

Europe, grasp the opportunity for global social justice!

Caritas urges European policy-makers to make a difference for the poor of the world

We, the representatives of 17 Caritas organisations in Europe, members of the Caritas Confederation who met at the Caritas Europa International Forum in Soesterberg (NL) on 1-3 July 2009, urge policy-makers in Europe to take immediate, decisive and courageous actions reflecting Europe's responsibilities towards the poor and marginalised people in developing countries who are suffering the consequences of crises to which they have hardly contributed.

Inspired by Catholic Social Teaching, Caritas vision is a world of peace, justice and solidarity. It is a world in which each takes responsibility in the well-being of all; the victims are recognized and provided support; the rights and dignity of women, men and children as well as the protection of the environment prevail over economic and geopolitical considerations. It is a moral duty and in the interest of all to bring an end to poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as minimal targets.

Caritas calls on the joint efforts of international institutions, governments in Europe, European and national parliaments, Churches and civil society organizations to ensure efficient policies to address poverty, injustices and inequalities in Europe and abroad. Caritas organisations contribute to this effort through our relief and development activities, our advocacy at home and overseas and our long-term partnerships with local organisations and poor communities in developing countries towards reaching sustainable solutions and enabling them to realize their rights and participate in their own development.

Systemic crises

For the last 16 months, the number of people living in hunger has risen by 200 million, bringing the historical figure of 800 million to over a billion: one person out of 6 suffers from hunger in the world today. An estimated 200,000 to 400,000 children will die every year by 2015.

We believe that the ongoing food security crisis, the climate and energy crisis as well as the economic and financial crisis are systemic crises that reveal the dysfunction and lack of sustainability of the economic development model, and lifestyle of the richest nations. It also reveals a deep lack of ethical commitment to common good by all actors.

The crisis became visible at the beginning of 2008 with the sudden rise in prices of food and energy due to speculation on natural resources including food, and export-led agriculture models. Later, the whole financial system went into disarray and the economy fell into recession. As a consequence, poor people have to deal with both high food prices and lower incomes. The parallel climate crisis is also due to the greed and unsustainable lifestyle choices leading to the depletion of natural resources, pollution and the multiplication of natural disasters.

Not only will these crises affect the well-being of future generations of European citizens, but it is now affecting poor people in the South.

An ethical vision for sustainable development

In spite of these devastating effects, Caritas believes these parallel crises are also an opportunity to rebuild the strengths of the global community on the values of human dignity, justice, peace and solidarity, associating the poor communities. In the words of Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga, President of Caritas Internationalis, "2009 offers the chance for a **blueprint for a better world**. There must be a conversion away from the old system of blind greed to one where our eyes are opened to justice and dignity for all".

While some European governments bailed out the banking system that is heavily responsible for the financial crisis, we allow one child to die from extreme poverty every three seconds. This scandal must end, and new priorities must be defined, **for the benefit of the poor and vulnerable women, men and children**.

Greater coherence of European policies for development effectiveness

Caritas calls for a broad agenda on development effectiveness that promotes **sustainable positive change that addresses the causes as well as the symptoms of poverty**, inequality and marginalization, with the clear objectives to fulfill all human rights, end poverty, protect the environment and achieve gender equality. In this broad agenda, the **diversity and complementarity of cooperation instruments, policies and actors** in development and humanitarian assistance must be emphasized.

Caritas calls on European policy-makers to **reinforce the coherence of their policies** in order to ensure that the impact of the action in development is not undermined by the negative effects of other policies, such as trade, agriculture, taxation, migration, security and the environment. The objective of sustainable development must always prevail over narrower concerns centering on European interests. In addition, development aid must clearly target poverty reduction objectives and the achievement of the MDGs, and not be used for other purposes, such as the management of migration flows.

Climate justice

Polluting countries, including European countries, must take serious steps to **reduce their carbon emissions**, without relying on off-setting in developing countries, and encourage its peoples to make fundamental lifestyle changes. The poorer countries must retain and pursue their **right to development**. Caritas urges the European Union and Member States to champion climate justice and to demonstrate leadership in international climate change policy negotiations, with a focus on **adaptation programs** as a means to reduce the risk of disasters. Europe must support countries affected by climate change with adequate technical and financial assistance that is additional to Official Development Aid (ODA).

Disaster risk reduction should be championed as a crosscutting policy issue and systematically included in all aid programmes. **European assistance should** focus on strengthening the **resilience capacity** of marginalized communities. These communities must be enabled to participate as equal stakeholders in relevant decision-making processes at community, national and international levels.

Food security

The **right to food** is a vital basic human right. The **lack of coherence** of food and agricultural policies of the European Union has impacted adversely on the development efforts of Southern countries and undermined their right to food. Caritas believes that this right should be at the core of all policy-making.

Caritas calls on reasserting the **primacy of agricultural and food policies over trade policies**, starting with an end to the policy of dumping subsidized agricultural goods produced in the North onto developing countries' markets, and adopting a vigilant approach towards agro-fuel production.

Greater **ownership** of the developing countries themselves to regulate and protect their own agricultural markets is required. The Economic Partnerships Agreements should be revised in this light. Stocks on local, national, European and international levels should be used to regulate market prices in order to enhance access to food.

Caritas urges the EU to increase and refocus investment and aid going to agriculture by supporting **family farming** with particular attention to women who produce more than 50 % of the food in the world. EU policies should promote the **multi-functionality of agriculture**, by securing small farmers' access to land, water and local markets, optimizing their skills and knowledge on biodiversity and improving their production capacities.

In addition, **food assistance** must be based on a transparent needs assessment of the most vulnerable groups, linked to livelihood programmes, be culturally appropriate, in compliance with the EC humanitarian food assistance policy.

Principled and comprehensive humanitarian action

Caritas emphasises that humanitarian action is not an instrument of conflict resolution or crisis management, or a tool for fighting terrorism. Humanitarian assistance is needs-based and must comply with the **humanitarian principles** of humanity, neutrality, independence, and impartiality. In order to avoid any association between humanitarian aid and military or political objective, **humanitarian coordination must remain under civilian control**, including when military assets are used in natural disaster response.

Moreover, Caritas calls on the EU to ensure that education programmes are included in emergency responses.

Sustainable and effective funding for development and relief

Caritas calls on the EU Member States to **honor their commitment to dedicate 0.7% of their GNI to development aid** and to **improve its quality**, as defined by development effectiveness. In particular, Caritas urges the EU to deepen its commitment to democratic ownership and accountability to the poor, to phase out all economic policy conditionality attached to aid, and to untie all EU aid to all countries, including food aid and technical assistance. **Flexibility and complementarity of the EU and Member States cooperation instruments** must be promoted to address the complex situation of fragile States and post-conflict countries, where efforts must be devoted to better link relief and development.

In order to ensure greater ownership, sustainability and avoid aid dependency, Caritas calls on the EU and European governments to enable **developing countries to mobilise their own resources** for their development. Governments in Europe must decisively **sanction tax havens and end tax evasion and illicit capital flows**, notably through enhancing the requirements for accountability and transparency of European companies operating in developing countries. In addition, Europe should demonstrate leadership in promoting **innovative financing mechanisms** to leverage additional funds for development.

Active and effective civil society

The **role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as development and humanitarian actors** needs to be further re-affirmed. 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.

Caritas calls on the EU and the governments in Europe to **maintain adequate direct funding for CSOs**, in spite of the aid budget cuts and the great diversity of funding channels.

Caritas calls on the EU to be more **inclusive in its decision-making**. In particular, Caritas is committed to engage in the Palermo II - Quadrilogue process, with the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Member States, to enhance the structured cooperation between the European Commission and civil society.

Caritas Europa is the European umbrella network of 48 Caritas member organisations operating in 44 European countries, through a vast range of activities related to social inequality, poverty, migration and asylum, humanitarian assistance, international development and peace. Caritas Europa is a member of CONCORD, the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development, and VOICE, the network of NGOs active in humanitarian aid worldwide.

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