



**BUSINESS
AS USUAL
IS NOT AN
OPTION!**

PUTTING PEOPLE AND PLANET FIRST

**CONCORD – Beyond 2015 Report
Launch with Commissioner Piebalgs
and Commissioner Potočnik
Moderated by Simon Maxwell**

European NGO confederation
for relief and development

CONCORD

Confédération européenne des ONG
d'urgence et de développement

Beyond2015

EVENT SUMMARY

Introductory Presentation (Tanya Cox on behalf of CONCORD-Beyond 2015 European Task Force)

Are current processes up to the job – given the recommendations for change that CONCORD-Beyond 2015 European Task Force (ETF) consider necessary? To our mind, no.

- What would it take to remove the obstacles to everyone's rights being realised, their being able to realise their potential and to live free from poverty?
- Our main argument is that the current system will not result in that – we need to think about changing the system, through measures taken in the context of the post-2015 framework, in order to offer a just, equitable and sustainable future for everyone, everywhere.
- Our aim – in producing these recommendations - is to stimulate thinking, to challenge the status quo



What do we need?

- Universal framework with aspirational goals. Beware we don't mostly focus on 'others' problems'.
- Framework must be comprehensive: include social, economic and environmental sustainability, plus governance.
- Human rights principles at the centre (equality and non-discrimination, participation and empowerment, responsibility and accountability).
- Focus on root causes not symptoms (like poverty, conflict etc); avoid silo approach.
- Transformational, structural change → challenge the system and the accepted wisdoms
 - Eg. economic growth. Even though growth has been considerable, well-being has not grown proportionately. So now we use the term 'inclusive growth' – in what does it differ? And can all economies keep on growing indefinitely anyhow? What does that imply for the environment? What are we going to do differently? What about the role of 'big business'?
 - Need to think about our production and consumption patterns and models.
 - Need to go 'beyond GDP' – what about the notion of well-being as a measure of progress?
 - Eg. approach to poverty: overly focused on income poverty and on the two (and especially the lower of the two) international poverty lines. That is not a universal approach! Nor very ambitious.... given it is likely to be met by 2030 anyhow (World Bank estimates). Poverty is multi-dimensional and must be dealt with as such.
- If the EU wishes to avoid being prescriptive, why not at least propose changes that European countries consider crucial in order to ensure a just, equitable and sustainable future for everyone. And in order to recognise our historic and ongoing contribution to the current challenges.
 - This should take two forms: reviewing our own behaviours (eg. Sustainable production and consumption, tackling waste, regulating the private sector to limit negative impacts and to improve payment of taxes) and assisting others to make change and progress (eg. financing the framework, implementing PCD commitments).
- But the change must go further than tinkering around the edges of the system.
 - Business as usual is not an option!

Discussion (under Chatham House rules):

Challenging current conceptions and models of economic growth are particularly difficult in times of austerity. Free markets provide opportunities for development in least developed countries and also provide jobs. However, it was also pointed out that given resource constraints, changes to economic systems are not just necessary but unavoidable. In terms of going beyond GDP, the EU has been planning complementary or alternative measures for many years, but nothing has materialised – why? The EU Sustainable Development Strategy is not set to be revised; in any case it is the EU2020 strategy that is defining the approach and this does not deliver on the necessary transformational change.

Are there too many goals in the Beyond 2015 proposals and could they all be covered adequately? The HLP are also struggling with this need to be comprehensive, covering both people and planet, without having a long list of must-haves and to include targets to explain the goals. The HLP – like the CONCORD-Beyond 2015 European Task Force – wants to see all goals contribute to the eradication of extreme poverty.

Is the Commission proposal weak on the Human Rights Based Approach? On the other hand, it was pointed out that the Millennium Declaration has been signed by most UN countries and therefore human rights are implicit. Is this enough?

What about universality? There's work to be done everywhere, which is why universality is the key. It appears a concept that everyone can agree with in principle but in practice there are different interpretations. BRICS countries would clearly like to see the EU and other developed countries change their consumption patterns. However, emerging economies also have an increasingly important role to play and should not be allowed to avoid the issues. Africa is a potential ally where the reliance on natural resources is far more critical to daily lives than is obvious in Europe or elsewhere.

Is there a consensus on the need to consider the long-term or does short-termism prevail? Talking to business partners, the short-term economic objectives are the most pressing and over-ride other concerns even though Europe is locked in a business model which is resource inefficient and the majority of EU companies expect a rise in the cost of their resources over the next year. We are importing six times more than we are exporting. Some businesses are more long-sighted, recognising future constraints and the opportunities presented by change, but not the majority even though it makes economic and competitive sense. The challenge Europe faces cannot be explained by growth and jobs – but currently the focus of the EU is 'preserving the EU'. We are reaching the edge of what is socially acceptable in Europe (austerity). Drivers of the discourse on climate change different in different countries e.g disasters in developing countries, green jobs/growth in Europe etc. We need a positive narrative.

Social partners might not be *speaking with one voice* – sometimes there is incoherence and inconsistency within organisations in terms of policy objectives. For example, trade unions have reached out on this issue to gather perspectives from the labour force.

What do we mean by quality of life - jobs, education? What does a new development framework mean for people in developed countries struggling with poverty and deprivation? In Europe our quality of life is based on what we have been consuming in the past and this has led to certain expectations. But we cannot expect to have the same quality of life in the future. As a first step, there is a need to focus on internal redistribution. We need to plan for a circular economy.

Entry points include internalising external costs, tackling harmful (EU) subsidies, public procurement policies, shifting tax from labour to





polluter, financial regulation and looking beyond corporate social responsibility to corporate social accountability.

What are the next steps at UN level? The EU must be in listening mode and encourage participation. However, already in the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, things are moving fast and we need to ensure that we do not have two parallel tracks – one moving faster than the other.

Has anyone considered the cost of inaction? We need to calculate and communicate the cost of inaction better than we do now. There is currently a lack of urgency – in many instances we don't go far enough or fast enough: the future development agenda could be irrelevant in the face of planetary boundaries, resource scarcity, climate change. The issues are not just about development and the environment but will lead to conflict and major humanitarian crises if not taken care of. We also need to address root causes, which we are not doing at the moment – conflicts, humanitarian crises, poverty etc are all symptoms, not the root causes.

How to engage others? NGOs should start campaigning and popular mobilisation – find champions and create a critical mass. What about the EU institutions? Are all the Commissioners as well as EEAS equally engaged with this issue and prioritising it? The post-2015 development framework should also be a top priority for the next European parliamentary elections.