



## **C20 Development WG Communiqué on the G20 Matera Declaration**

### **Building back better? Or business as usual?**

The Matera declaration, signed by the G20 leaders at the end of the joint Development/Foreign Affairs ministerial meeting represents, in the ambitious words of the Italian Foreign Affairs Minister Luigi Di Maio, an historical step in ensuring a world free from hunger and extreme poverty. The evidence of the impact of the pandemic on hunger, that was already on the rise in the years before, is recognized by the G20, which also emphasize the need for more proactive actions for empowering the youth and the women, as well as the role of small scale family farming. But relevant keywords are perhaps not enough to lay the ground for real change, in a situation where a truly new pace would be necessary. In order to tackle the problem of growing hunger, the root causes of hunger and poverty need to be clearly spelled out, but systemic determinants do not gain any visibility in the analysis, including the controversial role of international trade, the tensions within an under regulated global financial market, the role of conflicts in boosting hunger and poverty. This clear vision on structural constraints seem to be absent from Matera declaration, as well as a firm commitment in responding to the immediate needs; and a clear signal in support of effective public policies. To all extents, G20 seem to be overcautious, and its initiative unlikely to bring a real boost in the matters of concern.

#### **Catalytic investments for what?**

While the commitment on providing timely and urgent assistance is nearly absent from the Declaration, the emphasis on the need for tighter attention to marginal and vulnerable social groups is welcomed. Also the attention of building on local food systems and cultures is an important acknowledgment with many potential consequences at policy level. However a clearer understanding of the need for effective public policies might have turned away the risk for endorsing potentially risky initiatives: hiding an unclear rooting on shared common good, behind the screen of a call to 'all the stakeholders'. The declaration actually reiterates a somehow ideological appeal to the virtues of the private capitals, even if no clear evidence is been brought on the additional 'development' effect of this kind of financial flows: this kind of 'received wisdom', on how development may take place would probably need some more 'out of the box' thinking on something that has been promoted several times without really offering much evidence of its effectiveness. The risk of using the heading of 'catalytic investment' to legitimize the use of the scarce public resources to catalyze something that goes elsewhere than global public good.



### **Financial speculation: missing in action**

On the side of the structural constraints, the recognition of the effects of the climate change, could well result at least in a mention for the need for effective mitigation and effective climate commitments; while the exclusive emphasis on adaptation bears the risk of dumping on the poorest and most vulnerable the responsibility of surviving in a world whose climate is modified by someone else. But the most patent 'missing in action' when examining the factors that hinder an effective fight against the global hunger (and where most of the rhetoric is played on the need of keeping the markets 'open') is the mention for the financial speculation: these have played a key role in pushing to hunger millions of people by artificially inflating the price of the food commodities while at the same time making them so volatile that producers could not receive any meaningful market signal to plan for their future production commitments. Leaning towards market openness without even mentioning financial speculation, gives a good measurement of how detached from the reality the underlying analysis can be. –

### **The narrow path of multilateralism**

Recognizing the growing hunger, before and after the pandemics, shows clearly the shortcomings of the strategies adopted so far. While the efforts of the Italian government to bring on board some important issues has to be praised, G20 fails to take the lead in adopting really innovative and transformative approaches. Multilateralism, a word repeatedly used during these days is really the key to tackle the challenges of hunger, inequalities and climate change. But a truly multilateral perspective needs to be build every day, away from groups of countries 'by invites only', looking more at existing intergovernmental democratic and accountable instances, where social actors and civil society find a formal space for interlocution, rather than within unclearly defined processes that, even with some kind of 'UN' labels (but at risk of ambiguity for what concerns companions and allies), risk to undermine long established policy dialogue paths.

Challenges are at the high side, but Matera Declaration seems to fall short the ambitions, both in terms of contents and method. The need for clearer and more evidence based analysis on the root causes of hunger and poverty, and more courageous initiative still awaits for a response.