

## Freedom from Want: MDG Goal 8/FfD

Peggy Antrobus' Notes for Presentation at GA Hearings June 23-24, 2005

### Introduction

Thank you Mr. President for this opportunity to speak at these Hearings. I am here as a representative of many women's networks, DAWN, the International Gender and Trade Network and the Feminist Task Force of the Global Call Against Poverty (G-CAP).

In relation to this consultation, women's networks are emphasizing the indivisibility of the 8 MDGs (Freedom from Want) and the other Freedoms in the Secretary General's Report, and that women's equality, empowerment and agency are cross-cutting issues for all of them, and essential to their achievement. We are asserting that none of these Freedoms can be achieved without addressing the full array of human rights and especially the human rights of women including sexual and reproductive rights and violence against women. Therefore, in speaking on the topic of Goal 8, the financing of development, I will be highlighting these linkages.

As the policy framework, Goal 8 is critical for the achievement of all the other goals. However, despite the official rhetoric, this framework reflects a market-oriented approach to development which opens up countries of the South to increased exploitation from powerful corporate interests from the North and further marginalizes people who have suffered most from a development model based on the exploitation of people and resources.

Looked at from the perspective of women, a policy framework that privileges the market over the state, or efficiency over provisioning, is one that gives priority to profits over the needs of people who are too poor to access the market.

“Rather than accept this framework as our new given context, (CSOs) must continue to challenge and resist not just hyper-liberalisation policies but the whole economic paradigm of marketisation.” (Gigi Francisco, DAWN/IGTN, Seoul, June 2005).

In fact, Mr. President, Goal 8 is full of contradictions:

1. The assumptions underlying Goal 8 – that trade liberalization and neo-liberal domestic policies can solve the problems of extreme poverty and hunger, poor health, unequal gender relations and environmental degradation – have been proven false. Experience over the past 25 years of this framework shows that it has actually exacerbated problems that the MDGs are supposed to address.
2. The eradication of poverty and efforts to address issues of equity in education, healthcare and sustainable development cannot be achieved without addressing unsustainable debt, trade subsidies, terms of trade, net reverse flows of resources from South to North, and unequal power in global economic governance. Increased aid flows, and even announcements of debt relief for selected countries, do not alter these structures of profound inequality.

3. Trade liberalization and the ensuing loss of revenues and decreased policy options and space to many governments will make it difficult for those governments to finance public services like water, health care and education; while the introduction of “user fees” in these services jeopardizes access by the poor to these public goods.
4. ‘Public-private partnerships’ between a weakened public sector and an emboldened private sector gives the private sector special advantages and opportunities for increasing their control of assets and services that are critical to the achievement of the goals.
5. At the same time no attention is given to the importance of partnership with civil society organizations, especially organizations of grassroots women. Indeed, the whole approach to poverty inherent in the Goals ignores the agency, strengths and resourcefulness of communities that have been marginalized by market-oriented development, and the fact that this kind of development often denies these people their rights to their own knowledge and resources.

Based on their research and analysis, women who are part of the International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN) conclude that

A. Trade liberalisation policy may worsen existing gender inequalities thereby worsening women’s economic and social status.

B. Existing gender inequalities can also undermine the effectiveness of trade policy because they may adversely affect the factor re-allocations critical to the successful implementation the policy.

We therefore call on governments to acknowledge that neo-liberal policies have actually exacerbated problems that the MDGs are supposed to address and that they also contribute to abuses of human rights and jeopardize human security.

The language proposed by women's networks for the Outcome Document on issues of trade, debt and aid have been circulated. Here I would just highlight the following:

### **Trade**

1. **Summit outcomes must ensure that trade rules are dedicated to poverty eradication and bound by existing international agreements that promote and protect human rights and the environment.**
2. **Governments must conduct gender reviews and impact assessments of bilateral, regional and international trade agreements in order to identify gender biases in earning levels, job security, labor standards, unpaid work burdens and access to productive and natural resources.**
3. **We call on governments to make a firm commitment to review and resolve all pending implementation issues in the WTO in order to more fully understand the prospects and impact of trade liberalization and to avoid rushing imbalanced trade rules under the mantel of "development" in the so-called Doha Development Round.**
4. **Above all there is need for a justice-based approach that would give countries and people more control over their own resources.**

## **Debt**

### **G-8 Governments must**

**5. ensure unconditional debt cancellation of all illegitimate debts, such as those that cannot be serviced without causing harm to people and communities, those incurred by corruption and fraud and those incurred by exorbitant interest rates. Any ‘debt sustainability’ analysis must include an audit of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of all previous debts;**

## **Aid**

**6. Donor countries should increase the flexibility with which resources are made available and eliminate conditionality attached to development assistance, particularly when these imply further economic restructuring and especially when the exercise by women of their rights is curtailed.**

**7. More resources need to be given directly to NGOs and CBOs, including grassroots women’s organization, working on the issues raised in the MDGs and the SGs Report and on a long term and sustained basis.**

**8. Recipient countries should ensure that a necessary amount of the assistance received, agreed to in consultation with women’s groups, is earmarked towards implementation of commitments related to achieving gender equality, including the Beijing Platform for Action, ICPD Programme of Action, and Action Agenda 21.”**

## **In Conclusion, Mr. President**

Women assert that Freedom from Want, Freedom from Fear, respect for Human Rights, including the full range of Women's Rights as the basis of Freedom to Live in Dignity and UN reforms are inseparable, and that the whole framework of financing for development have implications for these freedoms.

- **Unjust trade regimes that deny poor countries access to markets and pit the interests of powerful corporations against those of small producers cannot eradicate poverty.**
- **Trade agreements that limit people's access to affordable medicines and prevent their use of their own knowledge undermines the achievement of many of the MDGs.**
- **Governments who spend scarce resources on weapons and military adventures do so at the expense of public services that are essential to human development.**
- **Trade agreements and aid that underwrite the spread of arms and fuel conflict undermine human security.**

**Mr. President, all of these elements serve to undermine people's access to basic needs, jeopardize their security and negate their rights.**