

PARAMARIBO DECLARATION

Working Together Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals

We, the participants to the Paramaribo Civil Society Forum held in Paramaribo, Suriname from 2nd to 4th May 2007 and organized by the Millennium Development Goals Global Watch in collaboration with the United Nations Association of Suriname and the National Youth Institute of Suriname (i.e. the National Youth Parliament, the UN MDG Youth Ambassadors, and the CARICOM Youth Ambassadors) with the support of the Government of Suriname, UNDP, UNICEF, the Government of the Netherlands and with the co-sponsorship of the UNA Guyana and UNA Trinidad and Tobago, the Suriname American Network Inc, the Suriname American League, Women's Network Suriname – Netherlands - USA (NVSN - USA) and others, on the theme “**Millennium Development Goals: Reviewing Progress and Making It Happen – Unlocking Civil Society Potential**”, having reviewed progress achieved in the realization of the goals and considered related issues including, *inter alia*, global partnership for sustainable development, human rights, strengthening the roles of civil society, the youth and the media and taking note of the summary reports of the working groups as contained in the proceedings of this Forum **Declare** as follows:

I – Eradication of poverty and hunger through global partnership for development

Latin America and the Caribbean:

Acknowledging the lack of qualitative and quantitative data and analyses from this region it has been realised that a true estimation of their position in achieving the millennium development goals could not be garnered especially when considering the Eradication of poverty and hunger.

One is concerned with the slow economic growth and a shortage of quality jobs. This inequality accounts for 43 per cent of the population classified as poor including 19 per cent that lives in extreme poverty. The region suffers from insufficient high savings rates to finance the investment needed to raise productivity as well as from limited tax revenues to spur investment in economic and social infrastructure.

In order to meet the Goals by 2015, in particular to halve extreme poverty and hunger, the Latin American and the Caribbean region will need to achieve a more rapid and sustained economic growth. Investments in human capital and empowerment of women will be required including social programmes to ensure that children can attend primary and secondary school and that people obtain proper health care. Venturing into special programs to assist the poor financially with sustainable loans for development is recommended. An authentic fiscal tax covenant will have to be in place so that state resources are used efficiently and to ensure transparency and accountability in the management of such resources. There will be need for international development assistance to supplement domestic resources of the poorest

countries of the region. Last but not least the region will need access to world markets for the Latin American and Caribbean region, especially for agricultural products.

Sub-Saharan Africa:

Much remains to be done to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 in sub-Saharan Africa. Although, globally, this region has resumed growth for over the past three years with a real GDP growth rate of 5.7 per cent in 2006, 5.3 per cent in 2005 and 5.2 per cent in 2004, this growth is far below the average growth rate of 7-8 per cent considered necessary for the African region to achieve the Goals by 2015.

It was emphatically stated that in order to achieve any of the Millennium Development Goals in this region we must tackle the matter at its roots; Lack of Fundamental Human Rights and Peace. Only when a holistic approach to reduce the war by Human Rights realisation across all African Nations is assessed and ventured will any real movement to MDG completion be realized

We have, however, noted encouraging progress : according to the World Bank's annual study "African Development Indicators (ADI) 2006, many African countries are on course in meeting the target of halving poverty by 2010.

Sub-Saharan Africa will need to sustain its on-going efforts. In particular, the region will need to improve good governance and smart management of natural resources. The region will also need to pursue economic growth through diversification, to promote entrepreneurship through the development of small and medium enterprises and support to the informal sector, to enhance policies conducive to private sector development, to reform and advance its banking system and financial intermediation, to invest further in human capital through education and health. The immense disease burden caused by HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, corruption, anaemic aid, cascading tariffs barring made-in-Africa products from entering global markets and dwindling foreign direct investments pose a threat to gains in overall poverty alleviation in the sub-Saharan Africa region.

Asia and the Pacific:

As one of the world's most dynamic regions and despite its huge population, Asia and the Pacific are doing better towards meeting the MDGs than sub-Saharan Africa. The report « *A Future Within Reach : Reshaping Institutions in a Region of Disparities to Meet the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific* » published in 2005 in partnership by UN Economic and Social Commission Asia-Pacific, UNDP and Asian Development Bank, finds that this region has made rapid progress towards many of the MDGs. However, as far as present trends are concerned, many countries in the region are likely to miss some vital targets, including those regarding infant mortality, HIV prevalence and access to water and sanitation in urban areas. Even more worrying, some countries are at risk of failing to reach even two thirds of the targets by 2015.

The Asia-Pacific region includes five of the world's seven most populous countries: China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Although the prevalence of economic and social poverty in these countries is often lower than is the case in sub-Saharan Africa, together and sometimes individually, they account for much

larger absolute numbers of deprived people. The five Asian giants alone account for over two thirds of all people living in rural areas without access to sanitation, underweight children, people living with less than one dollar a day, and of TB cases worldwide. Together, they account for more than 60 per cent of all people without access to potable water and of all people in urban areas without access to sanitation.

Countries like Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Timor Leste and parts of central Asia which belong to the Asia-Pacific region only recently started to recover from decades of war and civil strife. Their performance in terms of progress towards the MDGs and poverty reduction is weak, if not worse, than that of many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. This also applies to some parts of Asia's five giants, where enormous disparities exist between, for example, rural and urban China, northeast and south India, and provinces of Indonesia.

The moderate performance on some Goals, the lack of progress on a large number of targets in some countries, and the large number of Asians affected by various dimensions of poverty question whether the countries in the region are doing enough, either by themselves or with the help of the international community.

II – Human rights and the Millennium Development Goals

The interface - connection and interdependence - between Human Rights and the Millennium Development Goals has been addressed and debated in numerous forums and analysed in various studies and reports including, *inter alia*, the UNDP Human Development Report 2000 “Human Rights and Human Development”, the March 2005 report of the United Nations Secretary General “In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights For All”.

Cognizant of the fact that human development is essential for realizing the full protection of human rights, and human rights are essential for full human development and of the notion that development, security and human rights go hand in hand, we, the participants to the Paramaribo forum, underscore the need for building a strategic synergy between human rights and the Millennium Development Goals. We view the full protection of human rights and the Millennium Development Goals as the two sides of a same coin, and call on the human rights groups and the development community to work hand in hand. To achieve this synergy it is critical that the learning about the holistic framework of Human Rights as relevant to people's daily lives be implemented for them to distinguish between symptoms and causes. The learning about the indivisibility and interconnectedness of political, civil, economic, social and cultural human rights enables systematic analysis and critical thinking towards a sustained implementation of the MDGs at the community and at the political level.

Recognizing the importance of human rights based approach to the Millennium Development Goals, especially to the eradication of extreme poverty in this connection, we strongly voice the view that extreme poverty is a blatant violation of the right to development including the right to be free from fear and free from want and to live in dignity. The former United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan in his 2005 report, held the view that extreme poverty is a sad but inescapable aspect of the

human condition and is intellectually and morally indefensible. The scale and scope of progress made by countries in every region of the world has shown that, over a very short time, poverty and maternal and infant mortality can be significantly reduced, while education, gender equality and other aspects of development can be considerably advanced. The unprecedented combination of resources and technology, today at the disposal of the world, makes it compelling to get rid of extreme poverty.

Recognizing the importance of a human rights based approach to the goals, we stress the necessity of including a human rights perspective of the individual as well as the human rights of collective societies, such as indigenous people, in every activity of life. Human rights are a way to transform society. Equality will hardly be achieved unless human rights become a way of life. We, therefore, emphasize the paramount need for human rights education at all levels of society for the implementation of the Goals. We recommend integrating human rights education into all personal awareness and behaviour programs. We call on all Governments, human rights organizations, agencies and networks to develop and implement or continue to implement national strategies and programmes for human rights education and training which are comprehensive, participatory and effective. We hold the view that human rights education and information contribute immensely to the concept of development consistent with the dignity of women and men which takes into account particularly vulnerable segments of society of all ages, such as children, youth, older persons, indigenous and tribal communities, minorities, rural and urban poor, migrant workers, refugees, persons with HIV/AIDS and disabled persons.

We encourage Governments and private institutions to take affirmative action to make up for past discrimination in education, work or promotion on the basis of age, gender, birth, colour, creed, disability, ethnic origin, familial status, language, marital status, political or other opinion, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

The scourge of human trafficking has been irrevocably declared by the international human rights community as one of world's most despicable activities. We therefore suggest further action in this field.

We also recognize that the relatively new initiative of human security defined as protection of individuals and communities from threats to their lives and livelihoods and empowerment aimed at developing capabilities of individuals and communities to make informed choices and act on their own behalf can significantly contribute to the achievement of the Goals if they are integrated into national agendas for poverty eradication and local development strategies. We, therefore, urge the United Nations Human Security Fund and concerned partners in development to step up activities for human security in the recipient countries faced with threats and extreme poverty.

III – Disaster Preparedness and the Millennium Development Goals

Noting the important work done by the United Nations and Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) on disasters we recognize that this work is associated with the seventh Millennium Development Goal, ensuring environmental sustainability. We have further noted that the annual economic losses

associated with natural disasters averaged US dollars 660 billion in the 1990s not including the loss of human life averaging 184 deaths per day in different parts of the world.

We are aware that while disasters put development at risk, this risk can be managed and reduced through appropriate development actions including, *inter alia*, mainstreaming disaster risk into development planning and disaster recovery and reconstruction, building stronger institutions, mechanisms and capacities to deal with existing disaster risks including early warning systems, improving disaster preparedness and response and addressing gaps in knowledge for disaster risk assessment.

When disasters interact with other stresses and shocks such as a financial crisis, political and social conflicts, economic recessions or diseases, they annihilate the realization of all other Goals, especially the overarching Goal of eradicating poverty and hunger. We urge countries to adopt appropriate policies that reduce disaster risk and contribute towards the achievement of the Goals by reducing losses and protecting existing development gains as well as avoiding a generation of new risks.

Recognizing the need for the Civil Society to collaborate with governments on all levels concerning Disaster Preparedness we appreciate the Disaster Risk Index (DRI) developed by the United Nations Development Programme in order to improve the understanding of the relationship between development and disaster risk. The index measures the relative vulnerability to key natural hazards, namely earthquake, tropical cyclone, flood and drought, and identifies development factors that contribute to risk. The index shows in quantitative terms how the effects of disasters can be either reduced or exacerbated by policy choices. It should serve as an additional tool in the panoply of development actions to be put in place to manage and reduce disaster risk.

The Civil Society needs to advocate for Governments to pay more attention to the Climate Change phenomenon and thus the dissemination of information for individual responsibility to the environment must be completed for each region.

IV – The Media and the Millennium Development Goals

The role of the media in advancing the realization of the MDG global compact cannot be over-emphasized. There are too many people in the world who have never heard of the Millennium Development Goals. This needs to change and it needs to change now. In this regard, we underscore the urgent need to engage the media at the national, regional and global levels to raise the awareness of and advocacy for the goals, in particular the youth, indigenous people and the people living in rural areas.

The media is a power in democratic societies in its own right. It serves as a social change agent; it educates and acts as a public good in the development process. The media helps broaden informed decision-making, increase knowledge and mobilize political support. It channels, disseminates information and controls the socialization and enforcement of behaviour. However, the media is confronted with many difficulties in the developing world including, *inter alia*, inadequately trained journalists and weak self-regulation as well as monopolization by one group.

While we applaud the media's coverage of such natural disasters and diseases as the tsunami in the Indian Ocean, the Katrina hurricane in the US Gulf Coast, the earthquakes in Iran and Pakistan, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the bird flu, we are forced to note that their engagement in the promotion of the Millennium Development Goals largely remains lukewarm.

We therefore call on media owners to promote and donor partners to assist in supporting programmes and activities in developing countries aimed at further empowering media professionals through technical training and institutional capacity building to authoritatively feature the Goals through awareness creation and generation of regular and quality public debate and discussions to bring about changes in policy and in society. Also, human rights education programmes should figure prominently in the media coverage of the Goals. The media should tell the truth objectively.

V – Youth and the MDGs

The role of the youth in the achievement of the MDGs is one of the most important factors in the realization of these goals. With more than one-fifth of the world's six billion people between the ages of 15-24, 86 per cent of which live in less-developed countries, it is the largest group ever to enter adulthood on both sides of the development sphere. Moreover, they represent the part of the world population most affected by the Goals with the capacity to ensure their success.

All forums and focus groups have demanded the active participation of Global youth in decision making and governance to achieve the MDGs; recognizing this it is clear that all Governments, NGOs, Civil Groups and International Organizations need to empower their youth. We encourage all participants of this forum to demand this of their respective governments and agencies. We encourage all governments to follow the example set by the Government of Suriname by installing their UN MDG Youth Ambassadors, and in particular the recognition of their CARICOM Youth Ambassadors.

We have, over the last three days, identified the issues of youth migration, housing, and employment, as issues which must be placed on the international agenda, and addressed with urgency and in continuous consultation with the youth, in order to achieve the standard of global development that we all strive for.

We consider sport, culture and education as tools to bring about solidarity, participation, mobilization, peace, and equal relations across genders, races, sexual inclinations, generations, and with those among us with special needs. In October 2006 the first ever UN Global Youth Leadership Summit was held in New York. This summit brought together over 500 young leaders working towards development. This summit culminated into an international network of young leaders who continue to prove that the youth is able to and can advance progress as it concerns the achievement of the MDGs.

Achieving the MDGs is the most pressing social imperative of our time and only together (Governments, the private sector, civil society, international organizations, NGOs and the youth) will the MDGs be achieved by the time set.

VI – Unlocking Civil Society Potential

Having discussed the theme of the Forum “Millennium Development Goals: Reviewing Progress and Making It Happen – Unlocking Civil Society Potential” and aware that peace, development and wellbeing of peoples in the world can only be achieved if all sectors in society and all States in the world synergize to achieve the Goals by 2015, we have resolved and determined to pursue vigorous efforts in our respective organizations, countries and regions for a successful realization of the Goals. In this regard we are committed to intensifying our collaboration and networking at the national, regional and global levels and to work closely as partners with (i) the media to raise global awareness on, and increase advocacy for the Goals and (ii) governments and other national authorities, the private sector and international organizations including the United Nations system for an effective and timely implementation of the Millennium Development Goals Global Compact.

We have unanimously agreed to form a Global Alliance for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals that will mobilize and galvanize the people of the world for the purpose of claiming and ensuring the effective implementation of the MDG Global Compact. Civil society must get involved in politics and human rights and must include all social groups. We have entrusted the conveners of the Paramaribo Civil Society Forum with the responsibility for making this Alliance a reality. We call on donor partners, philanthropists and humanists to give their support to these conveners for the launching of the Alliance. We have also determined that the Alliance will meet every two years in rotation in each region of the world. We have further determined that the next MDG Global Watch meeting will take place in May 2009 in Pretoria, South Africa.

We request that the number of pilot countries selected by the Millennium Project to make the case for the realization of the MDG Global Compact be increased to include additional countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia-Pacific. In this respect, we call on donor countries and funding organizations to make an extra effort by providing the resources needed.

We encourage the exchange of experiences and lessons learnt between countries and the dissemination of best practices on the implementation of the MDG Global Compact and urge countries succeeding in their efforts to lend their support to countries lagging behind. We take note with appreciation the work of the Presidential Commission of the Dominican Republic, and urge other countries to follow this example and we follow with interest the on-going experience of Brazil.

We request the conveners of the Paramaribo Forum to disseminate widely the present declaration, and in particular, to submit it (1) to the United Nations Secretary General with the request to have it distributed to Member States as a document to the next session of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (2) to the United Nations agencies (3) to the President of the Republic of Suriname and to the National Assembly and the National Youth Institute of Suriname (4) to the Secretary General of the Organisation of American States (OAS) (5) to the Secretary General of CARICOM (6) the UN Office of Sports for Development and Peace and (7) the media and (8) civil society.