

CONCORD summary analysis of the Foreign Affairs Council Meeting Conclusions

- Concord is concerned that the conclusions contain too many calls from the European Union (EU) to others with little commitment or action from the EU side. It is indeed necessary that all partners show strong political commitments in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), however the EU needs to set the example as the world's largest donor, especially on issues such as ODA and Policy Coherence for Development (PCD). The conclusions favour an action-oriented approach without proposing an action or breakthrough plan on the EU side.
- We welcome the action plan for situations of fragility and conflict, but query whether this will be MDG-oriented, since the delayed 2009 Plan is not. Clarity should be provided as to whether the two plans are in fact the same. Furthermore, we regret the fact that the adoption of the 2009 Plan has been delayed by one year. In line with the Council conclusions of November 2007 on situations of fragility, we call for a proper dialogue with civil society on this action plan and any possible subsequent plans which are MDGs-related.
- Concord welcomes the positive language on addressing the MDGs in a comprehensive manner, addressing the inter-linkages between them and including human rights and gender equality dimensions, and supporting social protection systems. However, the language on addressing MDGs is not translated into commitments; it is unclear how the EU proposes to support social protection and promote human rights, environmental sustainability, climate and energy, democracy and good governance.
- Moreover, there is no mention of the additional Human Rights obligations acquired by EU member states through the International Human Rights Framework. Those commitments oblige EU signatory states to provide assistance to developing countries, among other obligations.
- We also point out that environmental sustainability is one of the main cross-cutting issues identified in the European Consensus and should therefore be highlighted alongside human rights and gender equality as fundamental to the achievement of the MDGs.
- We regret that there is no mention of monitoring mechanisms for any of the MDGs areas. In particular gender accountability and monitoring should be mainstreamed.
- We welcome the focus on off-track countries/regions and most off-track MDGs. However, this should be complemented by specific reference to tackling inequalities within countries/regions. It is unclear, what criteria the EU will use to determine the off-track regions and countries. Any criteria need to take into account inequalities within countries (both off- and on-track).
- We welcome the inclusion of specific paragraphs on gender and education, but these should be complemented by specific paragraphs on each of the other thematic issues in the MDGs, such as on the environment. We would have liked to see more explicit action points for each thematic issue, (re)affirming clearly the commitments made under each of those MDGs, and the linkages between them.
- A reference to the Council Conclusions on "the EU role in Global Health" is not sufficient. These Conclusions do not include any specific commitments on the achievement of each of the 3 health MDGs, which are most off track of all MDGs.
- We welcome reference to excluded and most vulnerable groups, but regret the lack of reference to children as such as a group, alongside women (OP 9).
- We welcome the recognition of the need to involve civil society (OPs 8-9)

- We regret the lack of reaffirmation in OP10 of outstanding commitments within the framework of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, such as in the Action Plan for the MDGs.
- We welcome that the EU is seriously considering innovative financing for development. It needs to be ensured that these additional resources are used for development purposes only, in particular for the achievement of the MDGs. The EU should support the establishment of a financial transaction tax of 0.05% which could raise EUR 10 billion a year for development.
- We would have hoped to see clearer language on education, endorsing and promoting the recommendations from the FTI evaluation to radically reform the FTI. In particular, to address the governance and trustee arrangements, the inclusion of civil society, and the financing of education in conflict-affected fragile states. Further, we believe that the EU should support education as part of every humanitarian response.
- Paragraph 38 is ambiguous. The EU has the obligation to raise and spend money for climate change mitigation and adaptation according to a number of agreements reached at a number of UNFCCC meetings over the past few years. We hope that the reference to partners to spend climate finance in line with the Copenhagen Accord is not trying to imply that the EU's allocation of climate finance is in any way linked with the association of developing countries to the Copenhagen Accord.
- Welcome commitments to PCD but would stress that PCD is an obligation under the Treaty for all EU member states and should be seen as a jointly owned and collaborative challenge. We would also like to see a reference to a timetable for a monitoring and reporting framework.
- We would have liked to see a specific reference to the EU-U.S Dialogue on the MDGs and the need to increase harmonization and complementarity of aid between the EU and the U.S and other major global donors.
- There is no mention of need for additionality of climate finance or the risk of diversion of funding from other MDGs.
- **Aid quantity.** Para 28 of the Conclusions reaffirms the 0.7% commitment but para 29 and 30 are very weak. Particularly para 30 "asks" member states to take actions, "invites" them to "share information" on the actions planned and says that the Council will "examine a report in the framework of the Monterrey process and will assess progress annually". Instead, we had called the Council to urge MS to put in place binding national yearly timetables (or action plans) and a peer review of aid commitments at Council / Head of State level (as proposed by the European Commission's Spring package) and involving the European Parliament. Despite suggestions by the Commission's Spring package and debate in the Council, there is no reference to national ODA legislations nor to the UK and Belgium examples
- **Aid effectiveness.** It is positive that the conclusions call on global funds to adhere to AE principles (32), include an agreement that the Commission will present a proposal for "progressive synchronisation of EU and national programming cycles", and see the introduction of wording on mutual accountability and transparency (paras 35 and 36) is also an encouraging first step. But despite a relatively long section on aid effectiveness (paras 32 onwards) the fundamental elements are missing. Amazingly, there is no mention of Paris, Accra and Seoul and of a number of politically sensitive issues. The Council fails to acknowledge that AE progress has been too slow, does not urge MS to speed up implementation of Paris and Accra commitments, does not mention any political commitment towards Seoul High Level Forum. The conclusions emphasise issues of coordination and division of labour while the AE agenda is broader and includes democratic ownership, conditionality, untying of aid etc. It is also worrying that the Conclusions suggest to expand the application of international AE principles to non-state actors (thus defying commitments in the AAA which recognises the specific role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in development and undermining ongoing efforts of CSOs to define their own principles within the Open Forum).