



Reformation of Development Policy in Africa

“Consider our development aid record. Last year, the nations of the world spent over \$1 trillion on armaments. But we contributed less than 10 per cent of that amount — a mere \$80 billion — as official development assistance to the developing parts of the world, where 850 million people suffer from hunger.”

Mohamed El Baradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Lecture on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, Oslo, 10 December 2005

Honourable delegates,

numerous commitments, a lot of efforts, few results, no solution. This could be the overall assessment of the development aid for African countries by the industrialized nations. Much has been done in the last decades, but large parts of the African continent are still suffering from malnutrition, famine, deadly diseases, high infant mortality, limited access to clean water, health care and education, and from multiple armed conflicts that threaten the lives of millions.

This Preparation Guide is aimed at giving you a brief overview on the issues at hand. The first part deals with the historic background. Afterwards there is some general information on important aspects and efforts concerning the topic. Please note that this guide cannot deal with all aspects, given the fact that this is indeed a very broad topic with so many challenges not only the people in Africa but all members of the international community have to face.

To read this guide will be enough to have a general idea concerning the topic, but it will not be enough for you, honorable delegates, in order to participate actively in HamMUN 2009 and represent your country in a realistic and appropriate way. Therefore a list with helpful links for your further research is added to this text.

But now let's have a look at what has been, what is at the moment, and what might be in the future.

I. Historical Background

We have to begin with the age of colonialism. Western powers divided the African continent among them. In most cases the fate of the original population was of little or no interest to the colonial powers. Especially European nations looked for natural resources and land for their settlers who wanted to escape disastrous living conditions. In many cases attempts to convert the indigenous population to the Christian religion were made.

Far too often the colonial powers considered the local population as being second class individuals, who should not be granted any rights comparable to themselves. They were

oppressed, and in some cases sold as slaves to work on plantations or in mines in their own country or far away in Europe or North America. Additionally it shall not remain unmentioned that an even greater number of people from North and East Africa were sold as slaves by Arab traders for more than a millennium.

Historians estimate a total number of 17 million people abducted and sold to the coast of the Indian Ocean, the Middle East and North Africa by Arab traders.¹

It was not until deep in the 20th Century that the age of colonialism came to an end with the emerge of new sovereign nations gaining independence, sometimes peacefully but often after bloody wars.

While colonialism sometimes brought new technologies, infrastructure and cultural influences to the colonies, it was far more often the case, that existing natural resources were exploited and the population was intentionally left in a low state of development so that they could not resist the oppressors. Because of that many African countries were blocked from developing for centuries. This is probably the main reason for the low development level in those countries today.

During the sixties and seventies of the 20th century, through the rapidly growing importance of mass media, reports of horrible draughts and famines in Africa reached the western public for the first time. This lead to numerous commitments by several western governments to help the suffering population in their former colonies and other African countries, such as Ethiopia. The amount of money spent for development aid grew rapidly. There were also a lot of fundraising and charity events for Africa organized by newly formed Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or individuals.

But why weren't those attempts successful? Why did the living situation of so many people in Africa improve so little?

II. Current Situation

Well, did it? It shall not remain unmentioned, that in several areas huge progress has been made over the last decades. Indeed there are less people dying of hunger today than 40 years ago. More children can go to school. Illiteracy rates have dropped.

But all of this is compared to four decades ago. If you compare the situation now with the situation ten to fifteen years ago, you will see a totally different picture. In other regions of the world, especially in Asia, the progress made is significant.²

But not in Sub-Saharan Africa. By the way, I should clarify that when talking about Development Aid for Africa we are in most cases talking about Sub-Saharan Africa. The countries in the North have in most cases different types of problems. Malnutrition, poverty, lack of access to clean water and sanitation there, while far from European standards, is not as severe as in the South.

OK, but once again, why did we not defeat hunger and poverty yet?
There are different possible answers to this questions.

¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1523100.stm>

² <http://www.undp.org/asia/poverty.html>

Some would answer that we simply did not give enough. As you have read in the quote from Mr. El Baradei in the beginning of this guide, the total amount of money spend for development aid is still far lower than the amount spend for military purposes.

Yes, the western countries do spend a lot for development aid. But it's simply not enough. A lot more has to be done in so many different areas. And this will require a much higher amount of financial aid. One of the most prominent proponents of this argumentation is Professor Jeffrey Sachs, an American Economist and Special Advisor to Secretary General Ban Ki Moon. According to Sachs development aid requires thorough planning. If conducted in such way, if industrialized countries were committed to spend more and to reach the Millennium Development Goals, then poverty could be eradicated by 2025.³

Others would argue in a different way. Sometimes advertisements are right: There are some things, money can't buy.

Is it really the quantity of development aid we should be worried about? Shouldn't we instead of pledging more millions of dollars make sure that the money we give is spend properly and in accordance with human rights and the principle of good governance?

While almost all experts, including Professor Sachs, would that development aid should be given in a constructive and well planned way, some have rather radical views. Professor William Easterly, an Economist from New York University, is a strong critic of Professor Sachs. Instead of giving more aid to developing countries in a way that is called "top-down" plans, he proposes a "bottom-up" approach. Poor countries should be empowered to care for themselves, should be made independent from foreign aid. In his view development aid far too often hinders recipient countries from developing their own economy.⁴ He draws the quite provocative conclusion, that traditional development aid should be abolished in favor of a completely new system of bottom-up assistance.

Another part of the problem is that the economy in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa is based entirely on the export of raw material. They don't have an production industry to produce and sell products instead of just the raw material. This leads to rather low prices for those resources on the world market and very low income for the people in the affected countries. If the African countries started to produce instead of exporting all resources they have, there economy would look entirely different and be a potential competitor for European and Asian companies. Another part of the heritage from the age of colonization.

In many countries corruption is also a major issue. Large parts of the development aid do not reach the population but flow into the hands of the rulers who live in luxury with well equipped armed forces while their population suffers from malnutrition and disastrous living conditions.

III. Current Approaches

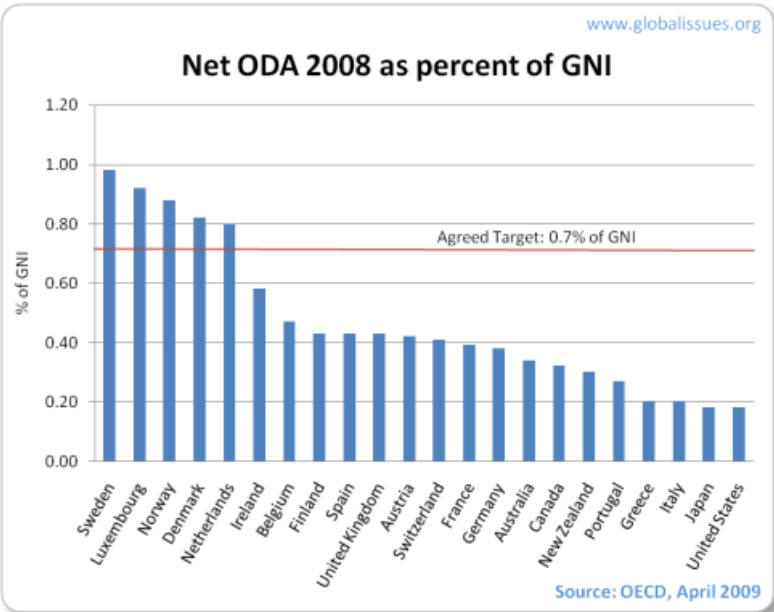
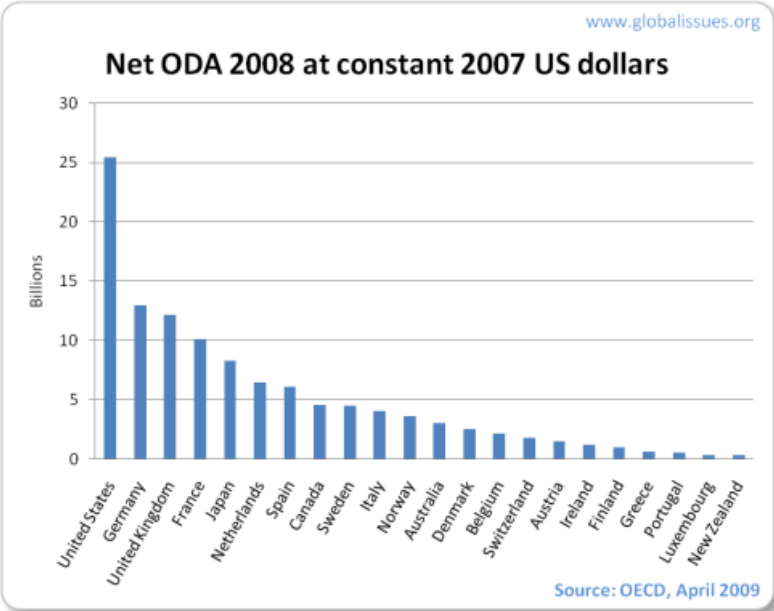
The possible ways out of the current situation correspond to the different ideas on what causes the situation.

³ Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*, Penguin Books, New York, 2005

⁴ William Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good*. Penguin Press HC, The, 2006

A number of states and non-state-actors demand an increase in spending for development aid. The United States spend more than \$ 25 billion, making it the country with the highest total sum of development aid in absolute numbers. This amount is surpassed only by the European Union. Its 27 member states contribute more than \$ 48 billion.

Those figures look quite impressive. But you need to take another look behind them. A far more realistic figure is the number relative to the Gross-National-Income (GNI⁵) of a nation.



Ironically the industrialized country with the lowest amount of development aid spent relative to its GNI is the United States.

Some of you might have heard of the goal that nations should spend 0,7 % of their GNI for Official Development Aid (ODA). What you will probably not know is that this goal is now 39 years old. The Resolution creating that goal states: *“In recognition of the special importance of the role which can be fulfilled only by official development assistance, a major part of financial resource transfers to the developing countries should be provided in the form of official development assistance. Each economically advanced country will progressively increase its official development assistance to the developing countries and will exert its best efforts to reach a minimum net amount of 0.7 per cent of its gross national product at market prices by the middle of the Decade.”*⁶

As you can read at the end of the quote, the original deadline set was 1975. Today, in 2009,

only five countries have reached the goal: Sweden, Luxembourg, Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands.

⁵ The Gross National Income is the total value of goods produced in a country (Gross Domestic Product = GDP) plus income received from foreign countries.

⁶ General Assembly Resolution 2626 (XXV) of 24 October 1970

In 2002 the United Nations Conference on Financing for Development, held at Monterrey, Mexico, dealt with the financial part of the topic. The participants included heads of state and representatives of member states of the United Nations but also representatives of large businesses and civil society. The so called ‘Monterrey Consensus’ was adopted as the basis for future international cooperation regarding development aid. The six aspects mentioned in it are:

1. Mobilizing domestic financial resources for development.
2. Mobilizing international resources for development: foreign direct investment and other private flows.
3. International Trade as an engine for development.
4. Increasing international financial and technical cooperation for development.
5. External Debt.
6. Addressing systemic issues: enhancing the coherence and consistency of the international monetary, financial and trading systems in support of development.

Six years later in 2008 a follow-up conference at Doha, Qatar tried to assess the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. The Doha-Conference saw some progress on a number of items and resulted in the adoption of the Doha Declaration but was in the eyes of many NGOs to be considered a ‘missed opportunity’.⁷

The 2005 Paris High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness dealt with the quality of official development aid rather than the quantity. Its final document, the Paris Declaration, comprises certain principles that states should follow in order to make their aid more effective.⁸

Another important aspect is the issue of debt relief. The economies of almost all developing countries suffer from enormous foreign debts. In recent years western states and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreed to free several African, Asian and Latin American countries of their heavy burden. In some cases this act was directly connected to a demand for democratization, respect for human rights and good governance.

Several former colonies also begin to demand the payment of reparations for the suffering under the colonial oppression. Ironically some of them are today among the cruelest regimes who oppress their own population and especially ethnic or religious minorities.

Based on the initiative of the IMF and the World Bank (the so called “Bretton Woods Institutions”), several states together with domestic stakeholder and other development partners drafted “Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers”. These papers take note of the specific situation of a country and set a framework for the reduction and ultimately the elimination of poverty. The first results of the Strategy Papers are quite hopeful. Maybe this could be part of a future comprehensive ODA-Framework.

When researching your country, you should verify whether such a paper exists for your country.

IV. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

In September 2000 189 member states of the United Nations assembled at the so called Millennium Summit at New York adopted the Millennium Declaration.⁹ They agreed to

⁷ <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/doha/press/ngopressconf.pdf>

⁸ The Paris Declaration: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf>

combine their efforts in the beginning 21st century to fight and ultimately eradicate poverty, hunger and deadly diseases such as HIV/AIDS. On the basis of its eight chapters, the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted a year later. The eight MDGs are:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

They are divided into 21 ‘targets’. Those are to be met by 2015, with regular review meetings throughout the 15 year duration.

In regions such as Asia, it is highly likely that most of the targets will be reached in time. But in Sub-Saharan Africa this is out of reach.¹⁰

V. Your Task

Your task, honorable delegates, is to find ways to reform the whole system of development aid for Africa. Whether the answer is more ODA or a better structured system, will be up to your nation’s government and your research. There can be no doubt however, that it is time to act.

You should also not forget that as the Human Rights Council you should have your special focus on the implementation of Human Rights. In recent years NGOs concerned with Human Rights issues voiced their concern about an increasing number of grave human rights violations, especially in rapidly developing economies. You will have to make sure that human rights and development are no contradiction.

Remember that you will be representing sovereign member states of the United Nations. You may have your own opinion on the matters at hand. But this is irrelevant. You should always act as a real diplomat from your country would act. To find out your country’s opinion on the topic you have to spend some time for research. The following links should help you with that.

Wishing you all the best for your preparation and looking forward to seeing all of you at HamMUN 2009!

Yours,
Kai Kröger,
on behalf of Sandrin Lange & Till Sagasser

⁹ General Assembly Resolution A/Res/55/2 of 18 September 2000

¹⁰ For more information on the MDGs you might want to have a look here: <http://www.endpoverty2015.org/>

Research Links

<http://www.un.org/> (UN Homepage – Starting point for your research)

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/> (Human Rights Council)

<http://www.un.org/en/members/index.shtml> (Links to permanent missions of all UN member states)

<http://www.uneca.org/> (UN Economic Commission for Africa)

<http://www.un.org/africa/osaa/> (Office of the Special Adviser on Africa)

<http://www.undp.org/africa/> (UN Development Programme – Africa)

<http://www.un.org/esa/desa/> (UN Department on Economic and Social Affairs)

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> (Millennium Development Goals)

<http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/> (Financing for Development)

<http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/doha/> (Financing for Development – Doha-Conference)

<http://www.endpoverty2015.org/> (The Millennium Campaign)

http://www.oecd.org/topic/0,3373,en_2649_15162846_1_1_1_1_37413,00.html

(Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development)

<http://www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/prsp.asp> (Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers)

<http://www.unhabitat.org/> (UN HABITAT)

<http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/africa?OpenDocument> (International Committee of the Red Cross)

<http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/> (Campaign „Make Poverty History“)

http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/ (US Agency International Development)

<http://www.hrw.org/africa> (Human Rights Watch)

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/poverty> (Amnesty International - Poverty and Human Rights)

http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/1579/Development_aid.html (OECD Observer)

<http://www.eurodad.org/> (European Network on Debt and Development)

<http://www.globalpolicy.org/social-and-economic-policy.html> (Global Policy Forum)

<http://www.cgdev.org/section/initiatives/active/millionssaved/> (Center for Global Development)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/default.stm> (BBC)

<http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/africa/archive/> (CNN)