

Europe must come clean and deliver on aid promises to world's poor

Ahead of vital talks among European Union Development Ministers next week on whether the EU will meet its aid targets, NGOs across Europe criticised key EU member states including Germany, France, Italy and Portugal for failing to live up to their promises of increased aid to the world's poorest countries.

In a special report launched today – **Hold the Applause! EU governments risk breaking aid promises** - over 1600 European NGOs, united under CONCORD the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development, said that several European governments won't keep their aid promises to poor countries by 2010 unless they radically increase their provision of genuine aid resources.

“We have seen scant change from last year's inflated aid figures by key European governments as not enough real money is reaching the people who need it most,” said Lucy Hayes from Eurodad, the European Network on Debt and Development. **“It is time for European governments to come clean and deliver what they have promised”**.

Many European governments are inflating their aid figures with debt cancellations, particularly to Iraq and Nigeria. They are also chalking up as aid their spending within Europe on refugees and foreign students' education. In 2006 these non-aid items accounted for €13.5 billion, almost one third of European Official Development Assistance (ODA). **“Poverty reduction does not always seem to be the main objective of European aid,”** explained Justin Kilcullen, President of the European NGO confederation CONCORD. **“Security, geopolitical alliances and domestic interests often take precedence”**.

The report details how this is money that is needed to help the 1,400 women in poor countries who die every day while giving birth due to the lack of adequate health care as well as to help the 4,000 children who die each day from diarrhoea and to put 80 million children into school. **If European governments do not improve on current performance, poor countries will have received €50 billion less from Europe by 2010 than they have been promised,”** said Lucy Hayes.

European governments continue to make misleading claims about their aid figures with nearly one third of Europe's reported ODA not in fact being used as genuine aid. Italy, Greece, Portugal and Spain missed the individual minimum 2006 target outright. Once non-aid items are deducted, this report shows that France, Germany and Austria failed to reach the levels they originally promised.

The report highlights the fact that European governments have committed to increase aid to Africa dramatically, yet aid volumes to Africa have been static since 2004. In 2006, Africa's share of European aid resources actually decreased. **“While more resources are needed an increase in aid volume alone is not sufficient,”** said Hussaini Abdu, the Africa Regional Governance Coordinator for ActionAid. **“European governments have a moral obligation to both increase resources but also to make sure that money is targeted and effective for helping the world's poor”**.

The report also draws attention to shortcomings in EU aid delivery. All EU countries, except Ireland and the UK, continue to tie some of their aid to their own goods and services, decreasing the value of aid to poor countries by up to 30%. Approximately one fifth of aid consists of technical assistance, much of which is ineffective at building capacity in poor countries. In addition, unpredictable aid flows seriously hamper the ability of developing countries to plan budgets and development strategies.

CONCORD is calling on EU governments to provide genuine increases in European aid, to ensure aid is focused on fighting against poverty and inequality and to take further steps to make aid more effective.

For more information contact:

Robert Shaw, ActionAid Media and Advocacy Officer: +32 (0) 496 205 447
Ester Asin Martinez, CONCORD EU Policy Officer: +32 (0) 743 87 81

Notes to Editors

- ★ You can download the report "*HOLD THE APPLAUSE! - EU governments risk breaking aid promises*" and more information from CONCORD website <http://www.concordeurope.org>.
It has been launched on 11 May (10 am) at a press conference in the Résidence Palace in Brussels. The report forms part of the follow-up to the [Global Call to Action against Poverty](#) (GCAP) mobilizations in 2005 and 2006. It is part of a broader process of monitoring and advocating on European aid taking place under the umbrella of CONCORD.
- ★ The EU Foreign and Development Ministers as part of the GAERC (General Affairs and External Relations Council) will review the EU aid targets on 14 and 15 May at their meeting in Brussels.
- ★ On 14th May from 9.00 to 9.30, a demonstration will take place in front of the Council of the European Union in the morning at the arrival of the Development Ministers. Demonstrators will be wearing a mask mocking Finance Ministers whose countries did not meet the target or have been inflating their aid. NGOs are considering them as "Aid offenders" or "aid' inflators".
- ★ [Eurodad](#) is the European Network on Debt and Development and is a member of CONCORD

CONCORD is the European confederation of relief and development NGOs. Its national associations and international networks represent over 1 600 NGOs which are supported by millions of citizens across Europe. CONCORD leads reflection and political actions and regularly engages in dialogue with the European institutions and other civil society organisations.

CONCORD is part of the 'Global Call to Action against Poverty'.