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## THE SOCIAL WATCH CHART OF FULFILLED COMMITMENTS AN UNREACHABLE DREAM?

The good news is that social indicators are showing significant progress in over sixty countries. If this pace is kept up, those countries will be able to celebrate the millennium by announcing fulfilment of the goals set out by the Social Summit and the Women's Conference in Beijing. The bad news is that progress is too slow to reach the goals in another 70 countries. Thirteen countries are in the same shape or worse off today than they were in 1990, and for almost 40 countries, the data is insufficient to say anything, which probably reflects an even worse situation.

For the second time, this Social Watch report includes a multi-colour chart of progress toward fulfilment of the commitments. As last year, blues indicate satisfactory progress toward the goals, and oranges and reds indicate status quo or backsliding.

The goals to which world's governments have committed are not unreachable. In fact, some are so modest that many of the countries (indicated in blue on the chart) had already reached them in 1990, the base line for this social development «rally» for the year 2000.

Yet last year's conclusion remains valid: «While the goals targeted are feasible, many countries have failed to make a sufficient effort. The assistance promised has yet to materialize, the participation of citizens is paltry, and globalization is not benefiting those who need it most.»

Failure to achieve social development aims appears linked to international war or internal conflict, as is to be expected.

Also grouped at the bottom of the table, however, are countries suffering the social impact of structural adjustment policies and those that have not benefitted (or have been harmed) by the opening of trade and financial processes deriving from globalisation. Most of the statistical data used as the basis for our calculations is from 1996. A table reflecting data after the 1997 financial crisis (which will be available next

year) is likely to show deterioration in countries that show fast progress this year.

### A «PATCHWORK QUILT»

The non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that participated in the summits and international conferences of the United Nations insistently called for governments to adopt specific, measurable goals with defined timeframes for fulfilment. The table published by Social Watch in this 1999 report summarises the progress made with regard to a dozen indicators for all countries and adds one that has been assumed by the members of the OECD: contributing a percentage of GDP to international development. Social Watch also publishes detailed tables and graphs for each of these indicators.

The methodology for constructing an indicator for fulfilment of commitments was developed in consultation with over 50 national Social Watch coalitions and tuned up during an international workshop held in Montevideo in 1997. Comments received after the first publication made it possible to make improvements in this edition. The number of columns was cut by merging several closely related indicators into one, and two new columns were added for commitments of a basically political nature, ie, reducing military spending and approving anti-poverty programmes that have specific goals and timeframes for eradication. This last commitment arose for the first time at the 1995 Social Summit and, thanks to the report «Overcoming Human Poverty» published by UNDP in October 1998, it is now possible to start assessing compliance.

The table that emerged from this process looks more like a «patchwork quilt» than customary numerical indices. This is due

in part to the difficulty of the task itself, which was to construct indicators for social progress capable of measuring countries' efforts and their speed of progress, rather than the current status of the situation. An additional difficulty derives from the lack of statistics for many countries and the divergent criteria used in preparing them. (See table.)

In averaging the available data, the margins of error are in many cases higher than the distances separating one country from another. Hence, it is not possible to establish a precise ranking. Nevertheless, the resulting table is very revealing. While it could be debated whether one country should be above or below another in the table, there are clear situations of progress and stagnation. A majority of countries have varying results in the different areas.

To prepare the table, we took the progress indicators by sector that are published separately in this report and regrouped them in large categories, from situations of backsliding to situations of fulfilment of the goals. Each of these categories is represented by a different colour. In ordering the countries we took into account not only the averages, but also the quantity of data available and its distribution among the different categories. The existence of backsliding in cases where the goal had already been achieved was weighted negatively. Finally, the tables exclude countries without data in at least four columns.

Encouraged by the spirit shown during the Social Summit, which called for economies that served people and not the other way around, no economic indicators are included on the list. As would be expected, the economies of many of the countries in

Indicators used to determine the ranking given in each column of which detailed information may be found on the different commitment tables, are shown below:

- Literacy and basic education. Percentage of children reaching 5<sup>th</sup> grade; Primary school enrollment ratio (net) and Adult literacy rate may be found in commitment tables 1a, 1b and 11, respectively.
- Child health. Infant mortality rate; Under-five mortality rate; Percentage of children under 1 year totally immunized (in turn classified in four different indicators: tuberculosis, DPT, polio and measles) may be found in commitment tables 3a, 3b and 10, respectively.
- Food security and child nutrition. Daily per capita calory supply and Percentage of under-5 suffering from moderate and severe malnutrition may be found in commitment tables 5 and 6, respectively.

- Reproductive health. Percentage of births attended and Pregnancies attended may be found in commitment tables 8a and 8b, respectively.
- Health. Life expectancy and Percentage of population with access to health services may be found in commitment tables 2 and 7, respectively.
- Safe water and sanitation. Percentage of population with access to sanitation and Percentage of population with access to safe water may be found in commitment tables 12a and 12b, respectively.
- Reduction of military expenditure. Military expenditure as percentage of GDP, taken from Human Development Report 1998, UNDP.
- Official Development Aid. ODA as percentage of GNP and its changes in real terms, taken from DAC, OECD 1998.
- Anti-poverty plans. information source «Overcoming Human Poverty», UNDP, 1998.

top positions are developed or growing rapidly, but several countries have made progress in their social indicators without spectacular economic results.

It warrants repeating that the table is not a situation indicator, as is, for example, the Human Development Index (HDI) prepared by the United Nations Development Programme. The Social Watch table shows progress toward goals, which are not necessarily the same in all countries. For example, as regards infant mortality, the commitment is to reduce it by the year 2000 by one-third of what it was in 1990. Some countries show a «goal fulfilled» value for having reached a value of 70 per thousand, while at the other extreme there are countries with figures under 10 per thousand who may not show great headway

because they are close to the limit of what is possible. For this reason, countries that reached values close to the goal were considered to have fulfilled their commitment, and only a significant deterioration in the figures was recorded as a setback.

Many of the top positions on the table are held by countries whose social development is the result of efforts of past generations. These countries have not necessarily advanced since 1990 (some even show slight setbacks). What is noteworthy is that there are several countries among those usually considered «underdeveloped» who hold top positions for having fulfilled their goals, which shows that the goals are not utopian or unviable. Moreover, inclusion of commitments of solidarity and reduction

of military spending penalises countries that, having obtained good results for their own citizens and disposing of the economic

resources to aid others, refuse to allocate a tiny portion of these resources to eradicating poverty worldwide. ●

### IMPROVING ACCESS TO SOCIAL INDICATORS

In Copenhagen, the heads of State made a commitment to «ensure that reliable statistics and statistical indicators are used to develop and assess social policies and programmes so that economic and social resources are used efficiently and effectively.» Nevertheless, social statistics continue to be incomparably more scant, outdated and hard to find than, for example, economic and financial indicators.

In May 1998, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) held a session on the Integrated and Coordinated Follow-up of Major UN Conferences and Summits. Roberto Bissio addressed the session on behalf of Social Watch as a panelist and highlighted the need for improved methods for the gathering and dissemination of social development indicators. Several delegates took the floor on this issue and the summary of the session by the President of the Council, Ambassador Juan Somavía, reports that:

*«In order to effectively monitor progress in the implementation of conferences at the country level there is an urgent need for the multilateral system to develop a coherent set of basic indicators as well as the need to strengthen the capacity of the UN system and of countries to collect and analyze statistics.»*

Ambassador Somavía's summary also emphasises that «involvement of civil society in an effective way in the intergovernmental conference follow-up process is essential

in view of the significant role members of civil society have played in the conferences themselves as well as in their follow-up and implementation, particularly at the country level.»

On July 20th 1998, the UN Secretariat's Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD), in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 51/202 on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, contracted the Instituto del Tercer Mundo, host organisation of the Social Watch secretariat, to implement a system based on the Internet's World Wide Web for visualising social indicators.

This system, linked to the «Internet gateway» of DSPD, was made accessible to the public at large, as well as to citizens and NGOs active on social development issues on January 1st 1999. Its Internet location is <http://www.socwatch.org.uy/indicators>

The OECD, in turn, considering that «there is a pressing need for an agreed system for tracking progress in achieving the basic development objectives, and also to avoid adding to reporting burdens on partner countries,» developed a working set of core indicators. An initial collection of those indicators is now available on the Internet at: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/indicators>.

The World Bank has begun publishing the World Development Indicators separately from the World Development Report, in book and CD-ROM form, with emphasis on the Copenhagen commitments and social development indicators. These are available at:

<http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/data.htm>