



**Ecumenical Advocacy
Alliance**



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MDG Summit: "We need more than words"

Members of an international church alliance are calling on government leaders to make "concrete and clear strategies" so that Millennium Development Goal targets will be met by 2015.

Focusing on the issues of food and HIV and AIDS, members of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) welcomed some aspects of the draft outcome document of the summit on the Millennium Development Goals starting today at the United Nations in New York. "But we need more than words," stated Rev. Dr Tolbert Jallah, general secretary of the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA).

"Our poor people in rural communities cannot eat declarations," Jallah stated. "Rich countries must fulfill their promises in helping poor and developing countries meet the MDGs in a timely manner. World leaders need to show how they will turn their words into action and meet the MDGs by 2015."

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty

EAA members welcomed statements in the outcome document which acknowledge the need to strengthen smallholder farmers, support participatory community-led strategies, and call for respect of all human rights.

Yet statistics released last week by the FAO and the World Food Programme show that while there may have been a slight decline last year, hunger is still affecting one-sixth of the world's population.

The draft outcome document states that "successes have been made in combating extreme poverty". Rev. Dr Richard Fee, general secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Canada noted that "925 million still suffering chronic hunger is far too high; there are only five more years to reduce the number of hungry people by half."

While the document highlights commitment by governments to address the root causes of extreme poverty and hunger. Fee said it lacks clear strategies to achieve the intended objectives.

Under the EAA's Food for Life campaign, members call for concrete actions to achieve food security and contribute to the realization of the right to food, such as:

- Supporting and implementing the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Good Governance on Land and Natural Resources.
- Ensuring that private investments should not displace communities nor degrade natural resources, but instead promote sustainable and agro-ecological production systems.
- Directing more Investments to smallscale farmers, particularly women, who produce more than half of the world's food.

"The summit should come up with concrete and clear strategies on how to reduce hunger if Goal 1 is to be a reality by 2015," stated Fee.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Church organizations and representatives engaged in the "Live the Promise" campaign highlighted

that achieving Universal Access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support is hailed in the outcome document as crucial for meeting not only MDG 6 but other MDGs too. However, "with no acknowledgement that the target of reaching this goal by 2010 will not be met, and no new time-bound and costed plan of action to reach this target, progress towards MDG 6 and other health-related MDGs may be lost," stated Rev. Veikko Munyika, coordinator, The Lutheran World Federation HIV and AIDS Desk.

The latest UN statistics have indicated that while significant progress has been made in slowing the pandemic, the reality is that for every two people who have access to treatment, another five still become newly infected with HIV. In addition, an estimated ten million people with advanced HIV infection have no access to antiretroviral therapy.

Governments can take one clear action now "to demonstrate the truth of their commitments", stated Erlinda Senturias, HIV and AIDS consultant, Christian Conference of Asia. "The world will be watching to see whether they pledge the 20 billion USD needed for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis to maintain and effectively scale-up its contribution to achieving both Universal Access and the wider health-related MDGs."

However, those involved in the EAA campaign acknowledge the major challenges are even greater. Meeting MDG 6, and the Universal Access goal, will entail intensifying efforts to boost HIV prevention; identifying simpler and less costly treatment regimens; and tackling inequalities, punitive approaches, discrimination and stigma that increase vulnerability to HIV infection and present obstacles to effective prevention and access to treatment.

Dr Sonja Weinreich, senior health advisor, Church Development Service (EED) in Germany stated, "Over the next five years, governments have to turn these words into action - develop funding that is sustainable and predictable, demonstrate leadership and support strategies developed by the most affected communities, and invest human and financial resources to reach those who need it the most."

Text of the draft outcome document of the MDG summit:

<http://www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/pdf/Draft%20outcome%20document.pdf>

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The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance is a broad international network of churches and Christian organizations cooperating in advocacy on food and HIV and AIDS. The Alliance is based in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information, see <http://www.e-alliance.ch/>

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