

A Global Partnership of Solidarity or Global Partnerships for Wealth?

A Civil Society Statement on the role of a Global Partnership in the new development agenda

It has been 15 years since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and yet the majority of the world's population is still held hostage by the long-standing problems of poverty, inequality, landlessness, unemployment, precarious employment conditions, environmental degradation, indebtedness, discrimination and violence.

Raging protests and strikes are erupting in many parts of the world, with demands running a wide gamut of issues from health, labour, education, human rights, women's rights, and indigenous people's struggle for their ancestral domain. All these are pointing to the prevailing mood of discontent among the people against the status quo and their loud clamor for human rights, dignity and fundamental deep-going change.

By next year, 2015, our governments and leaders are expected to meet again to come up with a new global development vision and priorities that hopefully will tackle the challenges left unresolved by the MDGs. It is clear that a new development agenda that genuinely attempts to address the vast and deepening inequalities of wealth, resources, power and opportunities whilst creating sustainable patterns of consumption and production will require international cooperation based on the principle of solidarity.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 22, establishes that international cooperation and solidarity is a pre-requisite for the realisation of human rights.

"everyone is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his (sic) dignity and the free development of his personality".

The obligation to international cooperation is further detailed in the Charter of the United Nations¹, the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights², the Declaration on the Right to Development, in the Rio Declaration and in the Millennium Declaration which specifies the principle:

¹ The Charter of the United Nations enshrines, in its preamble, the commitment of the peoples of the United Nations to "employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples". In defining the objectives and principles of the Organization, the Charter immediately mentions, in Article 1, paragraph 3, "to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all ...", thus becoming "a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends" (para. 4). Furthermore, Chapter IX of the Charter, devoted to international economic and social cooperation, alludes to promoting solutions to international economic, social, health and related problems, as well as international cultural and educational cooperation (Art. 55 (b)). In Article 56, the Charter registers the pledge by all members of the Organization "to take joint and separate action in cooperation with the Organization".

²Article 2 details the obligations of states to "individually and through international assistance and cooperation, especially economic and technical", towards the full realization of the rights recognized in the Covenant. Article

“Solidarity. Global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burden fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice. Those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most.”³

Recently, however, a different form of cooperation is being promoted in the name of sustainable development. A global partnership based on the principle of international solidarity is eclipsed by the proliferating *multiple and voluntary partnerships* between governments and trans/multinational corporations, with the United Nations even leading on the frontlines for these initiatives.

The mantra-like claim that is continually being chanted is that private sector initiative should be the cornerstone of development strategies. Majority of the post-2015 proposals coming from official agencies and expert panels, for instance, advocate fostering a business environment more conducive to the growth and competitiveness of the private sector; implementing “clear government policies and rules that align private business incentives”; leveraging of development assistance and public money for private sector development; and promoting public-private partnerships to reduce investment risks.

Beneath all rhetoric on partnering with the private sector is a creeping resurgence of a familiar market-led development strategy dominant among policy makers since the 1980s. Indeed while states have repeatedly committed to the principle of international solidarity a very different form of global partnership has dominated development policy and practice in the past three decades. It is a global partnership between governments, IFIs and corporations that has concentrated wealth in the hands of a tiny wealthy minority.

The emphasis given on market efficiency and productivity was the very same culprit that led to the greater concentration of wealth and assets in the hands of big corporations while doing little to improve the lives of the poor. The privatization of state-owned enterprises and assets has resulted in unaffordable costs of living and further hampered people, especially the most discriminated and disproportionately women, from accessing basic social and economic services. Tax policies have greatly favored the wealthy with governments reducing taxes on profits and high-income earners, while keeping tax wages and imposing flat taxes based on consumption, further incapacitating the poor. Deregulation of industries, initially explained to foster competition and eliminate monopolies, has instead concentrated business and market power into a few corporate hands.

The privileging of the private sector’s role in partnerships poses the danger of corporations and their lobby-groups gaining unchecked influence over the agenda-setting and political decision-making by governments. If left unmanaged and unsupervised, these partnerships are likely to evolve to further serve corporate interests resulting in the privatization of public services to the detriment of the peoples’ right to basic services and universal social protection. Indeed it is strange to think that while

11.2 specifies further the obligation in relation to right to be free from hunger. International solidarity was reaffirmed by the ESCR Committee in its general comment No. 3 on the nature and scope of international legal obligations.

³ United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000.

governments deliberate over a new set of “sustainable development goals”, other negotiations are taking place that will further cement the ‘sovereign rights’ of corporations over state jurisdictions.⁴

In light of these danger signs, among many others, we register our strong opposition to the uncritical appeal for partnerships with the private sector as the main driver of the future development agenda. We gather our collective strengths and efforts to counter the looming danger of the selling of our world’s future and our rights as citizens to corporations whose interests are increasing profits.

We call for greater scrutiny of partnerships with the private sector to ensure that they uphold and respect international human rights standards and development effectiveness principles. We demand robust accountability mechanisms and binding measures for corporations to be put in place to demonstrate full commitment and common understanding for global partnerships for sustainable development. We resist every effort that seeks to leverage partnerships to expand big businesses’ power and influence. We demand that our governments assert their ultimate responsibility in for protecting, respecting and fulfilling the human rights and interests of their peoples.

We call on governments to re-commit to the principle of international solidarity and support this principle as the mechanism for redistribution of wealth, power, resources and opportunities required to truly transform development and ensure the earth’s sustainability.

We call for a stand-alone Global Partnership goal which commits public funds to sustainable development, which commits to debt relief where it impedes sustainable development, which facilitates the exchange and democratization of knowledge, information, intellectual property required for sustainable development, which takes specific steps to reform global finance, end tax evasion, transfer pricing and other practices that limit public revenue, which reforms the global trade architecture and orients trade toward sustainable development, , informed by human rights and social justice, and which reflects the commitments governments have repeatedly made to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of all humanity.

Initial Signatories:

Campaign for Peoples Goals for Sustainable Development
African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)
Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)
Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN)
Asian Students Alliance (ASA)
Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID)
Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR)

⁴ The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership will cover the majority of global trade and will provide multi-national corporations the power to sue governments using Investor State Dispute Settlement procedures.

Center for Research and Advocacy, Manipur
Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA)
Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF)
IBON International
Indigenous People's Movement for Self Determination and Liberation (IPMSDL)
Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of Social Solidarity Economy (RIPESS)
International Migrants Alliance (IMA)
International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)
Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek (PKMT)
Peace for Life
Peoples Coalition on Food Sovereignty (PCFS)
People's Movement on Climate Change (PMCC)
Reality of Aid (ROA)-Africa
Reality of Aid (ROA)-Global
Roots for Equity
South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO)
United Methodist Church—General Board of Church and Society (GBCS)
United Methodist Church--General Board of Global Ministries, Women's Division
WELFARE - Togolese Youth for Sustainable Development

If you want to sign-on to this statement, please send your organization's name and country to secretariat@peoplesgoals.org