

9 Challenges for the Spanish Presidency

Showing global leadership in EU's external policies in a time of crisis



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Responsible Editor: Conny Reuter

SOLIDAR is a European network of 53 NGOs working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide.

SOLIDAR lobbies the EU and international institutions in three primary areas: social affairs, international cooperation and education.

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FOREWORD

The financial crisis that started in the US over a year ago is still wreaking havoc on the world's economies and its people. But once again, and despite the fact that they played no role in causing this crisis, the poorest countries in the world have been the worst hit. According to the World Bank, this crisis is having a serious cumulative impact on poverty, with 64 million more people expected to be living in extreme poverty by the end of 2010 than would have been the case before.

This crisis, in addition to the environmental one, has showed that the current economic model is unsustainable. But without minimising the suffering caused by this crisis, this moment is also an historic opportunity for changing global priorities and structures and putting in place up a model of development that puts people and the environment on top of the priority list.

During the first six months of 2010, Spain has the opportunity to lead the European Union into common action towards making real progress on eradicating poverty and inequality, both in Europe and in the world. With responsibility for the Europe 2020 strategy and preparations for the 2010 review of the Millennium Development Goals, there is no shortage of key moments where the Spanish Presidency will require showing that Europe is prepared to fight for a fairer and environmentally sustainable world.

Through the questions elaborated in this document we call on the Spanish presidency to listen to the voices of European citizens, who through organisations like SOLIDAR and its Spanish members work towards social justice in Europe and all over the world.

Together we can be a force for change!

Conny Reuter

Secretary General of SOLIDAR

9 Challenges for the Spanish Presidency

1. MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

2015 is the deadline by which according to the UN Millennium Declaration we are meant to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The current economic crisis, the ongoing food crisis and the challenge of climate change have introduced new barriers to achieving these targets. As a result and now more than ever, aid is a crucial instrument for the international community's contribution to the progress of the MDGs. Nevertheless, due to the decrease in donor support, there are doubts about the international aid system's ability to deliver the MDG targets.

SOLIDAR and its Spanish members call on this presidency to:

- Put at the centre of its agenda European Union and Member States' MDG commitments by putting forward necessary initiatives and coordinating relevant actions in order to secure the financing required to achieve these commitments.
- Support, at the United Nations summit on September 2010, the formulation of an MDG Breakthrough Plan focusing on the decisive achievement of these commitments that will move the MDGs to the top of the international agenda.

2. AID COMMITMENTS

In 2005, the European Union committed to increasing its aid budget to 0.7% of its GDP by 2015, with a mid-term target of 0.56% by 2010. According to European Commission estimates, if the current trend of Member States cutting aid spending continues, this commitment will not be achieved on time. Indeed, imagining the most optimistic scenario, one in which all Member States achieve their targets, because aid levels are expressed as a percentage of GDP and due to the recession in European countries, between 2008 and 2010 real aid flows will decrease by approximately 12 billion euros. The decline in aid from some EU Member States brings Spain to the top of the list of donors, joining other countries such as Finland and the United Kingdom which are increasing their aid flows. With the authority that this position brings, the Spanish presidency must play a leading role in protecting ODA commitments against the threat of budget cuts.

SOLIDAR and its Spanish members call on this presidency to:

- Act with firm resolve and in accordance with the political will showed through the Spanish cooperation action plan 2009-2012 to achieve the 0.7% target by 2015, and persuade other Member States to put their own commitments at the centre of their agendas and publish multiannual binding timetables showing how they intend to increase aid flows to reach the targets for 2010 and 2015. This needs to be done without falling into the temptation of counting non-development financial flows (sometimes referred to as ODA+ items) in order to meet the target.

3. AID EFFECTIVENESS

One problem plaguing the international aid system is the lack of resources, a situation which has been made worse by the current economic crisis. Nevertheless, achieving aid commitments is not just a question of numbers. Raising the volume of aid must take into account its quality, as reflected by the Paris Declaration (2005) and reinforced by the Accra Agenda (2008).

SOLIDAR and its Spanish members call on this presidency to:

- Lead the EU in a strategic and clear way towards improving the quality of aid, by reinforcing European Commission and Member State actions' to increase aid effectiveness with a view to achieving development goals.
- Focus on delivering on commitments established by the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda by moving forward in the fields of donors harmonisation (paying special attention to the European Code of Conduct on Complementarity and the Division of Labour in Development Policy), developing country ownership and donors alignment with national development strategies of partner countries.

4. POLICY COHERENCE

Eradicating social and economic inequality in a long-term development framework requires planning and coherence between policies. Some policies have an important impact on aid effectiveness and also on the achievement of the MDGs.

In order to stop policy incoherence amongst developed countries - which on the one hand give aid in order to fight against poverty, and on the other hand enact policies that damage the development prospects of developing countries and increase inequalities – the European Union committed to the Policy Coherence concept in the European Consensus on Development (2005) and stated “effective improvement in the coherence of developed countries’ policies would put developing countries in a much better position to achieve the MDGs”. In this consensus the EU commits itself to promote policy coherence for the sake of development, but in practice there are still European policies, especially trade (as exemplified by the Global Europe agenda) and agriculture policies which have damaging consequences on development.

SOLIDAR and its Spanish members hope this presidency will:

- Show serious commitment to policy coherence and consolidate the political will that is needed for effectiveness development.
- Lead a process that delivers an ambitious work plan, based on realities observed in developing countries, that brings the Policy Coherence in Development (PCD) principle into all aspects of EU foreign policy. In particular, ensure that EU trade negotiations do not compromise developing countries’ capacity to achieve decent work, uphold human rights, to have access to appropriate public services and to ensure Intellectual Property Rights do not hinder their access to medicines and climate change adaptation technology.

5. STRUCTURAL REFORM OF THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM

The financial crisis, which began in autumn 2008 in the United States, spread quickly throughout the world, affecting the real economy of almost all countries. Whilst its negative impact is undeniable, the scale of the crisis is at the same time a unique opportunity for changing the dominant economic orthodoxy and developing a fairer and more just international economic system.

SOLIDAR and its Spanish members call on this presidency to:

- Ensure that not only the G-20, as a self-elected club of world powers and emerging economies, but also the United Nations play a role in defining a new economic system.
- Lead the EU in a process of consolidating European representation at international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in order to open up space on their governing bodies for developing countries.
- Ensure Europe calls on the International Financial Institutions, especially the International Monetary Fund, to revise their policies, eliminating harmful conditionality and giving countries the necessary fiscal space to maintain and reinforce their social protection systems.
- Holding European governments and companies accountable for their role in tax evasion which leads to capital flight from developing countries.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges for the international community, one which has a direct impact on poverty and other social aspects of people's lives. The effects of global warming are hitting the developing world and the most vulnerable populations the hardest and developed countries must assume their historic responsibility for this ecological crisis by supporting developing countries in their adaptation and mitigation of climate change. These flows must not be part of Overseas Development Aid (ODA), but new, additional funds to the existing aid commitments and sufficient in volume according to developing countries needs.

Unfortunately, the last United Nations Climate Change conference in Copenhagen finished without any political binding agreement, without any commitment to cut emissions and with financial proposals insufficient to the adaptation and mitigation needs of developing countries.

SOLIDAR and its Spanish members call on this presidency to:

- Keep working on a common European position more ambitious than the one presented at Copenhagen in line with the gravity of the situation, by setting ambitious greenhouse gas emission reduction targets of 40% by 2020 (to 1990 levels) and ensuring that the next United Nations Climate Change conference (Mexico, November 2010) ends with a binding political agreement.
- Ensuring financial support to developing countries for their adaptation and mitigation efforts against climate change comes from additional funds to those already committed as ODA, whilst ensuring that these funds are sustainable and predictable.

7. MIGRATION

The EU has been trying to develop a common migration and asylum policy since 1999 when migration competence was conferred upon it by the Amsterdam Treaty.

The “Global Approach to Migration” (GAM), adopted by the EU on December 2005, represents one of the principal axes of this policy. The GAM tries to fight against illegal migration, promote legal and economic migration, improve the admission of qualified migrants, agree on a single permit system for work and residence, and negotiate circular migration and mobility association agreements between the EU and third countries.

Nevertheless, the fundamental rights of migrants, once they are in Europe, are not always respected. Integration of migrants in European society cannot be considered through the prism of security, but as a question of social inclusion. In addition, the question of a large number of undocumented migrants cannot be ignored, nor should they be criminalised due to their illegal entry into European territory.

SOLIDAR and its Spanish members call on this presidency to:

- From its experience as a gateway to Europe for migrants from developing countries, fight for a European migration policy based on the strict respect for human rights and dignity. The Presidency must promote solidarity between Member States so as to achieve better coordination and effectively guarantee migrant rights.
- Promote the absolute nature of non-refoulement, as stated in article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, in order to ensure the rights of migrants to seek asylum.
- Take into account the following points of the Stockholm Programme: the importance of a balance between the three areas of the EU Global Approach to Migration, notably the promotion of mobility and legal migration; ensuring

efficient, secure and low-cost remittance transfers as well as evaluating the feasibility of creating a common EU portal on remittances; and involving third countries in EU development initiatives whilst supporting diaspora groups in their efforts to enhance development in their countries of origin.

- Undertaking concerted action in order to eliminate people trafficking on European territory.
- Promote the establishment of a common set of rights for migrant workers. We call on the Presidency to unblock the European Commission 2007 *“Proposal for a Directive on a Single Application procedure for a single permit for third country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a Member State and on a common set of rights for third country workers”*.
- Take into account the link between migration and development in order to fight against the root causes of migration and reduce forced migration; therefore ensuring the promotion of beneficial policies for migrants as well as their countries of origin.

8. DECENT WORK

The financial crisis has worsened the already existing crisis of employment. According to the World Bank, there are some 100 million more people working for less than 1\$ per day, with unemployment on the rise. The decent work concept was introduced by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1999. It has four components: the right to a job, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue, and it is based on the premise that the four parts need to be integrated in order to ensure social progress and development.

At the European level, the lack of decent work conditions is not an unusual reality for a lot of workers. With an increasing number of working poor, increasing precariousness of working conditions, the growth of the informal economy and slavery-like working conditions, the Decent Work Agenda is relevant in Europe and abroad in order to ensure people have decent lives, particularly vulnerable groups like youth, women, migrant workers, people with disabilities or ethnic minorities.

SOLIDAR and its Spanish members call on this presidency to:

- Improve the collaboration between international institutions charged with eliminating poverty and reinforce the role of the ILO within the multilateral system.
- Ensure that the Decent Work Agenda is taken into account as a cross-cutting issue in every relevant European Union policy, at external level as well as internal level, and push for a Global Plan for employment.
- Develop funding for the establishment of social protection systems that cover formal workers as well as those who work in precarious conditions like migrants or informal economy workers.
- Ensure the observance of fundamental labour rights are a pre-condition before any trade or association agreement is signed between the European Union and a third country.

9. GENDER IN DEVELOPMENT

Gender equality is a crucial component to making progress on human rights and social justice. It is estimated that women represent 70% of the world's poor. For women poverty means not having access to basic rights like healthcare system, decent work, and safe drinking water. Poverty has also excluded women from taking part in the decision-making processes, and in extreme cases renders them victims of violence without any kind of protection.

Most governments in the world and all Member States of European Union have committed to working for gender equality by signing several international treaties. Nevertheless, political declarations are not always followed by the necessary actions to make progress on this issue. In 2005, a review of the achievements by governments measured against their commitments was undertaken in the context of the Platform for Action in Beijing and within the MDG process. It concluded that there has not been enough progress towards ending discrimination against women and to the achievement of gender equality.

SOLIDAR and its Spanish members call on this presidency to:

- Specify practical steps needed to ensure the European Commission and the EU Member States together fulfil their commitments to gender equality.
- Conclude the “Action Plan for Gender Equality and Women’s Capacity in Cooperation for Development” and ensure this action plan includes: specific proposals and actions for monitoring and assessing progress made by the European Union and the Member States; specific objectives are set in key areas such as human rights, the environment, agriculture, education and health; and ensure all actions are adequately funded.