

New world, new ideasⁱ

"It's time to listen to girls"

Parliamentary Appeal

Global Summit of Parliamentarians ahead of the G8 and G20 Summits

Paris, 17th May 2011

1. **A new world has arrived and it contains 7 billion women, men, girls and boys. But out-of-date ideas are still with us, which belong to a world where many despise young women and girls, either through cruel behaviour or because they have been forgotten. New ideas are within reach of the G8 and G20 leaders and they are fair, simple and realistic. These ideas stand to improve the performance of development assistance and will target those who need it most – girls and young women - by investing in activities that are affordable and will bring about many positive results. These ideas also have the potential to transform many lives, families and societies, breaking the cycle of inter-generational poverty, and this will all come about thanks to greater access to family planning.**
2. We, Members of Parliaments of G8 and G20 countries, and from countries across Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe, have come together at the French National Assembly ahead of the forthcoming G8 Summit in Deauville. France, the cradle of human rights, currently holds the G8 Presidency, and accordingly we wish to draw the world's attention to two aspects of human rights that are among the most neglected at present – the situation facing girls and young women and the challenges posed by global population dynamics.
3. These challenges are major:
 - 3.1. In 2011, for the first time in its history, the global population will reach 7 billion. Out of this total population there are 1.2 billion young people who will soon start their own families. Their reproductive choices will play a crucial role in determining the future of the planet.
 - 3.2. 600 million girls and young women in the developing world today are in a vulnerable situation, facing injustices, inequities and inequalities, such as forced domestic work, which constitute a major obstacle to social and human development, both at a personal and at a societal level. This situation is exacerbated in post-conflict situations.
4. Rapid population growth in developing countries is seriously damaging our chances of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, by making it impossible to provide adequate healthcare, education, nutrition, jobs etc. for a population that is ever increasing. For the 72 countries that are currently experiencing a decline in their

population, this inability of generations to renew themselves will have major ramifications for their society, which will require reorganising in the years to come.

5. We, Members of Parliaments, are convinced that the violations of the human rights suffered by girls and young women are severely impeding global development. It is their right to become actors in a world that is progressing: their future is our challenge, and their wellbeing is our priority.
6. We, Members of Parliaments, commit ourselves to supporting our governments in achieving their promises to guarantee health, dignity and human rights to every human being, and to fight against poverty in a sustained manner. Every woman, regardless of where she comes from, has the right to have the number of children she wants, and to achieve this she must have access to information, services, technologies and the means she requires that will enable her to exercise this right. For this reason we reaffirm the human rights of the individual, and thereby the necessity – whilst respecting individuals' personal beliefs – to separate religion, culture and traditions from politics as the first condition for achieving this end.
7. We, Members of Parliaments from all regions of the world, call upon the members of the G8 and the G20, upon partner governments, funding organisations, and development banks and agencies to :

**7.1. Invest substantially in projects and policies that aim to protect girls.
These should have the following aims :**

- 7.1.1. **To find out where girls and young women are,** by gathering local information about their situation that is both precise and reliable, most notably in matters pertaining to their education, in order to make their vulnerabilities more visible, to reveal where they are being excluded, and to establish how much (and which part) of development policy is being addressed to them.
- 7.1.2. **To develop their potential,** making the completion of their secondary education and the access to professional training and a job a priority, whilst investing in strategic programmes tailored to meet their specific needs and bring about their personal development.
- 7.1.3. **To defend their autonomy,** by putting an end to forced and child marriages, and all other forms of violence towards girls and young women, as well as assuring them equal and quality access to healthcare services, education, social assistance and legal protection, by providing special rights through legislation where it is necessary.
- 7.1.4. **To create the necessary infrastructure of safe and accessible spaces** where the social, health and economic assets can be built to prepare girls and young women to enter adulthood safely and well-equipped.

7.2. To make the challenges posed by the world's current population dynamics a development priority. This should be achieved by :

7.2.1. Providing **universal access to sexual and reproductive health**. This should be achieved by ensuring that contraceptives are freely available and by eliminating the obstacles people face in obtaining family planning, and by initiating and supporting proposed legislation and the services required for safe abortions to be able to take place. The 215 million women who want to avoid a pregnancy and who do not have access to modern contraception must also receive ambitious political, legislative and financial support.

7.2.2. Putting the **specific needs of the younger generations** at the centre of international action and investments in global health. This should be achieved by reinforcing, for example, integrated services for the prevention of HIV/AIDS in young girls with reproductive health and family planning services. This will provide them with a better understanding of the specific risks by which they are confronted.

7.2.3. Encouraging the **integration of population challenges in sustainability and resource policies**, most notably in the preparations being made for the UN Conference on sustainable development Rio +20, which will take place in 2012. The world must aim for more sustainable use of all global resources in order to protect and enhance the planet's natural assets; a foundational requirement for supporting healthy human societies, particularly in matters relating to nutrition and basic needs and for future development and the improvement of human wellbeing.

7.3. Not to miss financial pledges that have been made, particularly in matters relating to health, population and human rights. This should be achieved in the following ways:

7.3.1. By **maintaining our commitment to the goal of increasing public development assistance to 0.7% of GNI**, in accordance with the commitments that were made at both the UN and EU levels. Recent opinion polls indicate that public opinion in developed countries is largely in favour of this.ⁱⁱ

7.3.2. By **making real the pledges made at Muskoka** on maternal and child health, and that these funds should be made up of fresh money. This should be achieved most notably by bringing to life the parliamentary commitment that was agreed in Ottawa in 2002, reiterated in Strasbourg in 2004, in Bangkok in 2006 and in Addis Ababa in 2009, to devote 10% of public development assistance to questions relating to population and reproduction.

7.3.3. By providing **precise and detailed information** on their specific pledges, on the rhythm and volume of the funds that they will give, and on their plans

to involve representatives of civil society in identifying the priority sectors in which they will become involved and provide services.

7.3.4. By **critically analysing the public development assistance expenses** in order to focus subsequent activities in areas that were until recently neglected and unfairly politicised, such as the fight against maternal mortality and for reproductive health (MDG 5), and in areas which will be more cost effective and have a wider and more efficient scope, such as prevention programmes aimed at girls and young women.

7.3.5. By taking into account that equality between men and women is still far from being achieved, and that even if some substantive progress has been made, **women and men live in realities that are very different**. As a consequence of this fact, all activities with development as a core goal must be adapted to finally halt problems like the feminisation of HIV AIDS, particularly its spread among young girls, and take into account that women are under-represented in decision-making bodies, when the distribution of aid is based on the principle of national ownership.

8. We, Members of Parliaments, have a legitimate right to play an active role and demand that our governments be accountable and involve us in the way budgetary resources for development assistance are used. We also have the right to benefit from the analytical tools they have available to them to do so. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that development aid is used transparently and efficiently, and to promote democracy and international agreements whilst reinforcing the efforts made to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It is our duty to ensure that all that has been mentioned above has a positive impact on all citizens. To this end we commit ourselves to collating progress made by the G8/20 countries on the aforementioned commitments, and to make this publicly available to parliaments, governments and citizens in an accessible and modern format.
9. We, Members of Parliaments, recall our pledges towards the ICPD Programme of Action and the Beijing Platform for Action (1994 and 1995), and towards the Millennium Development Goals (2000), and hereby call upon the Heads of State of the G8 and G20 to honour the pledges they made themselves.

ⁱ Official slogan of the French presidency of the G8 & G20 2011

ⁱⁱ Special Eurobarometer 352, September 2010: "Europeans, development aid and the MDGs". According to this opinion poll, 89% of Europeans asked responded favourably when asked about the importance of public development aid, and 50% are in favour of increasing levels of public spending on development.

ⁱⁱⁱ The International Parliamentarians' Conferences on the implementation of the Programme of Action resulting from the International Conference on Population and Development (IPCI/ICPD) took place in Ottawa in 2002, in Strasbourg in 2004, in Bangkok in 2006, and in Addis Ababa in 2009 and led to the formation of an international consensus among parliamentarians that 10% of development budgets should be devoted to questions relating to population, which include activities linked to access to family planning, reproductive health, the fight against sexually transmitted infections and AIDS and research in these fields.