

London Forum on G-8 – ‘action on poverty needed now’

Wednesday 29 June 2005

A group of UK and US church leaders has called for decisive action and firm commitment on poverty from the world’s G8 leaders meeting this weekend.

The London Forum, meeting at Lambeth Palace and hosted by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, issued a final communiqué saying that the time for change is now:

“There is no place for apathy in a world which sees 30,000 children die each day because of poverty related conditions. The bible teaches that whatever we do to the poorest we do also for Jesus. We believe God judges nations by what they do to the poorest.”

The Forum was attended by delegations from UK Churches organised by Dr David Goodbourn of Churches Together and Britain and Ireland; US churches organised by The Revd Jim Wallis, leader of the peace and justice network Sojourners, representatives of African led churches and representatives from faith based mission and development agencies.

The communiqué calls upon G-8 leaders to, “provide courageous and costly leadership by providing the resources and making the structural changes necessary to eradicate poverty.”

Earlier some of the delegates had what they described as a ‘constructive’ meeting with UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown.

ENDS

Notes for editors:

1. The text of the full communiqué is as follows:

The London Forum
Church Leaders’ Statement on the G-8

There is no place for apathy in a world which sees 30,000 children die each day because of poverty-related conditions. The bible teaches that whatever we do to the poorest we do also to Jesus. We believe God judges nations by what they do to the poorest. This means all of us in the prosperous world, governments, churches, the media and populations stand under judgement, to the degree that we fail to respond to such a situation with costly compassion and generosity, so that we may help in God’s name and by God’s grace to secure justice for the poor.

The upcoming G-8 Summit is a challenge to the world’s leaders to take decisive action on behalf of those living in extreme poverty.

As leaders of churches and faith-based organisations from the United States and the United Kingdom in conversation with voices from the global South, we have gathered at Lambeth to strengthen our commitment to end extreme poverty on the occasion of the G-8 Summit.

For the first time in history, humanity possesses the information, knowledge, technology, and resources to bring the worst of global poverty virtually to an end. What is missing is sufficient political and moral will. As church leaders from diverse Christian traditions, we re-commit ourselves and our faith communities to help generate that moral will at this critical historical juncture. We call upon President George Bush, Prime Minister Tony Blair, and the other G-8 leaders to provide courageous and costly political leadership by providing the resources and making the structural changes necessary to eradicate poverty.

We applaud the progress being made in some of the poorest nations of the world on governance issues and commend the part played by churches and other faith-based communities in those countries in sustaining and supporting essential health and education infrastructures for the benefit of all. We recognise the necessity of proper investment in that infrastructure by governments and NGOs. We also commit to continuing our solid support for the role played by partner churches and pastors in those countries ensuring ongoing delivery of progress on poverty reduction by their governments.

We also applaud momentum being built by grass roots campaigns around the world who are addressing these issues and pledge to mobilise our energies, in partnership with faith leaders from the Global South, to realise common goals emerging from these campaigns and the Millennium Development Goals:

Debt – The recent agreement on 100% debt cancellation for eighteen of the world's poorest countries represents a major step forward that should now be expanded to include all multilateral creditors and more impoverished and heavily indebted nations.

Aid – The moral scandal of extreme poverty requires that the wealthy nations do much more to assist the poorest countries in fighting poverty, hunger and disease through a dramatic improvement in the quantity and quality of aid. We are also united in the call for good governance and an end to the corruption that undermines all nations and people. Conditions attached to aid and debt cancellation must not be used to reinforce existing patterns of inequality that undermine pro-poor policies of local governments.

Trade – The structural inequities and power imbalances in trade rules that tilt

toward the rich nations at the expense of impoverished nations must be reformed so that people can earn a sustainable income and the private sector can generate jobs and wealth for the common good. Rich countries must reform their subsidies to prevent the dumping of produce on world markets and strengthen special and differential treatment for poor countries so that they are able to protect vulnerable producers and develop new industries.

This is the agenda for young people and old together. We are all too aware that it is the poor who pay the greatest price of ecological degradation. It is women and children who bear the disproportionate costs of poverty while bearing also the greatest hope as agents for change. This is the time for change. We trust that by the grace of God we may all have the courage to change the course of history in favour of the world's poorest.

2. A full list of participants follows:

Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

Co-Chairs

The Revd Jim Wallis, Director of Sojourners and Convener of Call to Renewal

Dr David Goodbourn, General Secretary, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

Delegation from the USA

The Revd David Beckmann, President of Bread for the World

The Revd Rich Cizik, VP of Government Affairs at the National Association of Evangelicals

Dr. Robert Davis, Director, Mennonite Central Committee

Dr. Glenn Palmberg, President, Evangelical Covenant Church

The Rt Revd Peter Rogness, Bishop of St. Paul Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church of

America

The Revd Ron Sider, President and Founder of Evangelicals for Social Action

Father Andrew Small, Policy Advisory, International Economic Development, U.S.

Conference of Catholic Bishops

Mr. Rich Stearns, President, World Vision United States

Revd Adam Taylor, Campaigns Director of Sojourners

The Revd Geoff Tunnicliffe, International Director/CEO, World Evangelical Alliance

The Rt Revd Peter Weaver, Presiding Bishop of the United Methodist Church

Council of

Bishops

Delegation from the UK

The Most Revd Peter Akinola, Archbishop of Nigeria

Christine Allen, Director, Catholic Institute for International Relations

HG Bishop Angaelos, Coptic Orthodox Church
Mgr John Arnold, Vicar General of Westminster
Mr Andy Atkins, Advocacy Director, Tearfund
Mr Charles Badenoch, Director, World Vision
Mr Doug Balfour, Executive Director, Integral, Evangelical Alliance
Mr Chris Bain, Director, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)
Lt-Col Keith Burridge, Territorial Secretary, Salvation Army
The Revd David Coffey, Free Churches' Moderator (Baptist)
The Rt Revd Mgr Henry Docherty, General Secretary of Catholic Bishops Conference
Dr Alison Elliot, Convener of Action of Churches Together in Scotland
Mr Martin Gordon, Senior Campaigns Officer, International, Christian Aid
Bishop Greaves, New Testament Assembly
Ms Trish Heywood, Worldwide President, Mothers' Union
The Revd John Kennedy, Methodist Church
Ms Katei Kirby, Director of African and Caribbean Evangelical Alliance
The Rt Revd David W Lacy, Moderator, General Assembly of the Church of Scotland
Ms Anne Martin, Director of Commitment for Life Programme, United Reform Church
Dr Daleep Mukarji, Director, Christian Aid
The Very Revd Ken Newell, Moderator, Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Mr Brian Peterson, World Vision
The Rt Revd Peter Price, ex-General Secretary, United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel
The Revd Matthew Reed, Director, Church & Communications, Christian Aid
The Revd Dr Kenneth Ross, Council Secretary of the World Mission Council
Mr Peter Scott, World Vision
Archdeacon Taimalelagi, Anglican Observer at the United Nations
The Rt Revd James Tengatenga, Bishop of Malawi
Ms Hellen Wangusa, Africa Coordinator, Millennium Development Goals Campaign
The Revd Peter West, Area Coordinator, South London, Christian Aid
The Rt Revd Pierre Whalon, Bishop of the American Convocation of Churches in Europe