

# **SPEECH**

**BY COMMISSIONER ANDRIS PIEBALGS**

**at the 2<sup>nd</sup> interim meeting  
of the Policy Forum on Development**

**during the panel session on  
"Towards a common European Vision  
on the Post-2015 Development Agenda"**

**Brussels, 18 October 2012**

Colleagues, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

## **Introduction**

When we wound up our Structured Dialogue in May 2011, after an intense 14 months of dialogue, it was clear that we – civil society organisations, local authorities and the European Commission – were entering a new chapter in our interaction on development issues.

That chapter has begun, with the Policy Forum on Development giving us a sound framework in which to pursue that interaction.

Our new policy document, entitled *The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations*, is a perfect example of our interaction in practice, in that it reflects the outcome of our lively discussions under the Structured Dialogue. More than that, however, it also reflects the way in which civil society has become a major actor on the development scene. Our joint work and your contributions have led to a policy which EU Member States have endorsed. And the ongoing consultation on the Issue Paper about local authorities in development is enjoying similar input responses from local authorities and CSOs worldwide.

We still have a long way to go, though, so it is good that we have forums like this, in which we can examine together how best to bring about positive changes and results where they are most needed. So I'm looking forward to seeing the debates here at the Policy Forum feed into our thematic strategies.

I'm also looking forward to our discussion today, during which James Mackie, of the ECDPM, will be keeping order. The ECDPM describes itself as a "think and do tank". Thinking and doing are what we are all about – and more so than ever at the moment. We are moving from the "thinking" to the "doing" stage with our Agenda for Change; while at the same time we are thinking hard about the best post-2015 development framework we can offer the world. It is that framework I would like to discuss with you this morning.

As you are no doubt aware, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon has set up a High-Level Panel to look at a future development agenda for our post-MDG world. The fact that Mr Ban has asked me to serve on the panel is evidence of the trust placed in the EU's development ethos. It's now up to the EU to repay that trust by leading the final push towards meeting the MDGs and by helping shape the post-MDG future.

### **Post-MDGs; three pillars of a Decent Life for All**

If we all commit to that final push and then use the MDGs as a springboard towards greater progress beyond 2015, there's no doubt in my mind that we can rid the world of desperate poverty within a generation.

The fact that we can even contemplate such an outcome shows how far we have come in such a short space of time – thanks largely to the way in which donors and developing countries have bought into the MDGs.

In a recent wide-ranging public consultation the European Commission asked Europeans for their views on a post-MDG world. The response – including valuable contributions from civil society – revealed that Europeans strongly

support the MDGs and greatly value the development policy and commitment shown across the EU. They continue to back our high levels of spending on official development assistance, even during these difficult times at home. Furthermore, they are keen to see a new framework that takes the work forward into the future.

Another clear message from the consultation was that a rights-based approach should be built in. Shared responsibility for all countries and stakeholders should be strengthened. Finally, many respondents wanted accountability and transparency reflected in a post-2015 framework.

This rights-based approach is a main thrust of our Agenda for Change. We see a real need to use our development instruments to help catalyse genuine political and economic reforms and good governance, so that public authorities can offer a real future to their people. As we have seen time and time again, without governance there can be no development. We can make a real difference here. And you can, too. As our new policy on civil society says, given the right conditions, you can fully play your role as actors in governance and development in helping support transparency and good governance advocacy, contributing to policy-making and to human development and inclusive growth. We are committed to helping create those conditions.

So, while poverty eradication must remain our overriding priority and focus, we need to do more than tackle issues of material and human poverty alone. That's why I want to see a framework that is relevant to everyone and generates a real feeling of "inclusiveness".

Bearing all this in mind, I suggest that we pursue a core vision of a "Decent Life for All by 2030", focusing on three key pillars:

First, updated and modernised MDGs, providing decent living standards for all – a set of minimum floors below which no one should fall.

These "MDGs plus" would provide the basic rights that every citizen on the planet should expect and demand from their governments at the very latest by 2030, with, where necessary, for the poorest countries, the support of the international community through continued official development assistance.

Second, as we are all aware, the MDGs alone will not guarantee a decent life. Without dignity, poverty remains. So our second pillar would focus on the drivers for prosperity, creating jobs and guaranteeing justice, equity and human rights.

And third, our unsustainable lifestyles threaten to undo much of the progress thus far achieved, and impoverish future generations. We must tackle this thorny problem.

So the third pillar might focus on the obligations of all governments towards their citizens in terms of the good stewardship of their precious natural resources, from forests to fossil fuels, from minerals to soil.

More than this, however, good stewardship might also cover the sound use of income from natural resources and action to prevent their depletion.

Taken together, and defined through clear goals and targets to which every citizen can personally relate, irrespective of where they live, and which they can use to hold their governments to account, these three pillars could provide a framework that could provide a Decent Life for All.

And as we look ahead, I have asked my services to pick up the key trends from the public consultation. I know that civil society organisations and local authorities have highlighted some important issues and I want to see us follow them up. So, for instance, we will look in more detail at how to enhance the focus on the poorest and marginalised and at human rights in a future development agenda. We will examine how the issue of economic growth, productive employment and environmental protection can be enhanced. My services are also working on proposals to enhance accountability to achieve future development goals at global and at national levels.

### **Meeting the existing MDGs → MFF**

In the meantime, we have unfinished business to attend to: meeting the existing MDGs.

We have a great deal of which we can be proud. But we're not there yet. So we will continue to press hard right up to the 2015 deadline, especially in countries and sectors that are most off track.

This will require both smart policy-making and adequate financing to back the policy-making up. Our public consultation revealed a widespread understanding that providing aid continues to be important in helping partner countries achieve their 2015 and post-2015 targets. At the same time it is true that other factors – including remittances, growth-friendly policies and trade – will have a role to play in bringing about a fairer distribution of resources across the developed and developing worlds.

And the EU understands only too well that aid alone will not solve all our development problems. That's why, for instance, while doubling its collective aid in real terms since 2000, the EU has been committed to assisting its partner countries in other ways. Hence, for example, it is also the main importer of developing country exports and the only major economy to give duty- and quota-free access to Least Developed Countries.

We must maintain these commitments. We must maintain and promote our core European values, both at home and abroad.

And we must demonstrate to the EU's citizens and taxpayers that the large amounts we spend on development assistance are producing the maximum possible results. We must do this, whatever the economic weather; but in the current climate it is more important than ever.

I'm pleased to see us performing well in this area. The EU is widely recognised by independent bodies as a very effective donor. The "Publish What You Fund" watchdog has singled the European Commission out for leading on aid transparency internationally and internally and has ranked it among the top 5 most transparent donors in the world.

So there is a widespread understanding among fellow aid practitioners that the EU brings clear added value to development cooperation – in short, that EU aid works. Aid groups back EU development funding as among the world's best and would like to see it maintained in the EU's next seven-year financial framework to take us up to 2020.

For me, being "among the world's best" is great news. But it should not dent our desire to deliver even better value for money.

We must constantly strive to do better. The world is changing fast – and we cannot afford to be left behind.

Instead, as I suggested at the beginning of my speech, we must demonstrate that the trust which partner countries and fellow donors like the UN have in us is well-placed. We must be ready to be global leaders and help shape the new world order.

An outward-looking Europe with adequate financial means, promoting its values and interests and taking an active political role in global governance, can deliver real added value and meet the ambitions set out for its external action and development policy in the Lisbon Treaty.

That's why the Commission's proposals for the next financial framework include increased funding for an external relations package which reflects the new international context and the need for greater impact and results from external spending.

The proposed amounts would contribute to the EU's formal collective commitment to meet the longstanding UN target and set aside 0.7% of our gross national income as official development assistance by 2015, and would thus be a decisive step towards achieving the MDGs.

And they would be supporting the principles and instruments we need for an EU development policy that is at once more effective, more transparent and more outcomes-oriented; a policy that seeks greater aid effectiveness, policy coherence and donor coordination; a policy of the kind that I believe we can all sign up to.

## **Conclusion**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we pursue the MDGs and at the same time look ahead to a post-MDG world, our central concern should be that the fight against poverty is by no means won.

We need first and foremost to listen carefully both to the experiences of those who have succeeded, and to the aspirations of those who have not.

The process that we embark on now will make all the difference to the end result. We need to consider how the outcomes and follow up of Rio+20 and other international processes should feed into a final agenda that everyone can embrace.

With the Agenda for Change I believe we have the right policy directions in place to be able to contribute to this global agenda. And with a sound financial framework in place to take us up to 2020, we will be able to set about meeting our development goals in earnest.

For the EU to play an active role in the global debate on development post-2015, we need partners like you, as truly representative organisations, to continue providing us with your input, as you have done through the public consultation and, more broadly speaking, through the Structured Dialogue and this successor forum. Furthermore, your work to support governance and development for all in the EU's partner countries around the world will be a vital means of support

for our Agenda for Change and a further means of enabling our partnership to take root.

We share the noble ambition of giving the world's poorest and most vulnerable a real chance to escape the spiral of poverty and insecurity and participate in society to the best of their ability. That ambition must be at the heart of the post-2015 agenda. That's the thinking part. In the meantime, however, there is plenty for us all to be doing as well.

Thank you.

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