

Tearfund's response to the Russian G8 Summit – 18 July 2006

This year's G8 Summit in Russia has come to an end without any significant progress in the fight against global poverty. With events in the Middle East high on the agenda and a focus on energy security and education, reviewing the commitments made to Africa last year seemed to be a low priority for the leaders of the world's richest nations. While previous announcements and initiatives were endorsed and reaffirmed, leaders displayed little energy for taking these forward. We are hopeful that when the G8 next meets in Germany next year, Chancellor Merkel will put global poverty back at the top of the agenda.

Tearfund was particularly hoping for progress to be made on the global challenges of HIV and AIDS, trade and climate change.

Climate Change

Last year the G8 committed to act with 'resolve and urgency' on climate change. This year, however, the issue features in just one line of the chair's summary, with the G8 reaffirming their existing commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting an inclusive dialogue on further action against climate change in the future.

The G8 has agreed a new *Plan of Action on Global Energy Security*, which acknowledges the effects of climate change and calls for low carbon development and a focus on energy efficiency and savings – with recognition that renewables are part of the strategy. However, there are no new targets or timetables for action. Most worryingly, commitments aimed at increasing fossil fuel consumption directly contradict a commitment to tackle climate change. We are also disappointed that nuclear is being seen as part of the solution when, at present, we do not see this as being the best option.

Other current initiatives such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change are described as 'the foundation of our current efforts to address climate change', and will 'form the basis of an inclusive dialogue on further action in the future, including the period beyond 2012'. But division among members of the G8 as to the role of the Kyoto Protocol can be observed in the text. This highlights a lack of consensus amongst the G8 and with no clear action outlined for the way forward, a huge question remains as to how a post-2012 framework for tackling climate change will be agreed. The outcome of the G8 summit in St Petersburg represents a missed opportunity for world leaders to demonstrate their resolve to tackling climate change with the urgency they pledged a year ago.

Trade

The G8 reiterated its commitment to the 'development dimension' of world trade talks but once again failed to back up the rhetoric with action and political will. The G8 communiqué aims for an agreement at the WTO on agriculture and industrial goods 'within a month'. Tearfund maintains that the success of the Doha Development Round as a whole shouldn't be measure by the attainment of an agreement *per se*, but only by the extent to which development and environmental concerns are truly put at the core of the agenda. In a press statement, Tony Blair talked about countries having the 'necessary flexibility' to secure a deal at the WTO. The details of such 'flexibility' aren't given, but to be in line with the development mandate of the round this should mean the US and EU making the necessary concessions in agriculture without forcing developing countries to open their industrial and services markets.

The activities of the last few days raise further serious questions about the lack of democracy and transparency in world trade talks. One trade meeting involved the G8 plus five developing countries – China, India, Brazil, South Africa and Mexico; another, the EU, the US, Japan, Brazil, India and Australia. Notably absent have been any of the poorest countries in the world – no Least Developed Countries were present in the talks. Once again, the voices and interests of the poorest nations have been missing from negotiations – a serious injustice.

HIV and AIDS

Leaders also reaffirmed their commitment to tackling the HIV and AIDS pandemic, recalling commitments made at previous summits and pledging their continued support to international institutions, funding mechanisms and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Tearfund welcomes the commitment from G8 leaders to secure funding for the Global Fund in 2006 and 2007 and the call for active participation in the development of a four-year strategy for the Global Fund. We also welcome Russia's pledge to reimburse the Global Fund the sum of US\$270 million by 2010, but note that this is the only new money pledged to the Global Fund at the summit. UNAIDS estimates that £10-12 billion is needed annually to address the pandemic; with only an estimated £4.88 billion available in 2006, the G8 must help to close the funding gap.

Tearfund notes with concern the lack of a concrete set of targets to act as a road map to achieve universal access to comprehensive HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010. The historic commitments made at Gleneagles last year will fail to achieve significant impact without costed and time-bound plans for delivery. The statement made by the G8 also fails to acknowledge last year's commitment to ensure that all children left

orphaned or vulnerable by AIDS are given proper support, or to address the urgent need to ensure access to paediatric treatment.

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