MDGs with the World Programme of Action for Youth¹ (WPAY), adopted in 1995. The WPAY focuses on the challenges faced by young people and is strongly interrelated with the MDGs: young people represent a large percentage of the population, in particular in developing countries, so the MDGs are to a great extent youth development goals. Strengthening regional and global youth cooperation and the collaborative work with international organisations and institutions will contribute to the full realisation of the MDGs and the implementation of the WPAY. Through regional and global dialogue and cooperation frameworks, young people and youth organisations will be able to tackle global issues, contributing to the development of coordinated and coherent policies and programmes and promoting awareness raising, information sharing and opportunities for capacity building. National ownership is crucial and youth must be empowered to take action, but also to monitor policies and actions and ensure good governance. Involvement does not only lead to empowerment and long-term development, but also makes implementation faster, cheaper and more effective.

Global education also plays a strong role as a basis for establishing equal partnerships, as it can help foster the understanding of solidarity and responsibility. Youth organisations, as important providers of non-formal education, can play a key role in the promotion of young people's active citizenship, essential to changing the lifestyles of the current and future generations, in order to address the core challenges of global society.

Decent work and green economy initiatives must be central to employment-intensive growth strategies. Employment needs to be specifically addressed and not only considered as a positive consequence of poverty alleviation actions. Young people and youth organisations need support for their engagement in the fight against poverty, through agricultural reform, entrepreneurship, health initiatives and educators among others.

In order to identify key measures for youth, there is also a strong need for more comparable data on development and youth, especially the impact of climate change and the food and financial crises on young people. The focus must also be put both on "vulnerable States" and on vulnerable young people. The international community must address vulnerability factors, social protection systems and devise targeted interventions.

Looking beyond 2015

¹ United Nations, [Resolution \(A/Res/50/81\)](#): "World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 & Beyond", 1995.

The international community, and Northern governments in particular, must fulfil their responsibilities and commitments for more and better aid, to strive for more policy coherence and a holistic vision of development. Donor countries cannot, on the one hand, demand good governance in developing countries and, at the same time, not live up to their own promises - promises that are fundamental to achieving development. It is crucial that the commitments made during the Summit are followed up by a fair, adequate and legally binding climate agreement, beside a commitment to reforming international institutions and the financial and trade system. Northern States should also not forget vulnerable and marginalised populations within their own borders, even if their overall goals and targets are likely to be met.

We have reached a time when it is also crucial to start looking beyond 2015. The Goals will need to be revised in order to be ambitious and adequate, rather than set too low for the purpose of making them easily achievable. Governments should ensure a people-driven process towards the revision and renewal of the goals. Timetables should also be set for Official Development Assistance in order to bridge the financing gaps. The European Youth Forum sees addressing inequality and developing indicators as key issues in this process. National ownership and the role of youth must both be strengthened. This should start as soon as possible with the consultation and participation of young people in the definition of the post 2015 goals, preferably linked to a revision of the World Program of Action for Youth. In general, global governance must be addressed and reformed, both at international level and from a global citizenship perspective. Youth organisations, which fight for social and sustainable development and build democracy, good governance and respect for human rights, are committed to being part of this process.