

AFRICAN FAITH LEADERS STATEMENT ON PRIORITIES FOR A POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

We, African faith leaders from the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), the Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC), the Nigeria Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, the Hindu Council of Africa, the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa, the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims and the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA), ahead of the forthcoming UN General Assembly on the post-2015 Development Agenda New York, call on all Governments and the global community to place the life, dignity, rights and well-being of each person – now and in generations to come – firmly at the centre of all discussion and endeavour for development.

We believe that each person is created in the image of God and has equal dignity in relation with others. We also believe that together, we must build an equal, fair and secure society where each woman, man or child can flourish and contribute to the betterment of humanity.

We believe that we are bestowed with the stewardship of our planet and that it is our duty to protect and care for our natural environment. Together we must protect and preserve the earth and its abundance of resources for our benefit and that of future generations.

Over the next two and a half years, UN Member States and other actors will endeavour to build a new development strategy to succeed the Millennium Development Goals after 2015. The post-2015 agenda must aim at contributing to the realisation of a world in which all human beings are equal in the eyes of God, have equal opportunities to live a fulfilling life in a society free from violence and fear and in which wealth and income disparities within and between persons, countries and societies are at a minimum.

We believe that for this new agenda to gain legitimacy and acceptance, it must be led by the priorities and perspectives of people living in poverty and exclusion. The lives, voices, knowledge and experiences of those in greatest need must be central to the debate to achieve sustainable development. At the onset of the UN General Assembly Special Event on the MDGs and post-2015 sustainable development agenda we urge the international community to include the following principles and intentions in the post-2015 development agenda:

A single, integrated agenda

Building on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and ensuring that development is anchored on a genuinely global sustainability pathway, the future framework for development must reflect the integrated and inextricably linked social, economic, cultural

and environmental dimensions of development. A set of goals that fail to integrate these dimensions in a balanced way is not acceptable for addressing present and future development challenges.

A universal agenda

All countries need to commit to the new agenda and take action according to their context. Solidarity, with particular attention to the poorest, is a solid foundation for coherent action for the common good by all countries. In particular, developed countries need to prove their solidarity through delivering on existing commitments to development assistance and to create more space for mutual, equitable and productive engagement of developing countries in the development agenda, be it trade, debt and tax agreements or carbon space in our atmosphere. All countries have to step up to their respective responsibilities, no matter their national context. The post-2015 agenda must not lose the focus on those who need it the most.

Participation by the poor

Participation by the poor is a fundamental value which must underpin the post-2015 development framework. Poor people's participation can ensure that development interventions are responsive to the complex factors that inhibit them from living in dignity. The input of people and communities experiencing poverty is essential in avoiding ineffective, poorly designed and ill targeted interventions.

The UN and the global community need to invest time, money and commitment necessary to overcome barriers to participation by those who would benefit from its intentions and efforts. In particular the UN and global community must ensure that participation of poor and marginalized women and men and the young is built into the processes for global decision-making, accountability and the implementation of the post-2015 development framework. We must ensure a place at the table and in the field of development for the young and children, both male and female. Our action to include them today will determine how their world is tomorrow.

Reducing inequalities

Increasingly, addressing inequalities, be they rooted in economic, gender or other social marginalization of people on account of disability, ethnicity, beliefs or caste, is being recognised as central to ending poverty and securing peace and harmony in society. We believe that all women and men are equal in their worth. The vast disparities that obtain in relation to asset, income, opportunity and power between men and women and between any one social group and another are unacceptable.

The post-2015 agenda must aim to leave no one behind by embracing and advocating a minimum threshold for wellbeing against which the social status of each one person is evaluated. This threshold includes recognizing personal and collective agency by individuals and communities for their own development and guaranteeing their aspirations for wellbeing as the basis for dignified and self-reliant livelihoods. Leaving no one behind must include the right to social protection and implementing social protection systems that guarantee a minimum level of income and access to services to foster social cohesion and allow poor people to build resilience against economic and environmental shocks and stresses. Further, data used to monitor the post-2015 goals will need to include qualitative as well as quantitative indicators disaggregated by income, gender and other relevant criteria to ensure progress for those who need it the most.

Reforming Institutions of Politics, Society and the Economy

People live in poverty often times not because they have been purposely excluded from social, political or economic processes, but because those processes and the institutions on which they are grounded impair their ability to engage them in ways that secure their wellbeing. Additionally such processes may be manifestly unjust as may be evidenced by unfair trade and unjust tax systems, environmentally degrading economic activity or failing social, economic and political institutions. The new agenda must be built on securing the accountability of these processes and institutions to all citizens, especially those who are the intended beneficiaries of post-2015 development.

There is wide recognition that progress within the existing MDG framework has not been equitable, and that disabled people are disproportionately represented among those left behind by recent advances in development. For the disabled to be effectively included in the post-2015 development framework, disability should be understood as one of several inherent factors (including gender, age, geographical location and ethnic identity) which contribute to the marginalisation of individuals within their households and communities, and which result in their exclusion within the social, economic and political processes. This requires governments to ensure that disabled people are included and disability discrimination issues are addressed across all goals and targets

Economic institutions and systems need to deliver for the well-being of all people, within the finite limits of our planet's resources. Human flourishing requires that we use the unique gifts of creativity and productivity but exercising them responsibly, for the well-being of all Creation of which humans are only one part.

Acknowledging the crucial role of FBOs and Communities in development

Much can be achieved for individual and communal wellbeing by working in solidarity and in care for the vulnerable and our earth. This can be done whether by the paying of our taxes with honesty as well as by exercising love through giving and prayer. Faith Communities and practitioners have valuable expertise and experience in development. Faith-based organizations bring together and amplify rarely heard voices of the marginalized and excluded. We strive to bring peace and justice to the world. Our important role as conveners, amplifiers and informed experts needs to be recognized and resources provided to ensure we can contribute in this role meaningfully at all stages of post-2015 development.

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This statement has been endorsed and supported by:

Africa Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL)

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The Baha'i in Africa

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