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STATEMENT

MDG Summit: World Leaders Fail to Deliver On Commitment to Accountability and Transparency

As the MDG Summit wraps up and world leaders return home, ARTICLE 19 joins civil society and NGOs worldwide in expressing disappointment at the lack of progress made. Whilst world leaders acknowledged the necessity for accountability and transparency, they made few commitments that would lead to actual change.

“Global civil society told world leaders that for the MDGs to succeed, two things were essential: assistance and accountability at all levels,” says Dr Agnes Callamard, Executive Director of ARTICLE 19. “What the world’s poor received were politicians and dictators grand-standing, pointlessly repeating the awfulness of poverty, and no commitments to sorting it out.”

Civil society groups and some governments, including the EU bloc, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, pressed for the adoption of a strong political statement to inspire sufficient momentum over the next five years to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, the G77, a group of developing countries, lobbied hard to remove firm commitments for governance reform, instead focusing on increasing aid targets.

The resultant action plan, titled *Keeping the promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals* is strong on rhetoric but weak on commitment.

The plan makes reference several times to the importance of accountability and transparency, key recommendations from the *London Declaration for Transparency, Free Flow of Information and Development*, which was released in August 2010 following an international conference of civil society groups, government officials and experts organised by ARTICLE 19.

The plan acknowledges that for the MDGs to succeed, accountability and transparency must be central. It specifically recognises the importance of “transparent and accountable systems of governance at the national and international level”, aid transparency, for both donors and developing countries, and transparency in UN institutions.

However, despite these clear “lessons learned”, there are only minimal pledges to accountability and transparency in the commitment section of the document.

The few commitments to be found are under MDGs 3 and 8. Under Goal 3, governments commit to strengthening transparency, accountability and access to information in preventing violence against women (72.g), and in delivering primary healthcare (73.a). Under Goal 8, the plan acknowledges the importance of accountability in governance and transparency in finance flows at all levels (78.c,f,j).

The Summit ran from 20-22 September and brought together many of the worlds heads of state in New York. The action plan also announced a follow up Summit in 2013 to further discuss MDG progress.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- The action plan and more details about the summit can be found on the website: www.right2info-mdgs.org
- The London Declaration can be found at: www.right2info-mdgs.org/declaration/
- For more information please contact: Oliver Spencer, oliver@article19.org +44 20 7324 2500
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.