

Twining and international Development Cooperation: The role of Twining in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

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Mr. Chairman,
Members of the panel,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning. I would like to give you an overview of the 2 parts that make my presentation to you today first, and then move on rapidly to the task that brings us here today: to talk about Twining in relation to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Overview:

1. First I would like to do an exercise of “memory” and remind you “What are the Millennium Development Goals” and also explain to you briefly Who we are and What do we do at the United Nations Millennium Campaign
2. Then I will move on to touch on the issues of: Local Authorities as crucial players in the efforts to achieve the MDGs and the potential of Twining for the achievement of the MDGs

PART 1. What are the Millennium Development Goals?

- Almost 7 years ago....it seems yesterday but have passed 7 years already...exactly, in September 2000, 189 leaders from all UN members state countries gathered in New York for the Millennium Summit and signed an inspiring and visionary document in which they committed to tackle some of the worst effects of poverty and deprivation in the world and to make real progress for the poorest of the poor by the year 2015. They called that document “The Millennium Declaration”
- The Millennium Declaration recognises that:
 - No walls divide the world;
 - That Nations are interdependent – for example in terms of security concerns, finance linkages, health issues (pandemics), migration and the environment;

- The Millennium Declaration provided also the basis for the conceptualization of the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
- Broadly speaking, the 8 Millennium Development Goals are:
 - Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
 - Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
 - Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
 - Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
 - Goal 5: Improve maternal health
 - Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
 - Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
 - Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development
- The 8 MDGs established a clear division of labour between rich and poor countries:
 - Rich (or North) countries are responsible for the achievement of Goal 8
They must:
 - Deliver more and more effective aid
 - Cancel the international debt of poor countries
 - And improve the trading opportunities of poor countries
 - Poor (or South) countries on their part are responsible for the achievement of Goals 1 to 7
They must:
 - Implement the MDGs by integrating them into their development policies, investment plans and national budgets
 - They also must improve governance, transparency and accountability to their citizens

The United Nations Millennium Campaign: Who we are/ What do we do

- The United Nations Millennium Campaign was launched a bit more than two years after the signature of the Millennium Declaration. In October 2002 Mr. Kofi Annan—then the UN Secretary General— established the Campaign with the ultimate goal of informing, inspiring and encourage people's involvement and action for the realisation of the MDGs.
- The Campaign is an inter-agency initiative of the United Nations led by the former Development Cooperation Minister of The Netherlands, Mrs. Eveline Herfkens

- Under Ms. Herfkens leadership the mandate of the UN Millennium Campaign was defined. Today, we work in more than 40 countries worldwide (rich and poor) to support citizens' efforts to hold their governments to account for the commitments made when they signed the Millennium Declaration.

PART 2. Local Authorities as crucial players in the efforts to achieve the MDGs

- While it is national governments that bear primary responsibility for the implementation of the MDGs, actors at all levels must work together towards their achievement.
- While countries are committed to the MDGs at the highest political level, the Goals are fundamentally about the rights and aspirations of individual citizens. And individual citizens—people—live in local communities (municipalities, cities, villages, metropolitan areas...)
- Local policy-makers have amazing possibilities in their hands to help achieve the MDGs through the hundreds of thousands of decisions taken every day affecting the lives of millions of people.
- There is a growing consensus among international development cooperation actors that it will be at the local level where the real action on the achievement of the Millennium Goals will take place.
- The United Nations has recognized this role.

Kofi Annan, once said:

- And I quote: *"70% of the MDGs will be achieved primarily through local governments working in consultation with national governments and national stakeholders"* end quote.

But not only our former--and also our current SG-- have recognized this role. Member states themselves clearly have recognized it as well. In the Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly during the 2005 World Summit, all member states declared:

- And I quote gain: *"...We underline the important role of local authorities in contributing to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals..."* end quote.

...So, how this critical role of Local Authorities in relation to the achievement of the MDGs translates when addressing the issue of Twining initiatives?...

The potential of Twinning for the achievement of the MDGs

- Since poverty and exclusion are experienced locally, and since it is primarily at the local level that the services and programs to tackle poverty and underdevelopment are delivered, local authorities, in the South, have a direct impact on the achievement of the Goals locally.
- Also their counterparts--or their "twins"--in the North are key to the achievement of the MDGs. Local authorities in the North must ensure that rich country governments keep their promises on aid, trade and debt.

Twining and development education. And twining and advocacy at the national level:

- Twining and development education: Educating your citizens about issues of global concern is a fundamental role of local authorities especially in the North. To educate your local youth, their families and local pressure groups and local civil society about the need to deliver on the promises made at the Millennium Declaration also positions local authorities as a critical actor in the international arena. Using twining as a tool for development education could be a good example of the famous motto: "Think globally, act locally"
- By raising awareness among local citizens in the North about development issues and the Millennium Goals, local authorities in rich countries are very well positioned to generate the much needed citizen pressure for change of national rich country's policies on development cooperation.
- Twining and advocacy at the national level: Both, rich and poor country's local authorities alike, have the political legitimacy to lobby national governments directly on the Millennium Goals on behalf of their local constituents.
- Mayors and local officials provably know more than anybody else how to access national policy-makers and advocate for issues of local concern. This important expertise can be put at work in favour of international fight against poverty and the achievement of the MDGs.
- A motivated Mayor backed up with an informed and educated local constituency on global poverty is a powerful voice that national leaders will not be able to ignore.
- This piece needs to be incorporated into the twining work that local authorities are already developing. A Northern Mayor's voice (or the voice of a group of northern Mayors) joining hands with the voice of his or her southern Twin Mayor's voice (or the voices of group of southern Mayors) demanding to national governments in the North and South to deliver what they promised could be unbelievably powerful in terms of policy change.

As I said before, 7 years have passed already since the signature of the Millennium Declaration. 2007 is the year of the mid-term for the achievement of the Goals. This next October 17, 2007 (the international day of Eradication of Poverty) (we will have 7 and ½ years to go) and local officials have an opportunity to join hands and voices with the UN Millennium Campaign and a coalition of international development actors to STAND UP and SPEAK OUT against poverty and for the achievement of the MDGs. We mobilized last year around October 17 and in 24 hours (from October 15 to 16) more than 23.5 million people STOOD UP demanding the eradication of global poverty and the achievement of the Goals—a Guinness World Record.

In 2007 we are working together to mobilize in a synchronized action to get media visibility for the MDGs and the fight against poverty. We would like to count with your voice on that day and I encourage you to contact us by visiting our website at www.millenniumcampaign.org, or to contact our partners of CEMR and UCLG to explore how can we make this happen.

.....But on top of the potential for development education that twining initiatives clearly have, I would also like to talk briefly about another aspect of Twining for the achievement of the MDGs:

Twining and Aid Effectiveness:

- Even though the link between twining and development education, and twining and advocacy work must be critical and fundamental aspects of decentralized cooperation, it is also true that twining, sister cities, and other mechanisms of decentralized cooperation can also have an impact in helping achieve the MDGs in 2015
- Northern local authorities can also ensure that existing partnerships with local authorities in the South are focused, at the implementation level, on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The implementation of development cooperation directs us to talk about its effectiveness (or, if you wish, its quality)
- City to city technical assistance and individual cooperation projects are elements of twining initiatives worldwide.
- These elements of twining, have had their value in the past, and still have value today but if we are talking about Twining in the 21st Century, these practices need to be re-examined taking into account the new paradigm of development cooperation that came to life with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness of the year 2005.
- The quantity (and most importantly the quality) of the development cooperation practices and mechanisms being used by all actors (national and multilateral) at the global level is being re-assessed in light of the Paris Declaration, and twining cannot be an exception to this assessment.

- All the global development cooperation actors are starting to look into ways to better coordinate their aid delivery mechanisms, to make their Technical Assistance more effective and more sound in terms of increasing ownership in recipient counterparts, to cut substantially the administrative burden of their practices, to create critical masses of actors aimed at achieving maximum impact, and to avoid the excessive multiplicity of actors working on the same issues, in the same places, at the same time.
- Twinning in the 21st Century needs to look carefully at the amazing possibilities of partnerships for development. Partnering and coordinating is a critical piece of Aid effectiveness. Local authorities can partner with Foundations, NGOs, other local authorities, their own national governments and multilateral actors to make your development practices even more effective. The establishment Partnerships must be an inherent part of twinning initiatives.
- Exchange of information on development work of local authorities in a critical aspect of this puzzle. Local authorities are already setting up databases of best practices and sharing information in different parts of the world. The German model of coordination through its Ministry or the Spanish model of knowledge sharing are just two very good initiatives twin cities and local authorities in general may want to explore further.
- The UN Millennium Campaign has limited capacity and mandate to work with local authorities on these critical issues. But there are other actors that do have great expertise on the issue. For example, the OECD DAC can offer powerful insight on how to make decentralized cooperation in general and twinning in particular, an effective powerful force for the achievement of the MDGs and the broader fight against poverty. We encourage you to work with them.

The deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is just 7 and ½ years away. Time is running out.

We are the first generation with the knowledge and the resources to make poverty history. You can make a difference and refuse to miss this opportunity. There must be No Excuses to achieve the MDGs by 2015 but we need to work closer together if we really want to make this happen.

---Thank you