

Civil society voices for **Better Aid**

3rd September 2008

Donor governments continue to ignore developing country demands for aid reform

The Better Aid coalition calls for concrete commitments and timelines as negotiations stall

As ministers arrive in Accra for meetings of the reform of aid, donors continue to block Southern governments' pleas for reform.

Governments have gathered at the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Ghana to agree an agenda for action for improving aid. New evidence from the OECD shows that donors in particular are not meeting their side of the bargain. Negotiations have stalled as some donor governments, particularly Japan and the United States, are refusing to agree real actions to meet the commitments.

"If developing country concerns are not genuinely addressed, then donors are paying little more than lip-service to the promises of partnership," says Yao Graham of Third World Network Africa, "Once again we see global power relations being reinforced and the demands of civil society and developing country governments sidelined."

All governments present in Accra accept that developing countries need to determine their own priorities if aid is to work. But the proposals made by developing country governments to reform aid are being ignored in last minute closed-door negotiations.

Developing countries have set out their key priorities where they want to see real action.

- Removing harmful policy conditionality that undermines democratic processes
- Ensuring aid doesn't bypass domestic processes and scrutiny
- Making aid much more predictable over the medium term so that they can plan effectively
- Untying all aid from the purchase of rich country goods and services, including food aid and technical assistance. 75% of food aid comes directly from rich countries, undermining local markets and developing countries are often forced to contract expensive consultants from donor countries rather than drawing on their own expertise.

The Better Aid coalition of civil society organisations is calling for Ministers to agree concrete commitments and deadlines for delivering on these commitments. More fine words will not suffice.

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Editors notes:

Donors and developing countries agreed the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness in Paris in 2005. The Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness is the first major review of the progress made in implementing those commitments.

Thursday 4th September is the final day of three day Forum, when Ministers arrive to agree the final Accra Agenda for Action, which will be the political agreement from the Forum. Government officials have been trying to make progress with last minute negotiations over the first two days of the conference (2nd and 3rd September).

Since January 2007, CSOs networks have worked in an International CSOs Steering Group (ISG) to coordinate CSOs' analysis, proposals and plans for the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. The ISG maintains a website, www.betteraid.org, as a portal for CSO initiatives on aid effectiveness, including a Policy Paper signed onto by more than 350 CSOs on aid and development effectiveness reform. The ISG have been meeting with the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, based at the OECD DAC, setting out CSO concerns and proposals for the Accra HLF.