



## **United Nations 2005 World Summit Outcomes: Gains on Gender Equality, Mixed Results on Poverty, Peace, and Human Rights**

Oct. 12, 2005

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**A. The World Summit in the current geo-political context**

Conditions on the United Nations stage have changed dramatically since the mid-1990s when women's advocacy led to groundbreaking global policy agreements. The 1990s UN Conferences benefited directly from the atmosphere of the early post-Cold War period, where the hope was that military and security expenditures could be greatly reduced and those funds spent instead on human development and the environment. The last several years have shown this period to be a high point in multilateral global policy to advance human rights and economic and social justice.

The current environment, in contrast, is dominated by global trends antithetical to rights and justice. The neo-liberal economic paradigm, promoted by the United States and other wealthy countries through the World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, prioritizes economic growth, free trade, deregulation and privatization without due regard to social impact. Increased militarization and a shift to military and anti-terrorism expenditures, and strident religious and other fundamentalisms in all parts of the world combine to constrain the political will and resources of governments to advance a comprehensive human rights and development agenda. These global trends are exacerbated and reinforced by the extreme unilateralism of the Bush Administration. As a result, the human rights and development agenda has been undermined and stalled and the moral authority and effectiveness of the United Nations further weakened.

It is in this context that Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, launched his report, "In Larger Freedom" in March 2005. In it he set out a vision linking development, peace and security and human rights in a reformed United Nations better suited to the 21st century. The World Summit failed to achieve this grand bargain, but it did take some small steps forward. For the first time world leaders endorsed the responsibility of states and the international community to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. They also committed to the creation of a new Peace-building Commission by the end of 2005; and pledged to double the budget for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The Summit Outcome document is of special significance to women's rights advocates because it includes, for the first time in a UN agreement at the level of Heads of State, particularly detailed language on gender equality. World leaders promised to end impunity for violence against women and to eradicate policies and practices that discriminate against women; recommitted to the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325; and reaffirmed the Cairo Programme of Action goal of universal access to reproductive health.

The 2005 Summit was deeply affected by widespread distrust of U.S. motives and frustration with its unilateralist stance. The aggressive tactics adopted by the Bush Administration in the month preceding the Summit were crystallized in the sudden introduction by U.S. Ambassador Bolton of hundreds of amendments to the draft text being developed, including opposition to basic concepts like the Millennium Development Goals, adopted in 2001 as a roadmap to achieving the 2000 Millennium Declaration. This opened the door for a handful of other countries—Algeria, Cuba, Egypt, Pakistan and Venezuela—to adopt similar hard line tactics and negotiations quickly became mired in dissension, including protracted wrangling over procedure and process. In the end, the entire disarmament section was deleted and the sections on trade, climate change, the establishment of a Human Rights Council and UN reform were dramatically weakened.

## **B. Feminist advocacy**

For feminists, as for other civil society advocates, the negotiations process proved extremely challenging. Following the example of the 2000 Millennium Summit, the 2005 Summit did not use the conventional Preparatory Committee model, opting instead for high-level continuous consultations that severely restricted the participation of the majority of member states as well as civil society. The only formal opportunity for civil society input was the widely attended informal interactive hearings of the General Assembly. Furthermore, the preparatory process was longer (April to September) limiting the participation of organizations without permanent representation in New York. For the Summit itself, civil society was not allowed access to the UN building and limited to only two representatives to address the gathering as it ended. (See: Remarks to the World Summit by feminist leader, Virginia Vargas).

In the years prior to the Summit many women's organizations were critical of the narrow framework of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the failure to integrate women's empowerment and gender equality as essential crosscutting components. The minimalist approach of the MDGs was widely viewed as a retreat from the promises of equality, empowerment and women's human rights contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, Cairo Programme of Action and other intergovernmental agreements of the 1990s.

In the lead-up to the Summit feminist advocates therefore sought to expand the MDG framework to better fit women's needs. Feminist advocates and academics helped develop the seven strategic priorities of the Millennium Project's Task Force on Education and Gender Equality as well as the health systems recommendations of the Task Force on Maternal Health. Activists also worked consistently to ensure that ongoing UN work on peace and security and human rights recognized women's advocacy and integrated their concerns. Women's organizations created new networks (like the Feminist Task Force of the Global Call for Action Against Poverty (GCAP) and the New York-based Gender Monitoring Group of the World Summit), and shared information and refined advocacy strategies through listservs and face-to-face discussions in regional and global spaces like Beijing+10 (the 10-year review of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women at the March 2005 Commission on the Status of Women) and the General Assembly meetings on the range of issues to be taken up at the Summit. Feminist groups also joined broader social justice and human rights movements like GCAP, and served on the official Task Force of the President of the General Assembly.

In spite of these efforts, the Secretary General's Report; "In Larger Freedom", was extremely poor on issues of gender equality and women's human rights (see the critique, "The 2005 World

Summit: What's At Stake for Women," by the Gender Monitoring Group and partners). Nonetheless, as a result of sustained advocacy by feminists worldwide, each succeeding version of the 2005 World Summit Outcome document was stronger on gender equality and while not all of these gains were retained, language on gender in the final document is fairly strong.

### **C. Gender analysis of the 2005 World Summit Outcome document**

The following analysis of the Outcome document highlights aspects critical to women's rights in the sections on Development [II], Human Rights and the rule of law [IV], Peace and collective security [III] and Strengthening the United Nations [V]. Note: The importance of gender equality and the promotion, protection and enjoyment of all human rights in the achievement of development and peace and security are reaffirmed in the Preamble [Section I, paragraph 12].

#### **DEVELOPMENT (Section II)**

##### **Gender equality and the Millennium Development Goals: Paragraph 58**

World leaders reaffirmed that meeting the goals and objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action is essential in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. MDG #3 on gender equality and women's empowerment has been broadened beyond the limited focus on primary education (although it should be noted here that the 2005 target for universal primary education has already been missed). The World Summit Outcome document commits to five of seven priorities identified by the Millennium Project Taskforce on Education and Gender Equality—the right to own and inherit property (b); equal access to productive assets and resources including land, credit and technology (e); “eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and the girl child, including by ending impunity...” (f); increased representation of women in government decision-making bodies (g); and universal access to reproductive health, which is endorsed in paragraph 57(g). The two priorities not included are those on eliminating gender inequality in employment and investing in infrastructure to reduce women's time burdens. There are no references at all to *sexual* health or to sexual or reproductive *rights*. Furthermore women's right to land has not been explicitly recognized and there is no reference to gender balance in decision-making bodies, a goal with a 2005 deadline established in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.

##### **Strengthening health systems: Paragraph 57**

World leaders committed to “increasing investment... to improve health systems in developing countries and economies in transition” so they can achieve the health-related MDGs by 2015 [57(a)].

##### **Universal access to reproductive health: Paragraph 57**

World leaders recognized the centrality of reproductive health to achieving the MDGs and recommitted to the achievement of universal access to reproductive health by 2015, the central goal of the 1994 Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development [57(g)].

##### **Combating HIV and AIDS: Paragraphs 57, 68**

World leaders committed to “increase the capacities of adults and adolescents to protect themselves from HIV infection” [57(b)]; ensure greater coverage for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services through “substantial funding of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria” [57(c)]; “developing and implementing a package for HIV prevention, treatment, and care” towards achieving the goal of universal access to treatment by 2010 through

increased resources, better access to affordable medicines and the elimination of stigma and discrimination [57(d)]; implement the “Three Ones” principles in all countries [57(f)]; and promote long-term funding for research, including for vaccines and microbicides [57(h)]. They also made specific commitments to address the pandemic in Africa [68(i)]. However the gender dimensions of the pandemic, the need for gender parity in prevention, treatment and care, and the linkages between sexual and reproductive health services and services for the prevention, treatment and care of HIV were ignored.

#### **Quick-impact initiatives: Paragraph 34**

World leaders endorsed the concept of quick-impact initiatives— actions to bring about immediate improvements in people’s lives like distributing malaria bed nets, expanding school-meal programs, and eliminating user fees for education and health-care services—and resolved to “urgently identify and implement (such) country-led initiatives with adequate international support...” Other quick-impact initiatives recommended by the Millennium Project that were not included despite the efforts of advocates:

- Universal access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, including family planning and contraceptive information and services and the closing of existing funding gaps for supplies and logistics;
- Expanded use of proven effective drug combinations for AIDS;
- National campaigns to stop violence against women;
- Collection and desegregation of data by sex.

#### **Sustainable development: managing and protecting our common environment:**

##### **Paragraphs 48-56**

World leaders reaffirmed their commitment to “promote the integration of the three components of sustainable development—economic development, social development and environmental protection—as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars” [48]. The Rio principles are taken into account in this context but there is no mention of women’s critical contribution to environment management (Rio principle 20). The document acknowledges, “the sustainable development practices of indigenous peoples and their communities is crucial in our fight against hunger and poverty” [56(d)].

Most of the UN environmental conventions are mentioned but substantial action proposals in early versions of the Outcome document have been removed, including a proposed timeline to develop a more inclusive international framework on climate change and a reference to a globally defined action involving all major emitters and both developed and developing countries. World leaders also pledged to “promote the sound management of chemical and hazardous wastes throughout their life cycle” but only opted for “a voluntary strategic approach to the international management of chemicals...” [56(k)]. The need to ensure that water and sanitation infrastructure and services are gender sensitive and meet the needs of the poor; and a proposal to launch an action program, with necessary financial and technical support, to halve the number of people living without safe drinking water and basic sanitation did not make it into the final draft.

#### **Financing for development: Paragraph 23**

In the face of strong opposition from the U.S., Canada, Australia and others to commit themselves to a timetable to reach 0.7 percent of GNP in official development aid, the Outcome document simply reaffirms the 2002 Monterrey Consensus. It simply urges “developed countries that have not yet done so to make concrete efforts...in accordance with their commitments...”

[23(b)]. Governments did resolve to take concrete action and set deadlines to improve the quality and effectiveness of aid, including by further aligning assistance with countries' strategies, reducing transaction costs and making progress on untying aid [23(c)].

Commitments to innovative sources of financing made it through negotiations, yet are significantly weaker in the Outcome document than in earlier drafts. Reference to the urgent need for immediate front-loading of additional ODA was not included in the Outcome document. While the final text does state that some governments will implement the International Finance Facility, a mechanism to front-load ODA commitments, consensus on welcoming the 2005 launch of the IFF was deleted. A solidarity contribution on airline tickets was welcomed in the previous draft, but merely noted here [23(d)]. References to consider other solidarity contributions that would be nationally applied and internationally coordinated were completely eliminated.

#### **Debt relief: Paragraph 26**

The Summit Outcome document does not go beyond agreements at the July 2005 G8 meeting. It simply welcomes the "recent proposals of the G8," which offered to 18 Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) 100 percent cancellation of their debt to three specific institutions: the International Monetary Fund, International Development Association and African Development Fund. As for the other debts of these same HIPC countries, world leaders only agreed to "stress the need to consider" their cancellation. With respect to non-HIPC low and middle-income countries with an unsustainable debt burden, significant debt relief will be considered "where appropriate, and on a case-by-case basis." There is no reference to illegitimate debt. The U.S. had initially sought to delete all references to debt relief for non-HIPC countries. Since the Summit, the World Bank and IMF have agreed to implement the G-8 debt cancellation proposals.

#### **Trade: Paragraphs 27-32**

Developing countries at the Summit wanted to spell out an agenda for the upcoming trade negotiations at the December 2005 WTO Ministerial in Hong Kong. Relevant issues such as subsidies for agriculture and cotton, non-agricultural market access, services, intellectual property rights, and the environment did not survive the negotiation process—the U.S. and other Western governments insisted that trade related issues should be left to the WTO thereby quashing efforts to strengthen the UN to effectively address the negative impacts of trade on development. The trade section in the Outcome document is therefore significantly watered down with governments reaffirming commitment to trade liberalization [27] and using the mantle of "the development dimensions of the Doha work programme" to support unbalanced trade rules [32]. There are no references to the negative impacts of trade liberalization, the need for fair trade rules and policies, or the need to ensure that trade rules are in line with existing UN agreements on human rights, including women's rights, and the environment.

#### **Systemic issues and global economic decision-making: Paragraphs 35-39**

Proposals for World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organization reform, on coherence with the UN development agenda, and to ensure corporate responsibility and accountability, did not make it through the negotiation process. Language reaffirming the need to avoid unilateral measures that violate international law and the UN Charter and that prevent populations in poorer countries, especially women and children, from achieving economic and social development and realizing the full enjoyment of their human rights, did not make the final draft.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW (Section IV)**

### **Human Rights Council: Paragraphs 157-160**

A decision to create a Human Rights Council was made in principle [157], but governments could not agree to specifics of mandate, functions, membership size, criteria of membership, a peer review mechanism, and its status (i.e. as a standing body versus a subsidiary body of the General Assembly). Decisions on these details are referred to the General Assembly (160) but there is no deadline for determining the details of this process—creation of the Council could be taken up by the Third Committee of the General Assembly (Oct. 3-Nov. 23, 2005), but it is also possible that the new GA President will take this discussion directly to the full GA. The Commission on Human Rights has not been disbanded or replaced and at the end of the Summit was still scheduled for March/April 2006. The GA President (Sweden) has asked South Africa and Panama to co-chair a group to facilitate further debate.

Discussion about the Council became a significant sticking point in the very late stages of negotiations. In the end, the UK offer of vague compromise language was included, since few governments were willing to enthusiastically defend the Council so late in the process. Governments did agree that the Human Rights Council “should address situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations and make recommendations” as well as “promote effective coordination and the mainstreaming of human rights within the United Nations system” [159]. There is no clear commitment to maintaining (or disbanding) the system of special procedures (special rapporteurs and working groups) or to addressing NGO participation in further talks.

### **The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: Paragraphs 124, 126**

One of the few resource commitments made at the Summit was the agreement to double the budget of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) over the next five years and to further strengthen the work of this office, particularly in areas of technical assistance and capacity building. It was also agreed that OHCHR staff should be recruited “on a broad geographical basis and with gender balance...” and that governments would support closer cooperation between the OHCHR and “all relevant UN bodies, including the GA, ECOSOC and the Security Council.” [124].

### **Other human rights and rule of law commitments**

World leaders reaffirmed that “all human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing, and that all human rights must be treated in a fair and equal matter, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis...(a)ll States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems have the duties to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.” [119-123]. They also agreed:

- that civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights including the right to development are to be enjoyed by all people [123].
- to “improve the effectiveness of the human rights treaty bodies, including through more timely reporting, [and] improved and streamlined reporting procedures,” technical assistance to build States’ reporting capacity and enhancing implementation of their recommendations [125].
- to “pay special attention to the human rights of women and children and to undertake to advance them in every possible way....” [128].
- to “continue making progress in advancing the rights of indigenous peoples ... including through collaboration and consultation with them and to present for adoption a final

draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” [127] although without a timeline.

- that people with disabilities be guaranteed “full enjoyment of their rights without discrimination” and to “finalize a comprehensive draft convention on the rights of persons with disabilities” [129], again without a timetable.
- that “the promotion and protection of the rights of.... ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities” is positive for political and social stability and peace [130].
- to the protection of internally displaced persons [132] and refugees [133].
- to “eradicate policies and practices that discriminate against women and to adopt laws and promote practices that protect the rights of women and promote gender equality”[134(d)].

### **International Criminal Court**

The omission of any mention of the International Criminal Court in the Outcome document, at the insistence of the U.S., is particularly disappointing.

## **PEACE AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY (III)**

### **Women, peace and security: Paragraph 116**

The Outcome document reaffirms the crucial role of women in conflict prevention, peace making and peace building. World leaders committed to the full implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, which calls for decisive action to increase women’s participation in peace and security decision-making and to protect women’s human rights in situations of armed conflict. Leaders further stressed the need to end impunity for gender based violence and violations of women’s human rights and committed to implement strategies to report on, prevent and punish perpetrators of such violations.

### **The responsibility to protect populations: Paragraphs 138-140**

World leaders adopted the concept of the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, thereby acknowledging the collective responsibility of the international community to prevent conflicts and to react to situations through diplomacy, negotiation, and technical and economic assistance. The adoption of this concept is not a blank check for unilateral intervention, but rather a commitment by the international community to collectively protect populations from the most egregious violations of their rights in situations where nation-states are unable or unwilling to do so. Actions based on this responsibility must incorporate the provisions of Security Council Resolution 1325 and result in a more consistent, timely, effective, and ethical response to situations where large numbers of civilians, particularly women and girls, are under direct and systematic attack or threat of attack.

### **Human security: Paragraph 143**

World leaders committed to further discuss and define the concept of human security in the General Assembly. Although the language on human security could have been stronger it is encouraging that the reference to the concept was retained despite opposition from a few governments including Russia, China and Cuba.

### **Peace-building Commission: Paragraphs 97-105**

World leaders agreed to establish a Peace-building Commission by December 31, 2005. As an inter-governmental advisory body the Commission will assist countries emerging from violent conflicts by bringing together relevant actors, marshalling resources, and extending the period of



attention given to post-conflict reconstruction and peace building. Its mandate does not include conflict prevention, only post-conflict situations, and it will make annual reports to the General Assembly. The Outcome document also calls on the Secretary General to establish with existing resources a small Peace-building Support Office in the UN Secretariat and to create a multi-year standing Peace-building Fund from volunteer contributions. A number of key unresolved issues—particularly those related to reporting lines and the role of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in the Commission’s creation and future work—are being considered by the 60th Session of the General Assembly where the GA President has asked Denmark and Tanzania to co-chair a group to facilitate further discussions. The Outcome document does not provide for any participation by civil society groups in the Commission.

#### **Security Council reform: Paragraphs 152-154**

World leaders at the Summit could not agree on a timeline for the expansion and reform of the UN Security Council. In addition, since Permanent members of the Security Council refused to suspend their veto powers in relation to situations of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, this issue was omitted from the Outcome document.

#### **Disarmament and non-proliferation**

One of the greatest missed opportunities of the Summit was the lack of progress on the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, a glaring omission Secretary General, Kofi Annan, called a “disgrace.” The omission stems from the U.S. decision to delete all references to disarmament from the Outcome document.

### **STRENGTHENING THE UNITED NATIONS (Section V)**

#### **Secretariat and management reform: Paragraphs 161-167**

Language calling for gender balance in the staffing of the UN was deleted from paragraph 161(c), although the Secretary General and decision-making bodies were encouraged “to take further steps in mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and decisions of the Organization” [166]. Despite feminist efforts governments did not take up the matter of upgrading the status and resources of women-specific UN entities.

#### **System-wide coherence: Paragraphs 168-169**

Sustainable development, human rights and gender were noted as “horizontal policy themes” to be taken into account in UN decision-making [169].

#### **Participation of local authorities, the private sector and civil society, including non-governmental organizations: Paragraphs 172-175**

World leaders “welcome the positive contributions of the private sector and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in the promotion and implementation of development and human rights programmes and stress the importance of their continued engagement with Governments, the United Nations and other international organizations in these key areas” [172]. The Outcome document didn’t endorse any of the recommendations of the Cardoso Panel on strengthening the relationship between civil society and the UN.

### **D. Next Steps**

Women’s groups will need to continue to monitor and advocate for gender perspectives in the follow-up processes to the Summit, in particular in the formation of the Peace-building Commission and the Human Rights Council, and in national level implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. In addition to the issues analyzed here, there were other areas

of the Outcome document, such as information and communication technologies, where issues of gender were not taken up at all. As the processes of the Summit and the Beijing + 10 Review in 2005 come to an end, there is a need for further reflection by women's rights advocates about next steps in engagement with the UN. An NGO meeting held in New York during the Summit mapped some of the questions that emerged from that meeting (See: Challenges for the Future). Our organizations continue to see the UN as an important site of struggle for global policy making, and we welcome on-going discussion about effective strategies for on-going feminist advocacy in this arena.

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