



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

"Accra produces Agenda for Inaction," says René Grotenhuis, CIDSE President

Accra, Brussels, 3 September 2008 - The Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), the roadmap for donors and Southern governments from 2008 to 2010 on how they "do aid" will be finalized at 4:30pm today, on day two of a three-day international conference in Accra.

The third day of this conference was due to involve Development Ministers from the 100 plus countries which signed the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005, committing themselves to do aid better.

Those Ministers it seems have been sidelined from the real discussions which have taken place behind closed doors by technical staff.

There is reported to be some better language in the AAA, with governments committing to making progress on how they use the systems of recipient countries, and a strong acknowledgement of the role of civil society organizations and parliaments in the aid system. However the positions of the World Bank, United States, and Japan have ensured the AAA remains a document full of statements of intent with no time-bound targets for the improvement of aid delivery.

For example the potential to end the scandal of economic policy conditionality, whereby donors deliver aid only if developing countries follow dictated policy prescriptions, such as privatization of essential services like access to running water. The World Bank has refused to eliminate policy conditionality, in favor of an approach already being used by the European Union, in which aid is conditioned only on progress towards countries' development goals such as quality education for all children.

The political dimensions of these discussions in Accra have been crowded out by technical discussions. René Grotenhuis, CIDSE President, said:
"Development Ministers are being handed a fait accompli at 4:30 PM and asked to rubber stamp it. The negotiations have failed developing countries, who yet again have been promised so much and received so little."

Civil society and parliamentarians are not at the negotiating table here in Accra but have made their presence felt at the High-Level Forum. A CSO statement will be read out to Ministers tonight which presents the views of CSOs from over 80 countries, but it will be too late to influence the AAA, which by then will be a done deal.

The European Union came to Accra with a joint position carrying progressive and strong language for positive change in the AAA. They are reported to be committed to implementing, on a unilateral basis, this agreed position. CIDSE will be encouraging them to fulfill these commitments and take a leadership role in working with developing countries to go beyond the AAA.

With the growing global food crisis, and more people than ever facing starvation, the effective delivery of aid is vital. The opportunity has been lost here in Accra to make aid more effective for those for whom it is intended. Political will is an essential component of making this work.

The removal of politics from the aid agenda signifies a failure on the part of governments to make good on the promises they have made to the poor again and again to help them get out of poverty.

ENDS

Contact:

Denise Auclair, CIDSE EU Policy Officer, is present in Accra and available for interviews or to set up interviews with Rene Grotenhuis: Mobile-Phone Ghana: +233 243 712564 or Belgium Mobile Phone: +32 478 962013 Alternatively, contact Philipp Rohrer, CIDSE communication officer: +32 2 282 40 71 or rohrer@cidse.org

Notes to the editors:

CIDSE (www.cidse.org) is an alliance of 16 catholic development organizations from Europe and North America. Established in 1967, it promotes cooperation among its members in their efforts to eradicate poverty and establish global justice. CIDSE members share a common vision for advocacy and development programmes. The CIDSE secretariat is based in Brussels.

