



SOCIAL WATCH E-NEWSLETTER

Issue 31 - April 08, 2011

[“Europe Must Address the Actual Priorities of the Arab People”](#)



The Mediterranean in a Turkish map of the 17th century, translated from one published in Amsterdam. "It is time to change the perspective on the Southern neighbors..."

Social Watch, the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) and Eurostep welcomed this week the Joint Communication on a “Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean” presented by the European Commission. However, these organisations highlighted “several concerns” about this policy and submitted their proposals “as a contribution to a constructive dialogue around the future of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership”.

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[Top Ten Priorities for UN Women](#)

A series of feminist and civil society organisations from all over the world called UN Women to design its policies from an economic, cultural and social rights framework. Some of the signatories are ActionAid, the Center for Women’s Global Leadership and the Feminist Alliance for International Action, focal point of Social Watch in Canada.

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[LDCs: “Development Paradigm Must Change, and Urgently”](#)

Governments and international institutions were asked to renounce to the “business as usual” approach at the informal interactive civil society hearings of the UN General Assembly convened last week in preparation for the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), that will take place in Istanbul in May. “The development paradigm must change, and urgently,” said Dr. Arjun Karki, International Co-ordinator of LDC Watch and chair and spokesperson of the LDC-IV Civil Society Forum.

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[Ceaseless Repression in Azerbaijan](#)

The Azerbaijani authorities must halt a campaign of intimidation against opposition leaders that has seen activists detained and allegedly beaten last Saturday by police following anti-government protests, Amnesty International said on Thursday. That campaign was confirmed by Social Watch members in Baku. The protests were convened through Facebook and inspired by the Arab revolution.

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[Pakistan: Understanding Local Complexities to Meet MDGs](#)

Pakistani political, socio-economic and cultural complexities and the local diversities must be taken into account to meet the Millenium Development Goals, according to a study by Zulfiqar Halepoto, member of Social Watch Pakistan, published by DAWN, this country leading English daily.

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[Social Watch General Assembly in Manila](#)

The Fifth Social Watch Global Assembly will take place in Manila, Philippines, from July 13 to 15, 2011. National Social Watch coalitions from around the world have started the discussion to name their representatives. For any question related to participation in the Assembly please write to Ana Zeballos (anaclau@item.org.uy),

[Social Watch Pan Asia Capacity Building Workshop](#)

Watchers from Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines and Vietnam shared experiences at the Social Watch Pan Asia Capacity Building Workshop that took place in Phnom Penh from 25-27 March.

Under the slogan “Opportunities in the Current World Crisis”, representatives of those Social Watch national coalitions discussed on regional, global trends and challenges in the context of further exploring alternative development paradigms and explored ways to strengthen their organisational capacity to work together in term of Social Watch priorities, including national reports and advocacy.

They also looked for mechanisms to develop regional action plans on social protection and to strengthen regional network and cooperation between and among members of national coalitions.

Some other remarks of the agenda were the upcoming LDC IV Conference in Istanbul and the challenges facing UN Women and the economic issues at the UN and Rio 2012.

EU-Southern Mediterranean: “Contribution to a Constructive Dialogue”

The Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), Eurostep and Social Watch submitted this week their observations to the Joint Communication “A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean”, presented last month by the European Commission and the High Representative of the EU for Foreign and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton. These are some remarks of the civil society statement:

“We welcome the Joint Communication on a ‘Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity’ as a positive initiative towards what the communication describes as a ‘qualitative step forward in relations between the EU and its southern neighbours’. The groups submitting this position document work on issues of human rights, development, and justice in the Euro-Mediterranean region. They stress the importance that new approaches to the partnership between the EU and its Southern neighbours must recognize what worked and what did not work in the partnership thus far. This is a necessary step towards establishing a partnership that addresses the actual needs and priorities of the people of the region. Therefore, we highlight several concerns that we have with issues in the Joint Communication, and put forward proposals with respect to those issues. We do this as a contribution to a constructive dialogue around the future of the EU-Mediterranean Partnership.

- We stress the importance of revising the approach to the economic and social partnership with reforms focusing on the political systems and the role of civil society. The adopted economic model cannot remain in its current form.
- We stress the importance of rooting initial humanitarian assistance and other financial assistance to the region on the principles of national democratic ownership. This requires national consultation processes that include civil society representatives and various stakeholders in the formulation of national strategies and in the definition of priorities.
- We stress that the new approach must build on lessons learned from the application of the ENP tools so far, avoid imposed conditionality, and enable the processes needed, including the provision of necessary the space and time, to nurture a national dialogue that identifies political, economic, and social reforms.
- We stress that the orientation of investment towards local and national development priorities is necessary as part of the transition towards economic and social models that serve justice and rights.
- We stress that there should be a continuous, adequate and accurate flow of information, as well as open consultations with civil society organizations to enable their active engagement in the establishment of partnership mechanisms.
- We call on the EU to include migration as one of the indicators for assessing the impact of social and economic policies of the renewed partnership
- We stress that promoting inclusive economic development necessitates acknowledging an objective assessment of the implications of macro-economic policies promoted and adopted thus far on development capacities and prospects.
- We stress that trade policies and their implementation must contribute constructively to the strategic objectives established by Southern Partner Countries for their own national development. Achieving coherence of trade policy with that of a country’s development goals necessitates establishing cross-sectoral dialogue at the policy making level, and within institutionalized foras and mechanisms that monitor the developmental outcomes of trade policies.
- We stress the need to link the implementation of trade and investment agreements with progress in achieving developmental and on building capacities in the Southern Partner Countries.
- We stress that ensuring food security requires the establishment of viable agricultural policies that includes a commitment to food sovereignty. The EU’s policies that impact on the agricultural capacities and competitiveness of Southern Mediterranean countries, including trade in agricultural products and the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy, must be reformed in the context of the partnership to increase their compatibility with Southern Partner strategies.
- We stress that in order to achieve stability in the region, there is an urgent need to address the peace process (as noted in page 11 of the communication) and to find a just and sustainable solution, respecting the relevant UN Resolutions.

Read the complete civil society organisations statement at www.socialwatch.org/sites/default/files/CivilSocietyReaction.pdf

Read the complete EU Joint Communication at ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/fule/docs/news/joint_communication-a_partnership_for_democracy_and_shared_prosperity_with_south_med_en.pdf

Strong Call to UN Women from the Civil Society

An assorted coalition of national and internacional organisations called UN Women this week to design its policies and programs from an economic, cultural and social rights framework. Some of the signatory groups are the Center for Women’s Global Leadership, ActionAid, the Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID), Women and ESCR Group, the Feminist Alliance for International Action, WIDE, Feminist Task Force and Urban Justice.

These are the most remarkable passages of the declaration and its ten recommendations:

"We welcome the inauguration of UN Women and look forward to productive collaboration with UN Women in adopting a human rights' framework for your program work.

"To this end, we call upon UN Women to mainstream human rights in its policy and program design as these are set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Convention on Racial Discrimination; the Declaration on the Right to Development and other human rights standards and treaties. UN Women is poised to become the premiere world body for the advancement of women's substantive equality and human rights and we call upon UN Women to build its internal capacity particularly in the areas of economic, social and cultural rights.

"Below is a list of recommendations that will assist UN Women in incorporating a human rights framework for policy and program design within UN Women's economic, social and cultural rights work:

- "1. UN Women must uphold and institutionalize the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA)
- "2. UN Women should work to ensure alignment between its programs and build strong and powerful partnerships with Civil Society Organizations
- "3. The UN, with the leadership of UN Women should strive for coherence in its programming
- "4. UN Women should make use of the work of relevant UN Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures
- "5. UN Women must exercise a role of a women's rights ombudsman with the Bretton Woods Institutions, including the World Trade Organization, rather than simply partnering with them
- "6. UN Women must promote Gender Participatory Budgets and Gender Responsive Budgets that recognize and value women's paid and unpaid work
- "7. A response from UN Women to the current economic and climate crises must be reflected in their program work
- "8. UN Women should establish a multi-stakeholder Group of Experts on human rights responses to economic crises
- "9. UN Women must promote the strengthening of national commitments to, and enforcement of decent work, women's access to livelihood and women's right to an adequate standard of living
- "10. UN Women should provide technical expertise and capacity building.

Read the complete civil society organisations recommendations at www.fafia-afai.org/files/UN%20Women%20ten%20recommendations%5B1%5D.pdf

Against the "Permanent Branding" of "Rich" and "Poor"

"We do not want a world with permanent branding as 'developed', 'developing' and the 'least developed countries'; of 'lenders' and 'borrowers'; of the 'rich' and the 'poor'. The people of the LDCs want to march forward to the center stage of shared prosperity and live with dignity," said Dr. Arjun Karki, International Coordinator of LDC Watch,

speaking at the Informal Interactive Civil Society Hearing of the UN General Assembly in preparation for the Fourth Conference of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

These are some of the most remarkable passages of the hearings.

Karki: "We Are Calling for a World Without LDCs"

"So, what do we expect from this conference? Certainly not an outcome that merely rolls over the programmes of action of past decades, re-iterates commitments already made, and yet again urges renewed efforts for their implementation. We have heard all this before, and seen the results that are dismal."

"We need a commitment from the international community to enable the development process within LDCs to work. This means ensuring there is an effective transfer of technology, debt cancellation, climate justice and real market access that is not constrained by non-tariff barriers that prevent LDC products from entering developed country markets and circumvent the DFQFA agreement. Likewise, use of subsidies is to be stopped as is the use of aid as a lever to open poor country markets to the rich country products. And of course, the delivery of aid commitments that remain an important source of revenue."

"We are calling for a world without LDCs."

Odile Ndoumbe Faye: "Crises are worsening every day"

"Men and women of the 33 Least Developed Countries in Africa are living at the pace of the world crisis characterized by economic, food, environmental, social and political crises, which not only continue but are also worsening every day," said at the meeting Odile Ndoumbe Faye, on behalf the Association of African Women for Research and Development-Senegal. "Those crises are not isolated but the expression of the crisis of the neoliberal and capitalist model characterized by the overexploitation of labour and the environment and the financial speculation to the detriment of the real economy."

"LDCs' economic, political and cultural sovereignty must be respected so that the African genius can be released and

help African women and men to think their own development. The odious and illegitimate debts must be cancelled and a civic audit be done to enable the populations of the LDCs to seek compensation through education programmes focused on the rebuilding of the cultural identity of the women and men learners and linking school to the community life. And gender must be integrated in the 4th Action Plan and an audit be carried out throughout the decade in order to adjust the disparities and have gender disaggregated data to measure human development indicators in LDCs."

Coates: "Accountability is an issue for all, not just for LDCs"

"As we have heard from Roberto Bissio of Social Watch, civil society also has a key role to play in holding governments to account for the delivery of their commitments. This means all governments," said Barry Coates, from Oxfam International (New Zealand). "Good governance and accountability is an issue for all, not just for LDCs. As civil society we do not hesitate to hold donor governments to account, major developing countries and LDCs themselves, as well as international agencies."

"We therefore call on you to work with civil society as full partners. We play a crucial role in building support for the Programme of Action and ensuring it is implemented. We want to play a stronger role in policy formulation. We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in a dialogue here today and hope that you will engage with civil society in each country as this Programme of Action is driven through to implementation."

De Meyer: "Equitable Development Cannot Be Done Against the People"

"Inclusiveness, sustainability and equitable development are extremely important. They are a necessary condition for real development," said Rudy de Meyer, from Eurostep and 11.11.11 (Belgium). "But there is a high risk of them being diluted into meaningless buzzwords or interpreted in all kinds of different ways. We should qualify them better. And make them operational and useful."

"On the importance and the urgency of genuine ownership of development objectives and processes a lot can be learned from some of the events the last few months in the Middle East. If donors and governments really want equitable development and ownership, they cannot do it against the people and their organisations. As much as we want countries to gain policy space to plan their own development in a not always friendly international context, we fight for policy space for people and their organisations to protect and achieve their rights. In the end that is what equitable is about."

Sarba Raj Khadka: "A Timeframe to Eradicate Poverty and Hunger"

"The recent food price hike has had tremendous impacts on the poor people in the LDCs including other poverty trodden parts of the world. Lack of employment opportunities, reduction in food production and unjust distribution systems compounded with increased food price have negatively impacted the basic tenets of livelihood - food and nutritional security and food sovereignty. High price of food means lower amounts and inferior qualities thus compromising the nutrition requirements," said at the informal hearings in New York Dr. Sarba Raj Khadka, Director of Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN).

"Resource mobilisation and committed political leadership are very important to manage the above mentioned crises. At a time when ODA is being slashed back on accounts of the financial crisis, the immediate and unconditional cancellation of LDC debts, along with the implementation of a global financial transaction tax, would generate an impetus to accelerate the socio-economic development of the LDCs."

"Finally, I urge this august gathering to plan the convening of an UN Convention on Food Sovereignty, to pave the way for food security and food sovereignty of the resource poor, hungry and vulnerable people mainly living in the LDCs."

[Azerbaijan: "Systematic and Brutal" Repression](#)

Key figures from the Musavat Party and Popular Front Party have been detained in Azerbaijan, in a government crackdown following Saturday's "Day of Wrath" protests and charged with serious public order offences despite doubts over the evidence against them.

A ruling party official also warned on Wednesday that the government would crack down severely on another protest planned for 16 April.

"The Azerbaijani regime is sending a clear message that it will go after any dissenting voices in a systematic and brutal fashion," said John Dalhuisen, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for Europe and Central Asia.

"This deliberate targeting of leading opposition figures must stop, and the authorities should allow future public protests to go ahead," he added.

Protestors and lawyers representing some of the men have alleged that police beat them at the time of their arrest and while they were in custody.

Hundreds of riot police gathered in central Baku to stop Saturday's protest, which was inspired by recent protests in the Middle East and North Africa and organized using Facebook.

According to a statement released by the Azerbaijani Ministry of Internal Affairs on 4 April, around 200 people were detained during and immediately after the demonstration, while another 17 activists and organizers were arrested in the days leading up to the protest.

Among those arrested on 2 April were Hasan Karimov, Chairman of the Popular Front Party of Azerbaijan (PFP), Tazakhan Miralamli, Chairman of Jalilabad branch of the PFP, and Tural Abbasli, head of the Youth Organisation of the opposition Musavat Party.

Karimov, who has a heart condition, was hospitalized after developing respiratory problems in an overcrowded cell with 54 other inmates.

Miralamli claims that riot police beat him at the time of his arrest and again while he was held at the Sabail district police station. He was later taken to hospital where he was diagnosed with a broken finger and kidney problems as well as severe damage to his left eye.

In a closed trial on 4 April, the Sabail district court remanded Abbasli and two others - Arif Hajili, of the Musavat Party and Mahammad Majidli of the PFP - into custody for two months on a charge of organizing mass disorder. If convicted, they face a prison sentence of up to three years.

Read the complete press release at [amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/azerbaijani-authorities-target-opposition-rally-leaders-2011-04-07](http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/azerbaijani-authorities-target-opposition-rally-leaders-2011-04-07)

MDGs: Pakistan Needs to Strengthen Local Institutions

By Zulfiqar Halepoto

Pakistan will not be able to meet the targets set for the Millennium Development Goals until the strategic priorities conform to its specific, diverse and complex socio-economic, political and cultural realities.

It is on this one-point agenda that some consensus is emerging among the leading development practitioners, economists, civil society leaders, parliamentarians, NGO activists and local community representatives.

The same consensus was seen during the national conference on 'Monitoring the Achievements of the MDGs and Weaknesses of the Existing Budgetary Allocations' organised by the Policy & Governance Section of Action Aid, Pakistan supported by the USAID. Speakers and participants were of the view that for the MDGs targets to be realised, a political will is required to devolve and localise.

The aim of the conference was to create a space for communities and civil society organisations to critically monitor and influence the government to devolve MDGs implementation; sensitising civil societies to play proactive role, analysing the strengths and weakness of the government initiatives, and developing civil society recommendations to help achieve set goals.

From the community voice to expert opinion, the focus was on two main goals of education and health which, it was felt, should be given priority by the government. Speakers including Qamar Zaman Kaira, Dr Pervez Tahir, Abrar Kazi, Senator Haji Adeel, Naseer Memon, Irfan Mufti, Dr Ishaq Baloch, Dr Sarfraz and Zulfiqar Halepoto stressed the need to localise the MDGs programmes and targets by strengthening local institutions.

The proceedings started with presentations by grass-root communities and civil society activists from six districts—Bhakkar, Muzaffargarh, Multan, Sukkur, Sanghar and Qambar-Shahdadkot— who monitor the district level progress of the MDGs and are engaged with the local government systems to influence decision making processes.

Community representatives of these six districts shared the respective findings of their budget tracking and development expenditure. These initiatives were designed to raise people's voices on the alarming situation and poor progress towards the MDGs.

Speakers made their voices loud and clear on the major issues set in the year 2000 on eradication of extreme hunger and poverty, universal primary education, improving maternal health, reducing child mortality rate, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, gender equality, women empowerment, environment sustainability and developing global partnership for development.

Presentations from all the four provinces were an eye-opener and suggested that the targets of education and health—the basic indicators— were far behind targets.

The government's fourth official report on MDGs says 16 national targets and 37 indicators were adopted. Pakistan is ahead in six indicators, on-track in two, slow in four, lagging behind in 20 and off-track in one indicator (infant mortality). The report was criticised by participants who maintained that the success stories were fabricated and achievements were not reflected in the ground realities.

It was suggested that localisation of MDGs programmes in Pakistan is a must and socio-economic and politico-cultural diversity has to be kept in mind because the MDGs are focused on aggregate 'targets' while understanding of the local and urban dimension is missing. If aggregate targets are achieved, disparities across people and places may persist.

Presentations on provincial governments progress recommended that leading national policies— including those of national educational, safe drinking water, sanitation, environment, health and fisheries policies and the disaster management— should have a provincial outlook as MDGs fall into their domains after the 18th Amendment.

The conference agenda includes starting of an inclusive development dialogue to develop provincial strategies and planning.

Read the article at www.dawn.com/2011/04/04/localisation-of-mdgs.html

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Made possible thanks to the funding and support of the European Union and Oxfam Novib.



The international secretariat of Social Watch also receives funding and support from the Coalition of the Flemish North South Movement - 11.11.11.

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