



**Civil Society Development Forum\***  
**27 – 29 June 2008, New York City**

We, representatives of member organizations of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO), convened in New York from 27 to 29 June 2008. We discussed issues germane to the agenda of the High-Level Segment of ECOSOC's Substantive Session, to be held in New York from 30 June to 3 July 2008. Our conclusions and recommendations were prepared for consideration by ECOSOC member Governments in the course of their deliberations and decision-making at this Session.

1. We gathered at a time of confrontation with a series of crises – food crises – a manifestation of failed sustainable development policies, leading to riots in many countries; energy prices driving the cost of food, other commodities and services even higher; climate change having adverse effects worldwide; increasingly destructive weather patterns and occurrences; more extensive desertification, increased drying up of critical water resources, rising sea levels threatening the survival of populations on low-lying coastlines and islands; global financial turmoil and uncertainty; and the many ongoing conflicts around the world.

In light of the above,

2. We request Governments to substantially increase their investments in the sector of agriculture, to strengthen the position of small landholders, to stop the non-sustainable import of products grown far away and of genetically modified products, and to enhance the use of local and indigenous agricultural knowledge, practices and inputs.
3. We urge that agricultural workers have the opportunity to work in cooperatives, to earn the benefits of the value they add to the processing of food products, and to have access to capacity-building opportunities. Land ownership is crucial to agricultural workers. We encourage land redistribution measures to make this possible. In particular, land tenure rights for women must be legally recognized and enforced.

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\* The Civil Society Development Forum is the third in a series organized by the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO) prior to the ECOSOC High-Level Segments. The 2008 Forum consists of a component in New York, with a follow-up component in Geneva later in the year to examine action taken and further action required.

4. We reaffirm the human right to food and recognize the importance of food sovereignty. We urge Governments and civil society to reach agreement and to implement national level food sovereignty strategies and measures.
5. We note the pervasive role of international financial institutions in influencing national development strategies. We urge these institutions to redesign their strategies with a view to assisting countries in defining their priorities at home by using home-grown expertise and products of these countries. WTO's role in negotiations on agricultural matters should be re-examined. Measures should be taken at multilateral and bilateral levels to prevent speculative trading of staple food items and energy fuels.
6. National decision-making should respect human rights, encompassing food security considerations, especially those affecting children, and should contribute to the eradication of poverty and famine.
7. We recognize the need to end lifestyle trends embracing high resource, high energy, and other unsustainable consumption patterns. We urge governments to collaborate with civil society in halting and reversing these trends.
8. We strongly encourage corporate social responsibility that contributes to participatory and sustainable development, that precludes the exploitation of natural resources, that helps end the violation of human rights, and that promotes the human right to decent work and to adequate compensation and social protection.
9. We recognize full employment and decent work as essential to poverty eradication and in achieving sustainable development. We call on Governments to integrate the decent work agenda in international and national development strategies.
10. We assert that the achievement of sustainable development goes with the realization of human rights. We urge Governments and intergovernmental entities to include the realization of human rights in their development strategies. They must act in accordance with the mutually reinforcing relationship of human rights and sustainable development and the interdependence and equal importance of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.
11. We support a holistic approach to human rights and call on multilateral and bilateral donors to reinvigorate and not renege on this approach. We strongly urge UN agencies, Funds and Programmes to continue the explicit reference to human rights in Common Country Assessments, UN Development Assistance Frameworks and other UN development planning instruments.
12. We regret the absence of consensus with regard to the concept of development as a human right. We urge Governments to accept the mutual obligations implied by the human right to development, which is part of the Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs) that include sustainability of development.

13. We ask that the realization of human rights be introduced as a guideline for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS), as well as in the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, especially ensuring that the most vulnerable and marginalized populations receive priority attention.
14. We call on Governments to ensure the genuine participation of people experiencing extreme poverty in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes for sustainable development and poverty eradication.
15. We note the legitimate demand of aid recipient countries to be given more “policy space” in determining the use of aid. This demand should not be used as a pretext to disregard the obligations these countries have accepted to have women, men, youth and children realize their human rights and attain sustainable development.
16. We support efforts in the preparation of the Accra High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness to devote more attention to gender equality, human rights and environmental sustainability. We call for a more balanced economic policy agenda that promotes participatory and gender responsive budgets as tools for including the voices of the poor and of women in fiscal policy. Specifically, we urge Governments, and public and private entities, to support gender mainstreaming and promote gender balance in the agricultural sector.
17. We recommend to public institutions the development and publicizing of human rights instruments for sustainable development and of best practices in good governance. These mechanisms must demonstrate close cooperation and linkages among local, national, regional and international levels.
18. We assert that effective sustainable development should be people-centred. This requires effective local capacity building, capitalizing on the innate strengths and resources of the people themselves.
19. We call on Governments to bring youth and children into the discussion and action around sustainable development. Programmes for formal and non-formal education and training, including educator/teacher training, must be designed, established and sustained at every developmental and educational level.
20. Finally, CONGO and its member NGOs wish to reaffirm to Governments that implementing Internationally Agreed Development Goals, including the MDGs, is a vital long-term process. Its success can only be ensured in conditions of just and democratic governance within a holistic human rights framework and in the adherence to and the realization of the rule of law. National governments based on these inalienable principles should know that they can count on the support of organized civil society, nationally and internationally.