

UK can lead G8 in striking at causes of poverty, say religious leaders

To G8 Heads of Government,

Today marks the start of the 1000 day countdown to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the 2015 deadline. It is an appropriate moment to pause and to reflect on progress to date.

Development is working. But challenges remain. The number of people living in extreme poverty has been halved ahead of time and 14,000 fewer children die each day than in 1990. Yet 1 in 8 people still go to bed hungry every night and over 2 million die of malnutrition each year.

Even as conversations accelerate as to what ought to replace the MDGs, we should not slacken our efforts towards realising existing goals. Meeting the remaining targets, while challenging, is possible – but only if governments do not waiver from the moral and political commitments made over a decade ago.

Thirteen years on from the start of the Millennium the values and principles that drive these goals are as imperative as ever. The financial crisis may be a reason but is not an excuse for hesitation or deferral. The MDGs remind us that in addition to providing for the well being of our own societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold human dignity and the common good at the global level. Each individual has a value that can never be lost and must never be ignored.

With a focus on tax, trade and transparency, the UK Presidency of the G8 this year has the potential to advance the MDG agenda in ways that strike at the underlying causes of poverty, in particular by ensuring the wealth created by developing countries is not lost through unfair tax practices, a lack of transparency or a failure to secure the benefits of trade for developing countries.

As religious leaders from across the G8 we recommend that our Heads of Government take the following actions when they meet in June. First, fulfil existing commitments to spend 0.7% of national income on aid. Secondly, launch a G8 Convention on Tax Transparency committing signatory countries to prevent individuals and companies from hiding wealth so that it's untraceable. Thirdly, press for greater financial transparency from governments of developing countries so that the citizens of these countries can hold their governments to account for the money they spend.

Reaching a purposeful consensus on these areas won't be easy. But, if the political will and moral leadership is forthcoming, this year's G8 could help to create an environment that encourages the conditions for inclusive, equitable and sustainable economic growth – conditions that are desperately needed if we are to realise the MDGs and even greater things beyond.

Yours,

1. The Most Revd and Rt Hon Justin Welby
Lord Archbishop of Canterbury (UK)

2. The Most Revd Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster (UK)

3. The Most Revd Philip Tartaglia
Archbishop of Glasgow (UK)

4. Rt Revd Albert O. Bogle
Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (UK)

5. The Most Revd David Chillingworth
Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane
Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church (UK)

6. Revd Jonathan Edwards
General Secretary, Baptist Union of Great Britain

7. Mr Paul Parker
Recording Clerk, Religious Society of Friends of Great Britain
8. Mrs Val Morrison
General Secretary of the United Reformed Church (UK)
9. Rev Dr Michael Jagessar
Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church (UK)
10. Rev Dr Mark Wakelin
President of the Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain
11. Revd Simon Walkling
Moderator, National Synod of Wales of the United Reformed Church
12. Rev R. Kenneth Lindsay
President of the Methodist Church in Ireland
13. Archbishop Paul Hackman
Trans-Atlantic and Pacific Alliances of Churches (UK)
14. Commissioner Clive Adams
Territorial Commander, Salvation Army, UK and ROI
15. Revd Joel Edwards
Director, Micah Challenge International
16. Rt Revd Mar Theodosius
Diocesan Episcopa, Mar Thoma Church (UK)
17. Rev Michael Heaney
General Secretary of the Congregational Federation (UK)
18. Rev Torbjørn Holt
Chairman, Council of Lutheran Churches in the UK
19. Rt Revd Munib Younan
President, Lutheran World Federation (Jordan)
20. Ravinder Kaur Nijjar
Co-Chair of Religions for Peace European Women of Faith Network (UK)
21. Lord Indarjit Singh,
Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)
22. Mr Julian Bond
Director, Christian-Muslim Forum (UK)
23. Dr Natubhai Shah,
Chair/CEO Jain Network (UK)
24. Bhai Sahib, Bhai Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia
Chairman, Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (UK)
25. National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United Kingdom and on behalf of its sister Assemblies of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the United States
26. Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra,
Christian Muslim Forum Co-Chair and Assistant Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain

27. Mr Toufik Kacimi,
Christian Muslim Forum President
28. Ayatollah Dr Sayyid Fadhil Al-Milani,
Christian Muslim Forum President, and Imam Al-Khoei Islamic Centre (UK)
29. Dr Manazir Ahsan,
Co-Chair Inter Faith Network, Director General Islamic Foundation (UK)
30. Mr Yousif Al-Khoei,
Director, Al-Khoei Foundation UK
31. Mr Ramesh Pattni,
Co-Chair Hindu Christian Forum, Hindu Forum of Britain
32. Mr Nitin Palan,
BAPS Swaminarayan Hindu Mandir (UK)
33. Mr Malcolm Deboo,
President, Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe
34. Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari,
Chairman of the East London Mosque, and former Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain
35. Rabbi Dr Tony Bayfield
The Movement for Reform Judaism (UK)
36. Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner,
Movement Rabbi for the Movement for Reform Judaism (UK)
37. Rabbi Natan Levy,
Interfaith and Social Action consultant, Board of Deputies of British Jews
38. Rabbi Danny Rich
Chief Executive, Liberal Judaism (UK)
39. Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg
Senior Rabbi of the Masorti Movement (UK)
40. Rabbi Avrohom Pinter
Charedi Rabbi (UK)
41. Rt Revd Paul Hendricks
Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Southwark and Co-Chair, Christian Muslim Forum (UK)
42. Anjum Anwar
Dialogue Development Officer, exChange Project, Blackburn Cathedral; Chair, Woman's Voice; Trustee,
Christian Muslim Forum (UK)
43. His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel of France
Ecumenical Patriarchate, President of the Conference of European Churches (Fra)
44. The Most Revd. Dr. Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop and Primate, Episcopal Church (USA)
45. Rabbi Richard A. Marker
Former Chair, Elijah Board of World Religious Leaders (USA)
46. Mr Dave Courchene
Elder and Spiritual Leader, Anishnabe Nation, Eagle Clan (Canada)

47. Mrs Pascale Fremond
President, Religions for Peace Canada
48. Victor C. Goldbloom
Companion of the Order of Canada, Past Chair, National Executive, Canadian Jewish Congress
49. The Most Revd Fred Hiltz
Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Canada
50. Mr Mark Huyser-Wierenga
Chair of the Board, Citizens for Public Justice (Canada)
51. Rt Revd Susan C. Johnson
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
52. Mobeenuddin H. Khaja, O.Ont.
President, Association of Progressive Muslims of Canada
53. The Right Revd Gary Paterson
Moderator, the United Church of Canada
54. Pandit Roopnauth Sharma
President Hindu Federation and Spiritual Leader Shri Ram Mandir, Mississauga (Canada)
55. Mr. Prem Singh Vinning
President, World Sikh Organization of Canada
56. The Rev. Dr. James Christie
Director, Ridd Institute for Religion and Global Policy, University of Winnipeg, Canada
57. The Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton
General Secretary, The Canadian Council of Churches
58. Major Jim Champ
President, The Canadian Council of Churches
59. Dr. h.c. Nikolaus Schneider
Chair of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany
60. Bishop Martin Schindehütte
Head of the Department for Ecumenical Relations and Ministries Abroad, Evangelical Church in Germany
61. Rev. Regina Claas
General Secretary, Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany
62. Revd Martin Affolderbach
General Secretary, G8 Religious Leaders' Summit Germany
63. Prof. Dr. Johannes Lähnemann
Vice Secretary of the Round Tables of Religions in Germany
64. Rabbi Dr. Henry G. Brandt
General Rabbi Conference of the Central Council of Jews in Germany
65. Mr Bekir Alboga
Deputy General Secretary of the Turkish Islamic Union of the Public Institution for Religion (Germany)
66. Dr. Timmo Guezelmansur
Head of the Center for Christian Muslim Dialogue of the Catholic Bishop's Conference in Germany

67. Hilary Keachie,
Protestant Youth Federation Germany
68. Prof. Dr. Assaad Elias Kattan,
Orthodox Churches in Germany
69. Rt Revd Prof. Dr. Martin Hein
Protestant Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck (Germany)
70. Mr Michael Gerhard
Council of the Buddhist Union in Germany
71. Most Rev. Masanori Yoshimura
President, Japanese Association of Religious Organizations
Patriarch, Shinto Shinshu-kyo (Japan)
72. Most Ven. Yukei Matsunaga
Honorary President, G8 Religious Leaders Summit 2008
Patriarch, Shingon Esoteric Buddhism (Japan)
73. Very Ven. Koho Murayama
President, International Religious Fellowship
Lord Chancellor, Soto Zen Buddhism (Japan)
74. Most Revd. Mitsuo Miyake
President, International Association for Religious Freedom
Senior Chief Minister, Shinto Konko Church of Izu (Japan)
75. Most Ven. Jisho Omori
Patriarch, Benten-shu Buddhism
Chief Abbot, Myoohji Temple (Japan)
76. Most Ven. Nisshin Matsushita
Patriarch, Honmon Hokke-shu Lotus Buddhism
Chief Abbot, Myorenji Temple (Japan)
77. Rev. Takeshi Nishida
President, Itto-en Religious Community
Adviser, Religion for Peace (Japan)
78. Most Revd. Tsunetada Mayumi
Chief Priest, Sumiyoshi Grand Shrine (Japan)
79. Yoshinobu Miyake
General Secretary, G8 Religious Leaders' Summit Japan
80. Maulana Mohammed Shahid Raza, Muslim College