

***The European Union can make MDGs possible***  
**RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION**  
**April 2010**

The situation of poverty and injustices in the world today is more than alarming and the ongoing economic crisis urges us to improve our efforts for a better future. Poverty is present everywhere, in Africa, Latin America, Asia, as well as in Europe. Some of the poorest European countries are located just on the other side of the European Union (EU) borders.

For Caritas, **poverty, in all its forms and in all continents, is a scandal**; it is the denial of the most basic human dignity. Poverty is not in anybody's or any nations' interest; poverty is costly and poses a severe threat to socio-economic stability and security in the world. Fighting poverty is not only an act of charity; it is a fight for basic rights. It is the expression of solidarity between people, across continents, across generations, across cultures – this is the base for our humanity.

Caritas Europa believes that **striving for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)<sup>1</sup> is an important step in fighting poverty**. The MDGs represent a political commitment towards social justice and the eradication of poverty. Reaching the MDG targets is also essential for national and international peace and stability. As a catholic network, Caritas Europa is also very sensitive to the fact that the MDGs are closely related to the Catholic Social Teaching, which stresses that solidarity and reciprocity are fundamental principles in an interconnected world. Caritas has been a constant and dedicated advocate for the MDGs. Through many international partnerships in the field, Caritas organisations have implemented thousands of social, development and humanitarian programmes in all 5 continents, programmes that aim to reduce hunger, improve people's health, provide education to children, deliver care to HIV-AIDS patients, empower women and broader communities to claim their rights and build their own future, etc.

At the time of the establishment of the MDG framework in 2000, **the EU made a commitment to achieve the MDGs by 2015**. Since 2010, two thirds of the time has elapsed, and a lot still needs to be done. Progress has been made, but varies significantly from one Goal to another, from one country to another, and even from one region to another region within the same country. Today, the world, including Europe, suffers the consequences of a grave global economic crisis that hit the most vulnerable persons the hardest. The MDGs are also facing other global challenges, such as food insecurity, climate change, while violent conflicts have never ceased.

The **EU plays an important development role** both within Europe and outside the continent in providing 60% of global Official Development Aid (ODA) and in being an important trade partner of developing countries. Caritas Europa appreciates the positive outcome of EU cooperation for development and relief. This is why we are concerned that the new crisis context may affect the EU's commitment to achieving the MDGs, and the EU's ODA budgets.

The new Lisbon Treaty now clarifies that the ultimate goal of EU development cooperation is poverty eradication. 2010 is also the **European Year for the fight against poverty and social exclusion<sup>2</sup>**. In support of this political commitment by the EU and Member States, Caritas Europa is carrying out a campaign called "Zero Poverty – Act Now"<sup>3</sup>, which was launched with the publication of a new report

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<sup>1</sup> [www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)

<sup>2</sup> [www.2010againstopoverty.eu](http://www.2010againstopoverty.eu)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.zeropoverty.org>

“Poverty Among Us”<sup>4</sup>. It is also the year when the EU will adopt its new 10-year economic strategy, **Europe 2020**.

2010 is a perfect momentum for the EU and the Member States to take decisive actions for the MDGs and demonstrate their commitment at the **UN MDG Review High Level Plenary Meeting** (otherwise called UN MDGs Summit) on 22-24 September 2010 in New York.

## 1. The EU in the international MDG+10 process

Caritas Europa urges the European Union and the other influential players at the September UN Summit to act with a **sense of urgency** and more than ever with a **sense of responsibility** towards the poorest people on the planet.

We underline that the urgency is to look at what can be done concretely now - and at least until 2015 - to accelerate the efforts towards **realizing the existing MDGs**. While the MDG framework can be improved, in the short term, the global dialogue and partnership should continue to focus on defining the best strategies of action to achieve the MDGs from now until 2015, rather than starting to debate the shape of a post-2015 framework. Moving away from the MDGs could only be considered as a sign of lack of commitment of the international community to face its responsibilities. In addition, we insist on the **integrity of the MDG framework**. Given the strong inter-linkages between the different MDGs, success can only be claimed if all -not only one or two - MDGs have been achieved.

In order to achieve the MDGs, Caritas Europa believes that much more needs to be done to support the emergence or strengthening of inclusive and self-supporting societies, in which poor people are not simply victims but actors, and in which each individual's human rights and dignity are respected. Therefore, more efforts should be dedicated to **reaching out to the poorest and most marginalized people**, notably women, children and migrants, through participatory development approaches. **Social participation** is indeed the best way to fight and prevent poverty. Caritas Europa particularly emphasizes the need for long-term investment aimed at **protecting and strengthening the family**, as an essential pillar for social welfare and solidarity.

As the world's biggest aid donor and a major trade partner of developing countries, **the EU must demonstrate leadership and use its influence** to help reach an ambitious and constructive outcome at the UN MDG Summit in September, and beyond this, strengthen the international community's concerted efforts towards eliminating poverty making globalization fully inclusive and equitable. At the UN Summit, Caritas Europa calls for the adoption of an **Action Plan laying down clear objectives and timelines** to follow up the commitments, and the setting up of a **transparent monitoring mechanism**, notably to allow CSOs to follow up progress.

## 2. The EU Strategy for the MDGs

At the European level, Caritas Europa calls on the EU to adopt at its European Council of Heads of State and Government on 17-18 June – at the latest – a **comprehensive, action-oriented and fully budgeted MDG Strategy**. In the context of the MDG+10 review process, the EU Strategy needs to be ambitious enough to motivate the world's leaders to firmly commit to an adequate pro-poor action plan at the UN Summit.

### 2.1 An EU Action Plan for the MDGs

The EU MDG Action Plan must concentrate on addressing the MDG gaps and the inter-linkages between MDGs, integrating **human rights, gender equality and environmental sustainability as crosscutting issues**, and emphasizing the need for a **multi-stakeholder dialogue**. Thus, proposed actions must aim at increasing the responsiveness and inclusiveness of EU cooperation.

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<sup>4</sup> Caritas Europa, *Poverty Among Us*, 2009

## 2.1.1 Recommendations for all EU actions towards the MDGs

- **Respect and Promotion of Human rights**

A **human-rights based approach** (HRBA) must be used systematically; this requires an understanding of human rights in development both as a means and as an end. The capacity of staff of the European Commission and the Member States governments should be reinforced to integrate the HRBA at all levels of designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating EU and national policies and cooperation programmes.

The five principles of the Human Rights Based Approach derived from the international framework are<sup>5</sup>:

1. Explicit, accurate use of the international human rights framework;
2. Empowerment as a precondition for effective participation - as of right;
3. Participation in development decisions - as of right;
4. Non-discrimination and prioritisation of groups vulnerable to human rights violations;
5. Accountability of duty-bearers to rights-holders.

In addition, Caritas advocates for the proper implementation of all **United Nations Human Rights instruments**. Specifically, Caritas Europa urges the Member States that have not done so yet, to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted in December 2008 by the UN General Assembly, as well as the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

- **Responsiveness**

In order to effectively contribute to achieving the MDGs, the European Commission and the Member States must invest in the improvement of their capacity and tools, to **better understand the local contexts** of poverty and injustice in which they are cooperating. Such local analysis must identify not only the symptoms but also the root causes, including the systemic causes, of this poverty, these inequalities and injustices, as well as their victims and most vulnerable groups. In addition, the EU should further investigate the impact of cross-cutting issues such as forced migration, conflict and climate change on achieving the MDGs, as well as the inter-linkages between MDGs. Thus, it would be easier to identify effective synergies of action.

The EU MDG action plan must include a strong **monitoring system** that allows to collect relevant data for improving relevance and coherence of EU cooperation. Quality indicators for each MDG and cross-cutting issues, as well process indicators to evaluate the level of participation and transparency in policy-making and programmes must be developed. The monitoring system must also capture the inter-linkages between MDGs.

While progress with the MDGs may be observed at national level, this average national data often masks huge inequalities within the country, especially outside of the capital cities and major urban centres. The EU cooperation and aid should be **much better targeted**: i) to the poor and vulnerable groups, ii) in the regions they reside in; iii) with the view to address the symptoms and causes of poverty. Thus, more EU-funded cooperation projects are necessary in support of rural population and small farmers. This also requires strengthening the local stakeholders' capacity to design, monitor and implement local MDG strategies.

- **Inclusiveness**

The fight against poverty can only be won if there is more dialogue, participation, transparency and coordination amongst actors involved in the development process, including the poor

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<sup>5</sup> CONCORD Human Rights Based Approach briefing paper, 2008, <http://www.concordeurope.org/Files/media/extranetdocumentsENG/NavigationSecondaire/WorkingGroups/RBA/HRBA-Briefing-Paper-FINAL2008.pdf>

themselves, central and local authorities, parliaments, civil society organisations and the private sector. There is an urgent need for the European Commission and the Member States to increase their own capacity at headquarters and country offices / delegations level, to run a **sustained multi-stakeholder dialogue**, as well as to build the capacity of the other stakeholders (including CSOs) to become effective actors in such dialogue.

### 2.1.2 Specific recommendations for actions regarding selected MDGs

Caritas Europa appeals to the EU and Member States to undertake the following specific actions:

- ***Improving food security (MDG 1)<sup>6</sup>***
  - To recognize that supporting smallholder, family-based agriculture has proven to be the most sustainable way to enhance food security, to bring income to poor rural households and to mitigate climate change. Therefore, the EU and the Member States should promote women and men smallholder production, notably by securing and enforcing their access to natural resources (e.g. land, water), to local and cross-border markets, to financial services and credit, as well as by improving rural infrastructure, such as irrigation systems.
  - To increase long-term investments in agriculture and rural development in developing countries, which have been neglected for too many years. Financing of agriculture has to go back to the levels of the 1980s, which was 15% of ODA on average. The EU should avoid that these investments are undermined by the lack of coherence of other EU policies and agreements (e.g. CAP, EPAs, agricultural trade agreements, land grabbing).
  - To implement the FAO voluntary guidelines on the right to food to help improve their policy and programmes from a right-based perspective. People's well-being and the respect of their right to food and right to development must prevail over any other short-term political and commercial interests.
  - To actively engage in the global, regional and national coordination of the food security institutional architecture based on a clear division of responsibilities and tasks amongst the different stakeholders. The EU should support a reform of the FAO Committee of Food Security along the principle of "one member, one voice" and towards ensuring that Civil Society Organisations have a specific role to play in fighting food insecurity and poverty, and supporting the overall goal of the right to food for all.
- ***Empowering women for an inclusive development (MDG 3)***
  - To raise awareness on issues relating to the equity between women and men at all decision-making and programming stages at local, regional, national and international levels, in order to decisively fight poverty.
  - To commit human and financial resources and assign clear responsibilities for the delivery of the actions contained within the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010-2015. EU policies and programmes must be sensitive to the specific needs of women and men, as well as culturally sensitive, aiming to the elimination of injustice and discrimination.
  - To enhance the civil and political participation of women in all policy-making processes, which is essential for setting the political agenda towards achieving the MDGs. This requires more support to women's organizations.

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<sup>6</sup> See [Caritas Europa Response to the Consultation](#) on the European Commission Issue Paper "Towards a EU policy framework to assist developing countries addressing agriculture and food security challenges", January 2010

- To ensure greater coherence in the design and implementation of all EU development policies and programmes affecting women's lives (trade, labour market, health, sexual violence, migration, human trafficking, etc.) for progress towards gender equity and women's empowerment.
- **Fighting HIV/AIDS (MDG 6)**
- To protect the human rights, especially the dignity and integrity, of the people living with and affected by HIV & AIDS, their right to appropriate medical treatment, nutrition and their right to work<sup>7</sup>.
- To strengthen EU and national policies and programmes towards a more targeted response to HIV, TB and Malaria to achieve universal access to integrated and comprehensive treatment, care and support extended to families, and to increase development and access of pediatric testing and pediatric treatment for HIV and TB.
- To ensure more effective and more concerted efforts to deliver on the European Programme for Action to Confront HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis through External Action (2007-2011).
- To ensure that in the design of all EU development policies and programmes the specificity of HIV & AIDS is taken into account, that policies and programmes related to HIV & AIDS are sensitive to the specific needs of women and men, are culturally sensitive, and work towards the elimination of injustice, discrimination, social taboos and denial related to HIV & AIDS.
- To promote and facilitate cooperation between civil society and governmental institutions on local, national and international levels.
- **Preserving our planet (MDG 7)**
- To help safeguard the integrity of creation for future generations through a strategic focus on environmental sustainability with the view to identify and implement solutions ensuring environmental sustainability at the levels of local governments, businesses, civil societies and families, and to reduce the carbon footprint of the EU's internal and external activities.
- To explicitly recognize and protect the right of people to sustainable development, particularly of the poorest, in EU policies on climate change and the environment. To do so, these policies must enhance participation, strengthen the position of women and have a clear poverty focus, which includes ensuring that the poorest have access to ecosystems services for food, water, shelter and medicine, clean technologies that safeguard the natural resources, and protection from the impacts of environmental changes.
- To mainstream environmental sustainability through EU and national development policy and programming and ensure a strong coherence of EU and Member States' external policies, taking into account climate change impact on development.
- To agree a fair, effective, legally binding and enforceable post-Kyoto agreement. In recognition of their ecological debt to the international community, industrialized nations, and the EU in particular, should take the lead in making absolute reductions of greenhouse gas emissions of more than 40 percent (based on 1990 levels) by 2020. This target should be reviewed as the emerging science indicates.
- To provide sufficient levels of secure financial and technological support for developing countries to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, using secure and predictable financing mechanisms. This must be in addition to their existing ODA commitments. The EU also needs to

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<sup>7</sup> Caritas Europa, *In solidarity with people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS*, 2008

increase investments in the development and implementation of biodiversity conservation policies and programmes, in water sanitation and water management plans, in community based slum upgrading and above all in environmental education at all levels – within the EU and in collaboration with its partners worldwide.

- ***Implementing a genuine global partnership for development (MDG 8)***

- To fulfil the EU commitments regarding the volume of Official Development Aid (ODA) - reaching 0.7% of GNI by 2015 -, by reflecting these commitments in the EU and national budget programming laws.
- To allocate at least 20% of their ODA to basic social services, such as health and education (as called for by the European Parliament), and at least 15% to agriculture and rural development (i.e. to bring back the level of the 1980s). Flexibility and complementarity of the EC and Member States cooperation instruments must be introduced to address the complex situation of fragile States and post-conflict countries, and better link relief and development.
- To improve the quality, effectiveness and impact of EU aid, through phasing out all conditionalities relating to economic policy and migration flows management, and untying all EU aid to all countries, including food aid and technical assistance.
- To adopt innovative mechanisms for financing development, in particular using international taxation, starting with encouraging all Member States to adhere to the tax on flight tickets and putting in place a Tax on change transaction in Euro and British Sterling. While the EU should advocate this agenda through multi-lateral channels, specific measures must take place in the short term in the Euro-zone.
- To help developing countries mobilize domestic resources through reinforcing their tax administrations, strengthening mechanisms for stopping illicit capital flows and tax evasion, further regulating banking systems and suppressing tax havens.
- To cancel all poor countries' illegitimate debts (borrowings that never benefited populations) and to put in place a new framework for debt that will focus on the mutual responsibility of both parties.
- To reinforce corporate business transparency in tax, social and environmental matters. A new legislative framework must be adopted to require companies to systematically report on their impact on development. Country by country reporting by European multinational companies operating in developing countries must become a norm in the International Accounting Standard Board framework as well as in the EU Transparency Obligation Directive.
- To shift from the narrow aid effectiveness framework to a broader agenda on development effectiveness, which promotes the diversity and complementarity of all cooperation instruments (including aid), policies and actors in development, with the view to produce sustainable positive impact in the lives of people, through addressing the causes as well as the symptoms of poverty and inequality. Fulfilling all human rights, protecting the environment, ensuring decent work and achieving gender equality are core objectives of development effectiveness.

## **2.2 An EU Financial Strategy for the MDGs**

In order to achieve the MDGs, more financial resources are required. Caritas Europa advocates for a development process that promotes dignity, ownership and sustainability, leading to the self-support of developing countries. EU aid is necessary to help developing countries help themselves out of poverty. Therefore, a clear EU strategy for financing the MDGs must be developed.

Caritas Europa calls on the EU Member States to honor their commitment to **deliver 0.7% of their GNI in development aid by 2015** at the latest. The economic crisis cannot justify to neglect aid to developing countries, many of whom are now also on the verge of falling back into a debt crisis. Urgently, Member States must agree **binding timetables** that show how they will manage their aid delivery year by year until the 0.7% target is reached.

In addition, Caritas Europa calls on the European members of the G8 to also quickly fulfill their commitment to increase annual aid to Africa by US\$25 billion a year and overall aid by an estimated US\$50 billion by 2010; a promise made in 2005 in Gleneagles, and reaffirmed by the G8 in l'Aquila in July 2009. The European Commission must also deliver their promised €3 billion in support to the l'Aquila initiative over 2010-2012.

In order to avoid aid dependency, additional sources of financing must be promoted. The EU must enhance its support to developing countries to **mobilize their own resources** for their development. Europe should also demonstrate leadership in promoting **innovative financing mechanisms** to leverage additional funds for development.

### 2.3 Support to an active and effective Civil Society

With their extensive knowledge and experience of dealing with poverty and injustice situations, civil society organisations are key partners of the MDGs. In order to contribute to development impact more effectively, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) need an **enabling environment** including access to funding, political space, a guaranteed access to the poor and people in need, and adequate protection for their workers, especially in conflict and post-conflict contexts.

In particular, Caritas Europa calls on the European Commission and the Member States to **maintain adequate direct funding for CSOs**, and formulate **new, more flexible and simplified CSO funding modalities** that promote longer term support and sustainability and allows capacity-building of CSOs and networks in developing countries, as well as CSO network-based activities for better coordination and less duplication.

Caritas Europa calls on the EU to constantly reaffirm the **autonomous role of CSOs** and advocate for it in developing countries, through extending mapping exercises of CSOs in developing countries, and strengthening **multi-actor approaches** in its cooperation programmes, with the view to promote a conducive space for local civil society as an independent countervailing power and to support parliamentary scrutiny of government policy. Caritas Europa calls on the European Commission to identify mechanisms for **downward accountability** to people living in poverty and to capitalize on the grass-root linkages of CSOs to strengthen policy approaches to poverty eradication.

Caritas calls on the EU to be **more inclusive in its decision-making**, at European level and at the level of country offices and delegations. In particular, Caritas Europa welcomes the **Quadriologue** structured dialogue, and calls on the European Commission to demonstrate openness for addressing the challenges faced by CSOs. Caritas Europa calls on the European Commission and the Member States to also actively engage in the multi-stakeholder dialogue organized by the **Open Forum on CSO development effectiveness**.

### 2.4 Strengthened EU Policy Coherence for Development

The factors that affect development are multiple, such as trade relations, migration flows, armed conflicts, climate change. Development and aid policies alone cannot address all these challenges while meeting the needs of developing countries. Necessarily, the solutions are more complex, and require a high-level of policy coherence, in order to **create policy synergies and avoid harmful**

**consequences.** Caritas Europa strongly holds the view that the objective of international sustainable development must always prevail for the benefit of humanity as a whole and our planet.

In the European Consensus for Development, the EU recognizes that the principle of Policy coherence for Development (PCD) is an effective tool for poverty eradication and for achieving the MDGs. The PCD principle has also become **a legal obligation under the Lisbon Treaty**, applicable to EU institutions and the Member States.

The lack of coherence of EU external policies has been clearly demonstrated in areas such as agriculture, trade or migration<sup>8</sup>. Incoherent policies are counter-productive, costly, and they undermine the credibility of the EU towards European taxpayers and towards our partners in developing countries.

Caritas Europa believes that the PCD principle needs to be better promoted and implemented through **increased staff capacity, and the introduction of appropriate policy-making tools and institutional mechanisms** in the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Member States. A structured and honest **dialogue with Southern partners** on the impact of EU external policies should take place and **accountability** of EU policy-makers with regard to policy incoherence should be reinforced. Notably, we call for the nomination of an **MEP standing rapporteur** on PCD and the introduction of **European complaints mechanism** for ex-post control, so that the victims of damaging policies can be heard.

As an immediate point on the EU policy agenda, Caritas Europa urges the Heads of States to ensure that the **Europe 2020 Strategy** on European economic development, which they will adopt in June, is fully coherent with the objectives of sustainable development and the achievement of the MDGs, in and outside Europe. The choice of a socio-economic model for the EU will greatly affect developing countries since many of the resources that Europe needs come from abroad. It is extremely important to properly assess the impact of the Europe 2020 Strategy on developing countries and on the relationship between the EU and developing countries.

These recommendations are extracted from a broader Position Paper available on our website.

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*Created in 1971, Caritas Europa is one of the seven regions of Caritas Internationalis, the worldwide confederation of 162 Catholic relief, development and social service organisations working to build a better world, especially for the poor and oppressed, in over 200 countries and territories. Caritas Europa is the umbrella organisation of the European network of 48 Caritas member organisations, established in 44 European countries. Caritas Europa focuses its activities on policy issues related to poverty and social inequality, migration and asylum within all countries of Europe as well as on the coordination of actions of the members with regard to emergency humanitarian assistance, international development and peace throughout the world.*

<sup>8</sup> CONCORD, Spotlight on Policy Coherence, 2009,

[http://www.concordeurope.org/Files/media/internetdocuments/ENG/5\\_Press/1\\_Press\\_releases/00pressreleases2009/CONCORD\\_PCD-Spotlight-report\\_light.pdf](http://www.concordeurope.org/Files/media/internetdocuments/ENG/5_Press/1_Press_releases/00pressreleases2009/CONCORD_PCD-Spotlight-report_light.pdf)