

Global Classroom Joint Statement on the Millennium Development Goals Post-2015 Agenda and Publication of Final Reports

The first Global Classroom convened at the European Inter-University Centre in Venice (EIUC), from the 29th of April to the 3rd of May 2013, saw the participation of 18 students from 5 different continents and 17 different nationalities and professors from all over the world.

The students and professors came together to strengthen and deepen the integration of the Master's Programmes and Diplomas in Human Rights and Democratisation sponsored by the European Union under the aegis of the Global Campus (GC). The discussions were enriched with the participation of special lecturers including, Mr. Olivier De Schutter, (Belgium), the UN Special Rapporteur on Food, and Mr. Christian Strohal from the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The attendants presented and discussed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the future reform of the MDGs (the Post-2015 Agenda) and analysed the impact of the MDGs in the field of human rights.

Several initiatives have been undertaken already both globally and regionally in order to chart a way for the Post 2015 Agenda. The UN Secretary-General established the UN System Task Team on the Post 2015 – UN Development Agenda chaired by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme. In July 2012, the Secretary - General launched his High-level Panel of Eminent Persons to provide guidance and recommendations on the post-2015 development agenda. The panel is chaired by the Presidents of Indonesia and Liberia and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and members include representatives from the private sector, academia, civil society and local authorities. The report of the Panel was published in May 2013.

In contribution to these ongoing developments, each of the six different regions of the Global Campus focused on these issues from within their own field of expertise, drew up a comprehensive report on the application of MDGs in their region with a focus on human rights and resolved to add value to proposed reform of the MDGs at the UN level. The original reports as well as information about the EIUC and the Global Classroom are available below.

As an outcome to the first Global Classroom, the participants jointly present the following outlines of the reports and tentatively suggest some proposals as a contribution to the debate on the Post-2015 Agenda.

Master of Human Rights & Democratisation in Asia and Pacific Regional Program

“Poverty and Environmental Sustainability: Some Observations and Recommendations”

The Asia-Pacific report focuses on MDG 7, namely, achieving environmental sustainability. The focus is primarily on poverty, which is of great concern in the region. The report deals specifically with climate change induced poverty, community forestry, and renewable energy.

In order to effectively tackle poverty and the ill-effects of climate change there must be comprehensive action that encompasses both issues. Furthermore, as Bert Koenders argues, policy decisions on climate change must consider the interests of the most vulnerable, supporting their social protection, health, and livelihood. Climate change considerations therefore go hand in hand with the implementation of the MDGs.

Taking these two core aspects in mind, future initiatives towards meeting the MDG targets could concentrate on the following issues:

- The MDGs, specifically Goal 1 and Goal 7, should respectively incorporate climate change induced poverty as a key factor to deal with poverty and environmental sustainability. In this context, a rights-based approach should underline the related targets;
- The global targets and indicators for environmental sustainability (following adaptation for climate change) should explicitly capture the needs of the local context through participation of vulnerable communities in designing and implementing programmes;
- The targets to eradicate climate change induced poverty need to be comprehensively incorporated in all national development policies and action plans to be achieved within a specific time frame;
- National policies and programs must relate to investing in public expenditure and institutions to provide equitable access to social services such as public education, health care and family planning services. These programs and policies need to take into account existing inequities to narrow the gaps between the haves and have-nots;

- Development plans should enhance transparency and accountability to the citizens, in particular, the poor;
- Community-led pro-poor initiatives need to be initiated and promoted to achieve the twin goals of environmental sustainability and poverty reduction;
- Promotion of alternative and renewable energy technology needs to be made a government and donor priority, and made easily accessible and subsidised for the marginalised communities who are more dependent on natural resources for livelihoods and have limited access to capital-intensive technologies;
- The relationship between poverty and environmental concerns need to be consistently underscored in all the initiatives on environmental sustainability and its progress monitoring to ensure that initiatives on environmental sustainability are not taken in isolation;
- There is a need to conduct more research in respect of marginalised populations so that such research can contribute to statistical data and allow for constructive policy recommendations;
- The Post-MDGs Agenda should be linked with the existing international legal framework such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in order to strengthen obligations of governments to tackle environmental derogation, poverty and inequality.

European Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation

“The Post-2015 Development Agenda for MDG 8 – A Global Partnership for Development – A European Union Context”

The European report focuses on the post-2015 agenda for MDG 8 – the development of a global partnership. It recommends that a human rights based approach to development is essential for successful and sustainable development in particular for the European Union,

The report argues that from an internal EU perspective a special focus on non-discrimination, equality, empowerment, rule of law, accountability and participation should be the key benchmarks in all forthcoming EU development policies. It would be a task for the EU fundamental rights bodies, such as the Fundamental Rights Agency, to spearhead discussions about this approach and to ensure human rights based development in both a qualitative and quantitative manner.

From an external EU perspective development aid should focus on good governance and the fight against corruption in particular. Capacity building of national governments enables those to tackle development challenges without aid in the long run. Furthermore, development aid should, as a matter of obligation, be in line with existing provisions on international cooperation in several international treaties and documents.

Finally, programmes to empower citizens through civic education should form an integral part of official development assistance especially in holding leaders accountable. Moreover, open and genuine consultations should be the guiding principle before any development aid is extended, to facilitate aid that is demand driven. In this regard, south-south cooperation should be encouraged and supported.

European Regional Master's Degree in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe

“Revitalising the Rights Discourse: A Critical Appraisal of the Application of the Millennium Development Goals in South East Europe”

The report on South East Europe (SEE) provides an overview of development in the region by outlining the progress and problems involved in the implementation of the MDGs.

The SEE region suffered traumatic experiences in the past 20 years with severe transition recessions and devastating armed conflicts. Despite those grave setbacks in development terms the region has made steady and strong progress in meeting the basic commitments of the MDGs.

The report draws attention to the key challenges facing SEE countries in meeting expanded or contextualised understandings of the MDGs. Budgetary restrictions as economies have contracted has had a large impact on state expenditure on health, social security and education. The report argues that whilst such constraints may hinder the implementation of the MDGs they are not the most critical problem for development in the region.

The key theme of the report is the large discrepancy between commitments states have made under treaties they have ratified (to respect, protect and fulfil rights) and the quantitative targets of the MDGs. More often than not the scope of the MDGs have fallen far short of the rights states are required to realise under their treaty obligations and sometimes the MDGs have diluted the contents of those rights. The ‘silences’ in the MDGs in terms of how states should go about meeting their

targets also extends to upholding rights. There continues, for instance, to be discrimination against certain groups of people like the Roma or people infected by HIV despite the rights they have to be treated with dignity and equality.

The report emphasises that the MDGs must be rooted in the international human rights framework and that any future re-elaboration of the MDGs must see a revitalisation of the rights discourse; that requires not only paying homage to international human rights but that states commit substantive resources to realising these rights.

Buenos Aires Master of Human Rights and Democratisation (Latin America and Caribbean)

“Millennium Development Goals: Some challenges for the Post 2015 agenda”

The Latin America and Caribbean report considers the consultations in respect of the Post-2015 Agenda as an excellent opportunity to reinforce and develop new targets that take into account the future challenges to human development. The report, in the context of the region, accordingly considers that citizen insecurity and armed violence constitute a fundamental obstacle to achieving human development and the fulfillment of human rights.

The report contemplates the inclusion of a new goal in any post-MDG framework that will constitute an important improvement worldwide, as international community will be led to deal with this new challenge from an integral approach focused on the strengthening of human rights and human security, going beyond the traditional and conservative security policies.

The report also addressed the necessity to reinforce MDG 3 – promotion of gender equality and empowerment women. Gender inequality is still one of the most challenging goals in the region, not only because of a lack of physical autonomy and security, economic independence and participation in decision-making, but also because of the entrenched cultural intolerance towards gender and sexual diversity. Moreover, physical and psychological violence against women and LGBT community occurs very frequently and remains largely unaddressed. In brief, in order to achieve feasible gender equality, new strategies need to be developed and a holistic and integrated approach required.

LLM Human Rights & Democratisation in Africa

“Recommendations for the Post 2015 development agenda in line with health”

The Africa report provides an understanding of the place of African states in addressing health related MDGs. The report compares commitments states have made under national and international law and reviews the success of implementation of legal commitments. The report also concerns itself with making projections as we move closer to ‘The World We Want’ in the period post-2015 drawing lessons from the African implementation experience.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) convened a regional workshop on 15–16 November 2011 in Accra, Ghana, attended by 47 representatives from 18 African countries of government, civil society and academia. This was aimed at articulating Africa’s position on the post 2015 development agenda. Drawing from these, the report suggests that following should be undertaken:

- Providing appropriate information to the women regarding available health care, reproductive control methods and leading healthy lives;
- Minimising delays in reaching health centres by providing emergency transportation services such as ambulances improving infrastructure such as roads;
- Improving health facilities and ensuring that basic facilities such as electricity and water and emergency obstetric health care services are in place in health facilities;
- Provide more incentives for skilled health practitioners and continuous training on the new medical technology;
- Population Control dynamics which involve the continuous use of contraceptives;
- Data in the health facilities should be continuously updated, effectively monitored and evaluated;
- An integrated approach should be undertaken to lower the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. These include; Provision of facilities to prevent mother to child transmission of HIV, timely provision of care and treatment for HIV-exposed and HIV-infected children and more campaign, research and resources should be directed towards the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

Human Rights and Democratization in Eastern Partnership Countries

“Environmental sustainability in the Eastern Partnership Countries”

The Eastern Partnership Countries report considers the range of mechanisms, which may be used in the pursuit of environmental sustainability and protection of environmental human rights both at the international and national levels. The report notes that there are no special treaties providing for the

right of individuals for favorable environment as well as specific control or judicial mechanisms providing mechanisms of protection of rights of individuals or groups of individuals. Protection of this right takes place indirectly through protection of other human rights by the appeal to international human rights institutions, including the Human Rights Council and European Court of Human Rights.

The key finding is that there is no need to invent any extraordinary mechanisms. Countries of the region, for instance, have made efforts to implement their obligations. A series of regional agreements have been concluded in the environment sphere. A right to favorable environment as well as general obligations on the environmental protection has been introduced in the Constitutions and special legislation of the countries of the region. However, legal regulation in the area is not sufficient still. Regional agreements have rather framework character. National legislation contains certain gaps. The report concludes by making the following recommendations for the countries of the region:

- To adopt environmental codes in accordance to the principles of sustainable development on environmental issues;
- To develop national and international cooperation in order to ensure environmental sustainability and environmental protection at the regional level, including through drafting of precise and detailed documents;
- To recognize jurisdiction and to use therefore more actively judicial and arbitration mechanisms for settlement of disputes in the sphere of sustainable environment;
- To apply in practice provisions of Aarhus convention concerning access to information participation in decision-making and access to justice.