

Tearfund analysis of G8 statements published 8th July

Climate Change

Although the commitment to a 50% reductions target by 2050 has been reported as a success, the G8 communiqué on climate change has not significantly moved discussions forward or helped to contribute to establishing a new global climate deal by 2009.

2050 goal for emissions cuts

The G8 leaders moved on from their statement last year in that all leaders agreed to commit to a long term global target of at least 50% cuts in emissions by 2050. However, they have not kept pace with the science which now suggests that 50% cuts are the absolute minimum and that cuts must be in the region of 50-85% - with the upper end of this range looking increasingly necessary if there is to be any hope of keeping global temperature rise below 2 degrees centigrade. For developed countries like the G8 nations cuts must be in the region of 80-95%, but there was no mention of this in the statement. The statement did not identify the base year from which these cuts would be calculated. 1990 is the year that should be used – shifting the year to 2008 or even 2000 means that far lower actual cuts will be demanded.

Furthermore there was a worrying new development in the use of language around stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions consistent with the UN Climate Convention in a timeframe compatible with 'economic growth and energy security'. This is new language that has crept in, as the original language of the Climate Convention talks about 'economic development in a sustainable manner'. The G8 do not mention sustainability at all.

2020 targets

G8 leaders recognised the need for mid-term goals but shied away from making any firm commitments to the science based targets required for developed countries of 25-40% cuts by 2020. They also made no reference to the need for emissions to peak and decline by 2015 or at the latest 2020. This is extremely disappointing – cuts must be made urgently and the weak level of commitment to strong early goals sends a signal to the rest of the world that the G8 are not taking their responsibility as some of the world's biggest emitters seriously. Tearfund hopes they will re-think their positions at the UN negotiations on climate change later this year to allow real progress towards a global deal being agreed in 2009.

Adaptation

The G8 acknowledged that climate change will hit poor countries hardest, and committed to supporting urgent actions to mainstream adaptation into broader development strategies. They also referred to the importance of disaster risk reduction as an important part of adaptation work – all of which are key Tearfund demands. However, it is difficult to translate this broad sentiment into clear action for which the G8 can be held accountable. And there was no acknowledgement of the scale of funding required to help developing countries adapt – which is in the region of \$50billion a year.

World Bank Funds

The G8 recognised the need for substantial finance and investments for adaptation, mitigation and access to clean energy in developing countries. However, the only substantive proposal was the World Bank Funds announced earlier this week. These pledges of around \$6billion from Japan, the US and the UK are not new aid money, and will be given in the form of loans, mainly towards clean technology. Many developing countries have expressed their dismay that rather than working through the UN, the G8 have chosen to work through the World Bank which is difficult for many poorer countries to access. Tearfund urges G8 members to develop innovative financing solutions within the UN to provide the scale of funding required for adaptation and mitigation in the developing world.

Ultimately, the real place for negotiations on climate change is within the UN, not at the G8 where only a few countries meet together. G8 countries must be bolder and more ambitious as they approach the next rounds of climate talks in Ghana and Poland later this year. And they must listen to the voices of poorer countries, hit hardest by climate change, but excluded from events such as the Hokkaido summit.

HIV and AIDS

Tearfund cautiously welcomes the G8's re-affirmation of universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010. The communiqué references previous commitments on maternal and child health, including the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, but fails to reiterate significant financial commitments made in relation to these at last year's summit.

Children affected by HIV are barely visible in the communiqué. Bold steps to ensure universal access to paediatric treatment outlined at Heiligendamm in 2007 are conspicuous by their absence this year, which is concerning.

G8 leaders have committed to provide a projected US\$ 60 billion for health over the next 5 years. We are gravely concerned that this commitment falls far short of what is required to achieve the health-related MDGs and Universal Access by 2010. Based on current UNAIDS' resource estimates, the G8 share of resources needed for HIV alone is US\$65 billion for the next three years.

Tearfund, has been calling for full implementation of existing promises on health and HIV, including firm plans and timetables for delivery, and critically a robust accountability mechanism to track progress over the coming years. There are no timetables for delivery or measurable action plans attached to either the communiqué or health experts report. G8 leaders have agreed to establish a monitoring mechanism but the details of which remain unclear. This is little but an empty gesture on the part of G8 leaders with no agreed and published timetables and plans for delivery.

Food Security

The G8 registered their deep concern about the current global food crisis, but did not announce many tangible or measurable initiatives for tackling it at this year's summit.

We welcome the announcement of a global partnership on agriculture and food, managed by the UN and bringing in other key players, as better institutional coordination is vital. We also support the call for food security objectives to be mainstreamed into development policies, as a holistic approach to development which addresses basic needs, and livelihoods in a sustainable way, is required.

The appointment of a G8 Expert Group to monitor the implementation of food security commitments is a positive step. However, the lack of measurable plans adopted means that it is unclear exactly what role this group will play. A key role should be to keep up political pressure on leaders to ensure that the food crisis doesn't slip off the political agenda especially considering that 850m people were chronically food insecure before the food prices rose globally.

It is also vital that G8 leaders address the root causes of the food crisis, and make it a priority to invest more in mitigation, preparedness and adaptation so that poor communities are more resilient and they are not pushed over the edge when prices rise.

We also welcome the announcement at the G8 by the EU, proposing a 1 billion-euro (£792m) aid package for farmers in developing countries to respond to the global food crisis. This will help to increase agricultural production, but more focus should be on ensuring that the poorest

can afford to buy food when their own stocks run out e.g. diversifying livelihoods and trade reform.

Water and Sanitation

G8 leaders acknowledged the need to accelerate the achievement of the internationally agreed goals on water and sanitation, and pledged to reinvigorate their efforts to implement the Evian Water Action Plan (agreed at the G8 Summit in 2003). However their only commitment was to review it on the basis of a progress report prepared by their water experts by the next Summit and to discuss with their African partners the development of an enhanced implementation strategy. They called upon national governments to prioritize access to sanitation, building on the initiatives agreed at conferences on sanitation in Asia-Pacific and Africa but made no specific commitments themselves to increase the priority given to this most neglected of issues.

While the inclusion of sanitation and water in the communiqué – the first significant inclusion in five years – is to be welcomed, the content is shamefully weak. The water and sanitation sector is in crisis: 2.6 billion people lack access to a safe toilet, and 1.1 billion people lack access to clean water. Yet instead of taking urgent action to tackle this crisis, G8 leaders delayed reporting on progress until next year's summit. By then, 2.4 million more children will have died as a result of poor sanitation.

Tearfund believes that a new Global Action Plan for Water and Sanitation is required to achieve the sanitation and water Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets. One global high-level task force is needed to drive progress forward, and one annual high level review of the sector with the necessary senior political representation is needed to make the policy changes needed to overcome the key obstacles to progress. Given the failure of the G8 to take any steps towards such developments, it is vital that water and sanitation is made a major focus of the UN High-Level meeting on the MDGs this September.