Deutsches Institut
für Entwicklungspolitik

German Development
Institute

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Briefing Paper 7/2005

Between Frustration and Optimism: The Development Outcome of the Millennium+5 Summit

The Millennium+5 Summit held on the occasion of the United Nations' 60th anniversary did not live up to the great expectations placed in it. But it cannot be said either that the summit failed. Despite a polarization between North and South that grew in intensity in the course of the negotiation process, the 191 UN member countries did, at the last minute, reach agreement on a final document containing a number of noteworthy positions on securing international peace and preventing humanitarian disasters. The document's development-related items – while setting some new accents – are largely in line with the positions reached prior to the summit by the G8 and the European Union. One ground for disappointment may be seen in a number of unbridgeable differences of opinion on UN reform and disarmament.

Unlike the world conferences of the 1990s, this years' summit did not signal a new beginning. The steps forward urgently needed in multilateral politics were blocked by deep-seated conflicts of interest between the UN member states. Apparently too few countries have realized that national power politics and the defence of sovereign rights must, under the altered conditions of a growingly interdependent world, necessarily lead to impasse. The achievement of national goals is inextricably bound up with the ability and willingness to tackle global challenges. This is why it is essential for both North and South to acknowledge their common interest in global stability and security, equity and sustainability, and to assume joint responsibility for creating an inclusive global governance architecture and reforming and renewing the UN.

What expectations were placed in the summit?

According to a resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly, the Millennium+5 Summit was to review the process of implementation of the 2000 Millennium Declaration and the resolutions adopted at the world conferences of recent decades. In the eyes of the public at large, though, the main concern was reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In March 2005, as a preparatory input for the 'Major Event,' UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had presented his "*In Larger Freedom*," a report that met with a positive response throughout the world. The report, a highly ambitious undertaking, reaffirmed and enlarged the MDG agenda, called on the industrialized countries to appreciably increase their official development assistance (ODA) and provide debt relief for the world's poorest countries, and called for measures designed to create a more just system of world trade; but it also called for measures to prevent terrorism, to promote democracy, to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and to pave the way for further progress on disarmament. The report further contained proposals on institutional reform and strengthening of the UN. Kofi Annan's intention was to take advantage of the UN's 60th anniversary to generate moral pressure and to move the member states to set the stage for a new course in world politics.

What did the summit result in?

Overall, the outcome of the Millennium+5 Summit is ambivalent. While it is true that the 191 UN members states did prevent a debacle and, in the end, reach agreement on a final document, the declaration contains, apart from some important individual decisions (*see box, below*), a good number of vaguely formulated goals, nonbinding declarations of intent, and reaffirmations of resolutions already adopted.

Kofi Annan's message from 2003, namely that the Iraq crisis had brought the world to a fork in the road comparable in its historical scope only to the founding of the UN in 1945, was clearly unable to rouse the international community to make the breakthrough the Secretary-General had in mind. In a number of respects his strategy of combining a long list of individual measures to form a comprehensive compromise package has not worked out. There can be no doubt that Kofi Annan's new concept of a collective security architecture that would intertwine security and human rights, in this way paying due heed to the threat scenarios feared by North and South alike, gave rise to a good number of intellectual impacts. But these insights have yet to be translated into concrete international decision-making processes. Still, the statements made by many governments at the summit bear witness to a gradually growing insight that in efforts to come to grips with glo-

What was decided at the UN Millennium+5 Summit:

- Reaffirmation of the MDGs
- Every country adopts, by 2006, a national MDG strategy
- Additional targets: productive employment, decent work
- Additional target: reproductive health
- Enlargement of MDG3 (gender equality) and the rights of children
- Strengthening of the role of women in conflicts
- Establishment of a Democracy Fund for developing countries (*funding commitments by numerous countries*)
- Doubling of the budget of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Creation of a UN Human Rights Council to replace the present UN Commission on Human Rights (*the final shape of the new body remains to be defined*)
- Rejection of any attempts to relativize human rights with reference to religious or cultural particularities
- Acknowledgement of a "responsibility to protect" (*see text*)
- Creation of a UN Peacebuilding Commission (*see text*)
- Mandate for the Secretary-General to elaborate proposals for reform of the UN development framework

balized risks there is no alternative to cooperative multilateralism. All in all, the UN's authority may, therefore, even be said to have been strengthened by the summit process. While the world organization – which is, after all, no more than a mirror of the international community – is unable to conjure up any undreamed-of results, it is and remains the indispensable world forum for the articulation of national interests and the negotiation of programs of collective action.

One central success must be seen in the reaffirmation of the MDGs as the overarching action framework of international development policy. The summit also called on all developing countries to work out, by 2006, national MDG implementation strategies. In the end the US, which had initially categorically rejected any mention of the MDGs, gave in and for the first time officially committed itself to this global goal system.

Moreover, the international community adopted some of the elements of Jeffrey Sachs' controversial MDG implementation plan, "Investing in Development," including (i) the region-wide distribution of anti-malaria bed nets; (ii) provision of free school meals for all children, using locally produced foods; (iii) the elimination of fees for primary education and basic health services; and (iv) the launching of an "African Green Revolution" to overcome hunger there. The assembled international community furthermore reaffirmed the resolution adopted by the recent G8 summit in Gleneagles calling for the provision, by 2010 at the latest, of an additional annual US$ 50 billion for development cooperation. It at the same time also emphasized, in the sense of a mutual partnership, the responsibility of the developing countries to provide for good governance, respect for human rights, improved rule of law, participation, and development-friendly business environment.

Many countries are still faced with quite substantial problems in implementing the MDGs. This goes above all for sub-Saharan Africa, while e.g. East and Southeast Asia (and in part South Asia and North Africa as well) have made noteworthy progress on some MDGs. If the world as a whole is to reach the development goals by 2015, the timeframe set to achieve the task, the developing and industrialized countries will, as the summit noted, have to step up their efforts on a massive scale.

The acknowledgement, for the first time ever, of the principle of expanded sovereignty referred to as the "responsibility to protect" is a remarkable step forward for international law. It obliges the international community to intervene when governments fail to protect their own population from genocide, ethnic cleansing, or crimes against humanity. Here the UN member states have made an important step towards realizing human security, a concept with which the current General Assembly is set to deal at more length.

Another success may be seen in the agreement reached on establishing a UN Peacebuilding Commission (including a new fund) whose main task is to be the coordinator of reconstruction assistance following violent conflicts. Apart from the Security Council and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the new commission is to include the largest donor countries and troop contributors and the international financial institutions. As yet, no consensus has been reached on where the commission is to be positioned. The industrialized countries want it to report directly to the Security Council, while the countries of the South would prefer to see it linked to the General Assembly, where they would have better access to and control over it. However, the commission will only be able to fulfill its purpose if the relevant global actors are prepared to coordinate their policies and focus the resources available.

On the other hand, though, no success was made in the attempt to induce the industrialized countries to make concrete commitments to raise their official development assistance, provide debt relief in excess of what was decided on at the G8 summit in Gleneagles, or to open their markets for goods from developing countries. The wording of statements regarding environmental protection, disarmament, and a reform of the UN also remained relatively vague (*see box, below*). Here, only the coming months will show what is to come of the decisions taken at the UN summit.

But is also important not to overlook the fact that the summit led to a good number of positive results before it even got underway. Without Kofi Annan's dramatic appeal, the G8 summit in Gleneagles would hardly have taken the decisions it in fact took on multilateral debt relief for the world's poorest countries and on increased official development assistance. Nor would the EU have reached agreement on an increase of official development assistance to 0.51% of gross national income by

relief for the world's poorest countries and on increased official development assistance. Nor would the EU have reached agreement on its plan to increase official development assistance to 0.51% of gross national income by 2010, and to 0.7% by 2015. Furthermore, the international discussion is dominated as it never was before by attempts to develop new and innovative development-financing instruments. For the year 2006, France and Chile have announced their intention to adopt, at the national level, a levy on airline tickets, the proceeds of which will be used for purposes of development financing, and the UK has at the same time inaugurated a pilot project on the proposed International Finance Facility it has proposed.

Why was the summit blocked in a number of areas?

Many governments – this goes for the US, but also for numerous developing countries – are insisting on an old-style sovereignty that is no longer in line with the new, altered conditions posed by a growingly interdependent world. The consensus principle that has become customary at the UN gives every member state the possibility to torpedo resolutions, even those supported by an overwhelming majority. Shortly before the summit got underway, the US exerted massive pressure on the preparatory process by raising extremely far-reaching demands for changes. In some areas the US gave in during the negotiations; but it drew the line on commitments to increase development assistance, on trade issues, and on disarmament.

The US's confrontational stance drew resistance from hardliners from the South (including Egypt, Pakistan, Cuba, and China) and provided them with new room for manoeuvre, and this in turn led an increasing number of developing countries to declare their solidarity with them. The upshot was a blockade that prevented agreement on a definition of terrorism as well as on disarmament and nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The opposition from the South also blocked clear-cut decisions on management reforms that might have served to improve the efficiency of the UN Secretariat. What this means is that the hardliners from the South bear a good share of responsibility for the stagnation in UN processes; a global organization as complex as the UN can simply not be micromanaged by the organization's full membership of 191 countries.

While the European Union played a constructive role in mediating between the two opposing camps, it was unable to overcome the resistance to a comprehensive reform program. There can be no doubt that the EU's phased plan to increase development assistance proved to be an important impetus in gaining concessions from the South, which, for its part, was forced to scale back some of the goals it had set for the negotiations.

In the crucial phase of the negotiations, Secretary-General Kofi Annan's moral authority was weakened by the publication of the independent report on the UN's "oil for food" program for Iraq. The report notes that mismanagement and corruption are widespread in the UN. Even though the report did not accuse Kofi Annan himself of any wrongdoing, its findings offered conservative US circles plenty of ammunition to mount relentless attacks on the world organization.

What was <u>not</u> achieved at the UN summit:

- Binding international decisions on an increase in official development assistance
- Adoption of innovative sources of financing
- Binding commitments for a more development-friendly system of world trade
- Concrete measures aimed at improving climate protection or geared to achieving other environmental goals
- Measures designed to prevent any further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
- Agreements on disarmament or on nuclear test stops
- A uniform definition of terrorism
- Reform of the General Assembly
- Enlargement of the UN Security Council
- Reform of the UN Economic and Social Council
- Stronger role of the UN Secretary-General
- Expansion of UN cooperation with civil society, parliaments, and the business sector

In the eyes of nongovernmental organizations, the limited success of the summit was a result of a lack of transparency in the preparatory process. They took the opportunity offered by their first-ever participation in a hearing before the General Assembly, in June 2005, to state what they expected the final document to contain, but – unlike the situation at earlier world conferences – the negotiations took place behind closed doors. Still, civil society groups did provide for a good measure of openness by publishing on the Internet, in record speed, government position papers and the latest drafts of the final document. They used worldwide campaigns in favor of the MDGs to place the governments of the North under substantial pressure to act.

Where do we go from here?

The deliberations of the 60th General Assembly, which got underway immediately following the summit, are taking place under considerable pressure generated by high expectation levels. They will above all have to give more concrete form to the in part vague formulations found in the final document concerning the proposed Human Rights Council, the Peacebuilding Commission, and reform of the UN development framework. The proposed enlargement of the Security Council is unlikely to materialize in the foreseeable future. While there is reason to believe that the Swedish presidency will effectively bring to bear its international influence in the follow-up negotiations, the factor that really counts is the willingness of the UN member states to engage in meaningful reforms.

If no agreement is reached in the UN framework on central issues of global politics, the effect will be to encourage the lead countries in the UN to step up their efforts to forge new alliances. A good example of what an alliance of medium powers can bring about is the creation, in the face of resistance from the US and China, of the International Criminal Court. Spain and Turkey, for their part, have taken the lead in the "Alliance of Civilizations," which has set its sights on promoting dialogue between the West and Islamic societies. The "Community of Democracies," led by Chile, India, the US, and Poland, intends to intensify activities geared to a worldwide dissemination of the values it embraces. Finland and Tanzania are engaged in the "Helsinki Process on Globalization and Democracy." Despite their undoubtedly positive effects, it is important not to overlook the limits set to such initiatives. They may well serve to encourage a selective multilateralism, setting the stage for important actors to abandon their global responsibility.

Apart from the deliberations in the General Assembly, one other important event is the World Trade Organization's upcoming ministerial conference in Hong Kong in December 2005. It will decide on whether or not the Doha Development Round will, as hoped, improve the position of the South in world trade. Furthermore, the negotiations on the second round of commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, likewise scheduled for the end of 2005, also offer an opportunity to deepen climate protection, and to do so in cooperation with the so-called anchor countries, which play an especially important role for their own regions. And finally, there will also be negotiations at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund on proposals to reform the weighting of voting rights in the two institutions.

The important role of the anchor countries

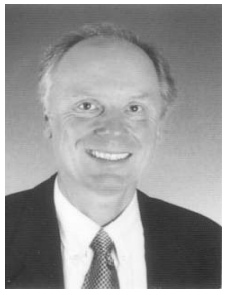
One crucial factor involved in setting a new course for world politics is the stance adopted by the so-called anchor countries. At the UN summit some of these countries (Pakistan, China, Egypt) tended more to block reforms, while others (India, South Africa, Brazil) threw their support behind a reform course. It is no longer possible to make progress at the international level without the active cooperation of this group of countries. Their growing economic and political weight is manifestly shifting global power relations. At the same time, the South is increasingly articulating its resistance to any military interventions from the North (we need think here only of the case of Iraq) and voicing its objections to the present lack of resource equity and the unequal distribution of power in global institutions. Consensus on solving the existential problems facing mankind is for these reasons only conceivable if the global system is fundamentally reformed with a view to shaping, by political means, the transition from a unilpolar to a multipolar world order.

German and European responsibility

The worldwide attractiveness of the European model of integration has given the European Union a large measure of responsibility as a constructive mediator in the process of global transformation. But if it is to assert any such positive influence, the EU will in the future have to (i) present a more closed front on issues of foreign and security policy and (ii) continue to live up to its role as a pioneer of international development policy. This would imply, among other things, that the EU must meet its own commitment to increase its development-assistance expenditures to a level of 0.7% of gross national income by the year 2015 and to give a more equitable shape to its trade relations with the South by reducing its agricultural subsidies and taking major steps toward opening its markets.

With a view to its long-term national interests, but also out of a sense of ethical-humanitarian responsibility, Germany, for its part, must appreciably step up its global engagement - and do so without regard to the interest it has expressed in gaining a seat on the UN Security Council:

- Germany should take steps, both conceptual and in terms of its concrete development-policy practice, to optimize its contribution to implementing the MDGs.
- It should take steps to ensure that the EU's phased plan for reaching the 0.7% goal remains on track and is underpinned in budgetary terms – e.g. by adopting a levy on airline tickets (a move that would have the additional advantage of – at least in part – internalizing the costs of some environmental damage).
- At the same time, Germany should work to increase the effectiveness of its development cooperation and ensure that the targets set out in the Paris Declaration of March 2005 are in fact met.
- Finally, Germany should develop ideas of its own on reform of the UN development framework and present them at the upcoming UN talks. This, however, would also require Germany to step up its funding commitments for UN development work.



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ISSN 1434-8934 (deutsch) ISSN 1615-5483 (englisch)