

European Development Days 2008 - Closing ceremony

Two days after the G-20 Summit – what paradigm for development?

- **Alain Joyandet**, Secretary of State for Cooperation and Francophone Affairs, French Presidency of the European Union
- **Bernard Kouchner**, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, France
- **Thomas Yayi Boni**, President of Benin
- **Michèle Pierre-Louis**, Prime Minister of the Republic of Haiti
- **Morgan Tsvangirai**, President of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), Zimbabwe
- **Louis Michel**, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid

This year's European Development Days (EDD) proved a "resounding success" and attracted more than 5,000 participants. **Louis Michel**, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, reminded participants that everyone who attended this third EDD are united in the belief that "we can change something; we do have the power to bring about change."

EDD 2008 followed on the heels of the G-20 economic summit in Washington. Although African leaders were not at the table, which was decried frequently throughout EDD, speakers praised world leaders for reaching consensus on a principle that opens the door for a reconstruction of global governance and recognizes the importance of development in the worldwide financial framework.

However, "we must be vigilant over the next few months," cautioned **Alain Joyandet**, Secretary of State for Cooperation and Francophone Affairs, French Presidency of the European Union. "It is up to us to continue working on practical proposals to give our ministers to ensure development be given the weight it deserves and ensure that we achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)." Joyandet added that EDD participants could walk away with "new found optimism and determination to roll back poverty."

Bernard Kouchner, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, acknowledged that many are afraid of the effects of the financial crisis on the most fragile economies and that recession in the developing world will have huge repercussions. "A lot of you are afraid the developed world will retreat into itself. Many have said the MDGs are unattainable," he declared. "But [France's] commitments will be maintained."

Africa needs a macro-economic stimulus programme and a commitment from the developed world to eradicate poverty and improve the daily life of citizens, said **Thomas Yayi Boni**, President of Benin. "It is important that strategies defined by developing countries themselves be supported. The international community needs to prove that it is really willing to support Africa," he said. At the same time, the enormous efforts made by the international community to counter the financial crisis proved that it is possible to eradicate poverty. "It is important that the sense of collective responsibility be seen for what it is – a statement of solidarity for the poor of this world," Yayi Boni concluded.

The financial crisis is just the "tip of the iceberg of what has done a lot to destroy the economies of developing countries," commented **Michèle Pierre-Louis**, Prime Minister of the Republic of Haiti. "Do we need a different Bretton Woods to deal with

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these problems? Yes. We need different new, appropriate and regulated institutions that exist to develop people and bring about mutual respect and dignity,” she said. Pierre-Louis added that financing development will take a “thorough paradigm change” that entails solidarity, transparent and respect for commitments.

In an impassioned plea on behalf of the Zimbabwe people, **Morgan Tsvangirai**, President of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), told participants that the humanitarian crisis in his country is “man-made” by a dictator and a party that are trying to hold on to power. The crisis is escalating. By January, the government will only be able to feed 5.5 million people, leaving 50% reliant on humanitarian aid to survive; Schools have been closed down in the capital because teachers cannot go to classes. Hospitals have shut their doors and cholera is killing people every day.

Tsvangirai described the situation as “heartbreaking” but that the Zimbabwe people remain firm. “They say no deal is better than a bad deal,” he said. “They are prepared to suffer in the knowledge that one day, they will live free from hunger and poverty.” Tsvangirai – who was introduced as the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe – said that the sharing of power must be equitable and it must reflect responsibility with authority if MDC is to respond to the people’s plight.

Commissioner Michel reconfirmed the international community’s support for Tsvangirai and the Zimbabwe people. “We will support you and the vision you have for your country. Sooner or later – hopefully sooner – you will be in the position to enable the people of Zimbabwe to achieve their dream of prosperity, justice and freedom,” he said.

The Commissioner called upon European and national parliamentarians to ensure they keep their commitments. “All of us know just how much hope the poor of the world still have. We cannot take the luxury once again of dealing them a crushing disappointment,” he said.