

A CALL TO PARTNERSHIP

COMMUNIQUE FROM THE CONSULTATION OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS ON GLOBAL POVERTY
September 13, 2005

PREAMBLE

At the urgent call of Church leaders in the southern hemisphere, we came together at Washington National Cathedral as Christian leaders from diverse traditions and places, both rich and poor, South and North, united in a common concern for those of us living in poverty. We see their faces; we hear their voices; they are a part of us, and we are a part of them.

As the United Nations reaches its 60th anniversary, we give thanks for its work in peacemaking and global reconciliation, particularly the historic commitment to eradicate poverty in the Millennium Declaration of 2000. Five years have passed, and despite this triumph of principle, there has been a failure in practice. In this communiqué, we offer our partnership to the leaders gathered at the World Summit at the United Nations in building a global movement to make real the promises of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a crucial step toward a more just world for all God's children.

DECLARATION

We believe that God calls us to place people struggling with poverty at the center of our concern. Globalization has brought unprecedented economic growth. At the same time, one-sixth of the world's people still fight daily for survival under the crushing burden of extreme poverty. The increasing concentration of wealth in our world, while so many suffer, is a scandal that impoverishes us all.

We believe that the spirit of partnership between rich and poor, exemplified in the MDGs, is a way the world can address poverty in all its dimensions. In particular, we support the Goal of a "global partnership for development" and believe that the Churches can make a unique contribution to that partnership.

We believe that our communities of faith, representing millions of people and sponsoring numerous human-development initiatives, can provide new models for advancing a global movement against poverty. The Churches have a vast network of institutions, trusted relationships with millions of people, and access to countless local communities, all rich resources for development.

CALL TO GOVERNMENTS

In light of the urgency of the needs of the most vulnerable, we call upon governments to take the following actions:

1. **Create a Just Society:** We recognize that poverty cannot be uncoupled from structures of injustice in the world. We call upon governments to protect human life, defend human rights, foster just economies, and create conditions in which all people can fulfill their human potential.
2. **Build Partnerships:** In many countries productive partnerships have been established between government and Churches, but more possibilities lie ahead. We call on governments to facilitate partnerships with Churches and religious organizations so that the poor become protagonists in their own destinies.
3. **Promote accountability and transparency:** Corruption and a lack of transparency and accountability rob the poor of significant resources and pose an obstacle to development in many countries. We know that nations and international institutions have undertaken anti-corruption initiatives; we commend these and urge that far greater resources be devoted to their implementation.

4. **Cancel Debt:** We commend this summer's debt cancellation agreement of the G-8 as a significant advance, and urge world leaders to build upon this agreement. Too many nations still labor under a burden of debt that does not allow them to invest in the health, education, and economic development of their peoples. We call upon creditor nations and international institutions to cancel the remaining debt of all nations struggling with extreme poverty.
5. **Increase Development Assistance:** We commend those countries that have increased development assistance in response to the Millennium Declaration and the Monterrey Consensus. We challenge all nations to fulfill the commitments they have made to increase development assistance dramatically.
6. **Promote Trade Justice:** Too little progress has been made in making the world's trade systems fair and just for developing countries and peoples. We call upon the nations of the world to level the playing field for trade.
7. **Security:** In too many regions and countries, armed conflict exacerbates extreme poverty, which in turn sows the seeds of future conflicts. We call upon the leaders of nations to protect innocent populations, reduce the flow of arms, and support peace building.

A CALL TO THE CHURCH

In making these calls to governments, we know that the Churches themselves must be active partners in the work of development and building a just world economy. We affirm the work of countless Church communities and faith-based relief and development agencies that work for and with those living in extreme poverty. At its best, this work acknowledges the leadership of persons in poverty, engages poor communities as partners in human development, moves us to work across denominational and faith lines, and brings us into productive partnerships with governments and the private sector.

Our call to the churches builds upon our strengths. At the same time, we humbly recognize our weaknesses. As Christian leaders we challenge our own Churches to pursue partnerships with governments, international organizations, civil society, and across confessional lines. Without new strategic partnerships, the world will fail to fulfill the aspirations of the Millennium Declaration.

We encourage the Churches to deepen and intensify efforts to promote transparency and accountability, both in their own development work and in the work of their governments. Locally rooted church communities, in collaboration with civil society, can help governments monitor distribution of resources and evaluate results.

OUR HOPE AND COMMITMENT

In faith and obedience to God, and in humility, we are compelled to be agents of hope, doers of justice, and lovers of kindness. We believe the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved by 2015. These targets of basic material well-being can only be reached in the context of peace, human rights, environmental sustainability, and gender equity.

Building a just society involves costs and risks. We will stand with courageous political, religious, and community leaders. We commit ourselves to work as partners with all who work to achieve a more just and peaceful world.