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WOMEN'S GROUPS EXPRESS SHOCK AND DISAPPOINTMENT
AT UN SPEECHES BY BUSH AND BLAIR

Women's organizations at the World Summit are shocked and disappointed by the statements made yesterday by President Bush and Prime Minister Blair before the UN General Assembly.

President Bush thanked the international community for its assistance with post-Katrina rescue and reconstruction. Yet he personally unleashed Ambassador John Bolton on the Summit negotiations three weeks ago, dealing a severe blow to international cooperation and the final result. President Bush claimed that the US has a moral obligation to help poor countries. But Ambassador Bolton made it clear throughout the negotiations that the US will not adopt the target of 0.7% of national income for foreign aid, and he even tried to prevent other rich countries from mentioning it in the Summit agreement. President Bush can no longer speak with a straight face about his commitment to defeating HIV/AIDS, when his Ambassador refused to allow language that would have ensured *full funding* for the Global Fund on HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB. Neither can President Bush continue to point to his "Millennium Challenge Account" program as an alternative to concrete targets for foreign aid - the MCA has proven to be an exercise in public relations that has disbursed little money to poorer countries.

Prime Minister Blair called the Millennium Development Goals "a specter." Instead of reiterating Britain's commitment to these goals, he only referred to the weaker agreements reached at the G8 summit in Gleneagles. But "doubling of aid" that is already paltry amounts to much less than meeting the 0.7% target. Bush and Blair talk about trade as a critical strategy in poverty eradication. But until the EU and the US eliminate the millions of dollars spent for farm subsidies to their own agribusiness, this is just one more empty promise. "Opening trade" will also hurt the poor unless the EU and the US stop using patents to prevent affordable access to essential HIV drugs. Farm subsidies and patents were to be included in the agreement for this Summit, but the US successfully got them off the table. Britain should stop the race to the bottom began by the US, not acquiesce to it.

Statement by:

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