

Brussels Declaration

“The Future of Parliamentary Involvement in Global Health and Development”

20 October 2008

We, Parliamentarians from European countries and the European Parliament, participants of the Conference “The Future of Parliamentary Involvement in Global Health and Development” held in Brussels on the 20 October 2008, commit ourselves to provide political leadership on a national, European and international level to Global Health and Development in order to improve the wellbeing of the millions of people, and to hold ourselves accountable to our commitments in a transparent and responsible manner. Our aim was to agree on concrete, realistic and measurable recommendations addressing the development needs of developing countries, particularly Africa, with a specific focus on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and sexual and reproductive health and rights, in the context of development aid. 2008 is a critical year and without extraordinary efforts we risk failing to achieve the MDGs.

1. Europe’s responsibilities as the world’s largest donor and international commitments

1) Europe is the largest donor to official development aid (ODA), accounting for nearly 70% of the US\$ 117 Billion ODA in the world (EU Members States accounting for 54%, the European Commission accounting for 10% and other European donors accounting for 5%).

2) We welcome the many recent renewed commitments towards international development and global health in particular at UN, G8 and EU levels, namely:

- The outcomes of the United Nations General Assembly High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS held in New York in June 2008 and the United Nations High-Level Event on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) held in New York on 25 September 2008, announcing new commitments to meet the Millennium Development Goals.
- The G8 health-related commitments in the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit Leaders Declaration in July 2008 reaffirming US\$ 60 billion for aid to Africa to fight infectious diseases, strengthening health systems, and working towards the goal of universal access to HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria prevention, treatment and care by 2010 and to support MDG 4 and 5 via a comprehensive approach to reducing maternal and newborn mortality;
- The EU MDG Action Plan agreed in June 2008 and calling for speeding up achievement of the MDGs and delivering on pledges for increased ODA by the European Union.

3) We welcome increasing European leadership and support towards new and emerging global health funding mechanisms, namely:

- The financial commitments to the Global Fund to fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria, European Donors made during the Global Fund Replenishment Conference, the largest exercise ever in financing global health, held in Germany in September 2007;
- The support of many European donors to technical partners and for the International Partnership for Global Health which aims to strengthen the health system in recipient countries;
- The establishment of new financing mechanisms and initiatives such as Unitaid, Debt2 Health, Providing4health or Affordable Medicine Facility for malaria, offering a unique opportunity to provide stable and predictable resources for health in a coordinated manner.

4) As European Governments affirm their commitment for continued support in global health and development, we remain concerned that these commitments are not translated into practice as EU ODA decreased by €1.6 billion in 2007. It is therefore our responsibility as Parliamentarians to ensure continued European support and leadership on global health ODA.

II. Recommendations for Parliamentary Actions in Global Health and Development

As representatives of the people at national and European level, and specifically taxpayers who provide public funds for official development aid to global health initiatives, Parliamentarians recognise the unique responsibilities which rest on their shoulders to provide the necessary impetus to meet global health and development commitments.

As legislators, Parliamentarians should:

- Examine their respective legislative framework and propose/initiate changes to adapt development and budgetary policies and practices to the emerging global health architecture;
- Initiate and establish policy bases for decisive Government action in specific areas of global health in addressing global pandemics and which will contribute to reaching the MDGs;
- Enhance cooperation and exchange information between European parliamentary groups and parliamentary groups of developing countries to undertake all necessary steps within their authority to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights policies.

In their government oversight function, Parliamentarians should:

- Hold government leaders and the European Commission to account on their international commitments to global health and development aid, for example, by outlining concrete steps and timeframe to be taken to deliver on financial commitments;
- Establish top level government leadership at Ministerial level on development aid and global health in particular;
- Establish dialogue between parliamentary structures and the leadership and governance of new and emerging global health mechanisms and strengthen oversight of European representation within these global health mechanisms.

Within their budgetary influence, Parliamentarians should:

- Advocate for a strong support to the new financing mechanisms aiming to mobilise additional resources for global health and increased programming for sexual and reproductive health and rights in our development policies;
- Encourage open debate about the benefits of investing in international development and global health within Parliament and with government Ministers so as to ensure continued high levels of global health aid, particularly in economically troubled times, conflict situations and humanitarian crises.
- Endorse Parliamentary commitment to allocate 10% ODA for population assistance, and look towards broader goal for global health.

As community leaders and public figures, Parliamentarians should:

- Systematically organise hearings on the implementation of the MDGs in Parliament;
- Introduce parliamentary resolutions reaffirming support for, and solidarity with world's most vulnerable people;
- Engage partner organisations to join in mobilising constituents, the media and civil society representatives on global health and development challenges;
- Take part in government and European Commission's consultations surrounding Financing for Development and more generally to be included on all relevant delegations for UN/Health/Women-related International conferences and sessions.

We, the signatories Parliamentarians, invite other Parliaments in Europe to use this conference as a starting point for the establishment of an ongoing policy dialogue on global health and development. This will contribute to an ongoing oversight of the implementation of commitments and will hold governments and the European Commission accountable to the promises they have made.

This declaration shall be forwarded to the Presidents of Parliaments in Europe to serve as a blue print for further concerted action on global health and development, emphasising the positive role Parliamentary structures and Parliamentarians may initiate in order to ensure that global health and development remain on the agenda.

Signatory Parliamentarians:

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19. Janneke Schermers
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21. George Tsereteli
22. Hilde Vautmans
23. Elvira Velasco Morillo (pending waiting for the Spanish translation)
24. Cecilia Wikström