

# The London Declaration for Transparency, the Free Flow of Information and Development

**We, as members of the global human rights, development and transparency communities and participants in the ARTICLE 19 conference on “Transparency, Free Flow of Information and the Millennium Development Goals” held in London on 24-25 August 2010, adopt the following Declaration.**

In September 2000, leaders from 150 countries adopted the Millennium Declaration and agreed eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) each with targets to meet by 2015.

Since 2000, a number of countries have succeeded in achieving some targets, for instance in combating hunger, and improving school enrolment and child health.

However, progress has been uneven and several MDGs are likely to be missed in many countries. Large differences remain between regions, across countries in the same region, and even within countries.

It has been repeatedly acknowledged that progress is off track, not because the MDGs are unreachable or because time is short, but rather because of unmet commitments, inadequate resources, and lack of focus and accountability. Development efforts are hampered by corruption, mismanagement, improper allocation of resources and their inefficient and ineffective use.

There is mounting evidence that transparency of financial flows, including of budgets, aid assistance and revenues from natural and other resources, is insufficient and ineffective. The environment and space for civic engagement and civil society organisations are increasingly restricted, preventing active participation and monitoring, and weakening demands for accountability. Both the free flow of information and transparency, including through a free and independent media, have largely been sidelined in the debate on the MDGs and the fight against poverty.

Yet, as is broadly recognised, transparency and the free flow of information reduce corruption and play a vital role in ensuring accountability at all levels. The availability and accessibility of information empowers people to demand their rights and public services. Free, independent and professional media and civil society organisations are essential to the global fight against poverty, and facilitate citizen participation in development programs.

*We are convinced that all efforts towards achieving the MDGs by 2015 must be considerably and urgently stepped up and should encompass the following interconnected principles:*

*First, **the free flow of information, transparency and civic engagement** are fundamental to the achievement of the MDGs, and the global fight against poverty*

*Second, **the free flow of information** includes protecting and strengthening the right of all to seek, receive and impart information and ideas related to the MDGs and development, and the existence of a free, diverse and professional media*

*Third, **transparency** requires collecting, producing, and disclosing accessible, credible and disaggregated data on MDG indicators and targets, as well as on budgets, aid assistance and revenues from natural and other resources*

*Fourth, **civic engagement** requires establishing and protecting an enabling environment for civil society organisations (CSOs) and the media, and active participation by all, in particular people living in poverty and those discriminated against, or marginalised.*

## ***We urge all States to take immediate action on the following priorities:***

### ***To promote the free flow of information and civic engagement:***

1. Respect, protect and fulfil the right to freedom of expression, including the right to information, as well as the right to freedom of association, in accordance with international human rights law
2. Adopt and effectively implement national laws, regulations and policies on access to information. This includes promoting access to, and proactive disclosure of, information related to development and the MDGs
3. Establish an enabling legal, regulatory and public policy framework for the media, including new media, which promotes their independence, diversity and pluralism, and thus allows for independent investigation and reporting on MDG implementation and poverty alleviation
4. Establish an enabling legal and regulatory environment for CSOs which recognises their independence and right to carry out their peaceful work without fear of harassment, reprisal, intimidation and discrimination
5. Take all necessary measures to ensure that all sectors of society –including women and vulnerable groups– are able to exercise their right to impart and access information without discrimination, including through the media and information and communication technologies (ICTs)
6. Remove all obstacles preventing people living in poverty from accessing information on development policies and take proactive measures to promote their effective participation in the design and execution of development strategies
7. Ensure that national, sub-national and local bodies make available and accessible all development-related information, including information on development assistance received and expended, strategies for development, MDG targets and indicators.

### ***To promote transparency:***

8. Ratify and fully implement the UN Convention against Corruption
9. Implement the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action; recognise that national development strategies require ownership by governments as well as parliaments, citizens, civil society organisations, and communities
10. Publish comprehensive, timely and comparable information on aid policies, performance, and financial flows. Implement the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) and ensure that IATI delivers an international standard that aligns with the information needs of governments and their citizens
11. Publish accessible and comprehensive information on budgets, expenditures and revenues in relation to development and the MDGs, such as on development assistance, social, economic and financial activities, and natural resources, including the extractive industries, forestry, fisheries and land
12. Fully comply with the International Monetary Fund's Code of Good Practices on Fiscal Transparency
13. Join or support relevant multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST) and the Medicines Transparency Alliance (MeTA). Donor governments should also support developing countries' transparency measures in planning, licensing and contracting for natural resource management and establish benchmarks for all development assistance programming in resource-rich countries
14. Implement the UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) Guidelines for the Development of National Legislation on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters
15. Adopt legal rules to require that all publicly-traded companies in natural resources and other relevant sectors publish all information on contracts with and payments to governments.
16. Ensure that all intergovernmental organisations adopt comprehensive, effective access to information policies, such as those developed by the Global Transparency Initiative (GTI) for international financial institutions (IFIs)
17. Establish participatory and transparent local government institutions to ensure equitable and quality service delivery.

***We also call on all other partners in the development and MDGs process to take the following actions:***

18. **Intergovernmental organisations** should adopt and effectively implement comprehensive access to information policies based on the principles of voluntary, maximum and proactive disclosure, such as those developed for IFIs by the Global Transparency Initiative
19. **Non-governmental donors** should support governments in adopting laws, regulations and policies that will ensure the free flow of information and transparency, including on MDGs and development strategies, and the receipt and expenditure of development assistance
20. **Private sector bodies** should adopt corporate social responsibility standards which recognise the importance of transparency and the free flow of information. They should join multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST) and the Medicines Transparency Alliance (MeTA) and publish all information on contracts with and payments to governments, particularly in relation to the extractive industries and other natural resources
21. **Civil society organisations, including international and national non-governmental organisations**, should join and support international and national self-regulatory initiatives to strengthen their reporting, transparency and accountability, including accountability to the people they serve. They should publish detailed information on their funding and expenditure as well as on the impact of their development activities.
22. **Media organisations** should provide a platform for an inclusive public debate about development and achievement of the MDGs with the participation of people living in poverty by, among other things, reporting on issues that are of particular concern to them. They should also actively and fairly investigate and report on the implementation of strategies on the MDGs and the delivery and use of development assistance, including by governments, CSOs and IFIs
23. **All MDG partners** should champion efforts at national and international levels, to enable citizens to access information and hold authorities to account, including by supporting and strengthening CSOs and civic engagement. They should support and make use of relevant accountability mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels, including parliaments, courts, ombudspersons, UN Charter and treaty bodies and regional bodies to scrutinise MDG implementation and strengthen accountability.

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