

[draft program]

"How to Make External Debt Sustainable?"

A panel discussion among policy makers, academics and civil society

2:15 pm - 3:45 pm, Wednesday April 9, 2014
International Monetary Fund, MC 2-210
Washington D.C.

Since the outbreak of the world recession in 2008 countries as diverse as Greece, Grenada, Burundi and Ukraine have run into serious debt sustainability problems. Ultimately even the IMF had to acknowledge, what academics have been warning against for years: Multilateral debt relief initiatives such as HIPC and MDRI have not solved the global sovereign debt crisis "once and for all". A recent IMF staff paper has identified some of the reasons for this in the set-up of global debt management, but has stopped short of making proposals for remedy.

One of the key elements of any debt restructuring process is the definition of a sustainable debt level for sovereigns. IFIs have developed various methodologies for distilling definitions for a sustainable debt out of a plethora of economic data and political circumstances. However, in real life, economic expertise tends to be over-ruled by political preferences (for or against relieving individual countries of their over-indebtedness) and by the dominance of creditors, who urge debtors to kick the can the road rather than solve a looming crisis in time.

Against this sobering background we ask for the link between the technical definition of debt sustainability and its translation into meaningful debt restructuring. How can timely and sufficient debt relief be provided? What are the missing links in global sovereign debt management? The panel discussion will provide input from policy makers as well as academic experts and civil society representatives with a long-standing record of advocating for fairness and transparency in sovereign debt workouts.

Welcome Remarks:

Sara Burke, Senior Policy Analyst, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, New York Office

Moderator:

Eric LeCompte, Executive Director, Jubilee USA Network

Speakers:

Three initial inputs of 10 minutes each, which look at debt sustainability from various angles, will be followed by commentaries from policy makers

Adrian Cosentino, Secretary of Finance, Argentina

“Debt Sustainability as a Pillar of Sustainable Development”

Lee C. Buchheit, Partner, Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP

[Speech title TBA]

Aldo Caliari, Director, Rethinking Bretton Woods Project, Center of Concern

“Definitions of Debt Sustainability”

Kristina Rehbein, erlassjahr.de

“The Global Debt Map: Who is in trouble today, and who is close to it?”

Responses:

Timothy Antoine, Permanent Secretary, Grenada Ministry of Finance (TBC)

N.N., government of Switzerland (TBC)