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Movement - Canada

Mouvement fédéraliste
mondial (Canada)

Affiliate of / Filiale du
World Federalist Movement
Mouvement fédéraliste mondial

International President
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The Very Rev. Hon. Lois M. Wilson

Canadian President
Président canadien
Warren Allmand, P.C. O.C. Q.C

Past-President / Ex-président
Hon. Flora MacDonald

Council Chair
Président du conseil
Robin Collins

Executive Director
Directeur exécutif
Fergus Watt

NATIONAL OFFICE
Suite 207, 145 Spruce Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1R 6P1

BUREAU NATIONAL
145, rue Spruce, bureau 207
Ottawa, Ontario K1R 6P1

Tel./Téléphone: (613) 232-0647
Fax / Télécopieur: (613) 563-0017

wfcanat@web.ca
www.worldfederalistscanada.org

MEDIA ADVISORY

**World Federalist Movement - Canada
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World Summit on Development and UN Reform MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, POSTPONEMENTS, AND FAILURES

The reform effort that was initiated over two years ago by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had three overarching objectives: (1) to overcome the "deep divisions among member states," particularly those arising from US actions in Iraq; (2) to spur greater efforts to realize commitments made in 2000 to attain, by 2015, the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and (3) to bring about "ambitious, far-reaching" reforms to the institutional structure of the UN.

Set against these objectives, the process to date must be judged a failure. There is no sense of renewed collective security or greater shared purpose to achieve the MDGs. Indeed, the divisions among member states led to a near collapse of the process. Last-minute changes significantly weakened previously agreed-upon commitments. With respect to the MDGs, the Leaders Outcome Document reinforces present commitments but breaks no significant new ground. And the detailed architecture of the main agreed-upon institutional changes - a Human Rights Council and a Peacebuilding Commission - is postponed, while there is no new agreement on reforming the Security Council, strengthening peacekeeping capacity, or making the UN a more democratically accountable organization.

However, the result could have been much worse. A week ago it looked like there might not be a consensus document at all. A core group of diplomats, including Canada's Allan Rock, worked overtime to negotiate a final text. Much of its impact will depend on subsequent negotiations over key postponed items, and on the ability of Civil Society to push governments to take real action on these issues.

The final weeks of negotiations led to considerable weakening of previous agreements. Consensus forums like the UN General Assembly are often vulnerable to the 'tyranny of the minority.' Led by the US, a small group of states (including Egypt, Cuba, Iran, Pakistan, and Venezuela) watered down the draft outcome document submitted August 5 by General Assembly President Jean Ping. In many passages, statements of principle have replaced commitments to action.

(1) Development

Despite the American plan to eliminate references to the MDGs, they are still mentioned, although in a somewhat diminished form. The document primarily reiterates commitments to development objectives agreed to at previous meetings.

The big winner under the development heading in the Document is the "Global Partnership" programme from the Monterrey Conference in which "development" is always dependent on "good governance" – the new slogan for protection of private property, law and the market economy. The original thrust of the Summit, to reinforce the battle to eradicate extreme poverty, appears to have been parried.

Trade, investment, debt, commodities and quick impact aid are essentially stand-pat sections based on present power relations with little innovation. There is no progress in bringing the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization into closer alignment with UN development goals. A paragraph related to opening up European and American markets to least developed nations that would have had a greater positive impact than any other measure has been emasculated.

Two very contentious paragraphs remain in the document, but now they only commit "some countries." One refers to the 0.7 percent target goal for official development aid, and the second to the creation of "innovative sources of financing."

(2) Peace and Security

The commitment to create a new Peacebuilding Commission, a forum to coordinate programming for countries emerging from conflict, is retained. Its mandate is more circumscribed in the final text and its operating modalities are still uncertain, being left to an "Organizational Committee" that is to meet during the upcoming session of the General Assembly.

A long list reiterating previous commitments to disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, agreed to in the August 5 text, has been removed, save a few sentences of support for the landmines treaty and an action plan regarding small arms and light weapons.

The section on peacekeeping, lamentably weak throughout the reform process, took yet another blow when a commitment to create standing civilian police capacity was reduced.

(3) Human Rights and Rule of Law

The final document retains a commitment to replace the discredited Human Rights Commission with a more effective Human Rights Council. However, the ability of member states to see this through is now in doubt because extensive text on agreed to commitments regarding the transition process has been removed. Key passages that would retain many of the important and creditable features of the Commission (human rights treaty bodies, special rapporteurs, participation rights for civil society) have been deleted.

A definition of terrorism, approved by the High-level Panel and retained in Ping's August 5 text, has been removed. The agreed-upon text calls for further negotiations on a convention on terrorism.

The section on "Impunity," including references to the International Criminal Court, has been removed.

Canadian diplomats deserve credit for the fact that the final document endorses the emerging norm that there is a collective international responsibility to protect populations in the event of genocide or other large-scale killing that sovereign governments have proved powerless or unwilling to prevent. A related Canadian objective, the detailing of "guidelines on the use of force" to protect populations at risk is a matter for future discussions, in the General Assembly and Security Council.

(4) Strengthening the UN

Well-publicized efforts to reform the composition of the UN Security Council fell apart earlier this summer. The final document puts yet another nail in the coffin: A call for "comprehensive reform" in the August 5 draft is weakened, including references to "early reform."

Overall, the document weakens the role of the General Assembly in relation to both the Security Council and in its oversight of the UN Secretariat.

It strengthens commitments to reforming the management and accountability procedures at the UN Secretariat, which was a goal for US negotiators.

Decisions regarding the most important institutional changes to UN machinery - a Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission - have been postponed. It is not surprising, therefore, that Kofi Annan told world leaders this week "that is why this reform process matters, and must continue."

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Warren Allmand, WFMC National President, (514) 262-5623 (mobile)

Fergus Watt, WFMC Executive Director, (613) 232-0647

John Trent, UN Reform Program Associate (819) 827-4407