

## **Remarks delivered by Stephen Lewis, Co-Director of AIDS-Free World at the RESULTS Educational Fund annual conference, Washington, DC, June 12, 2007\***

Let me take a hard look at the issues arising from the G8.

Everyone is aware of the solemn promises that were made at Gleneagles in July of 2005. They followed in the wake of Tony Blair's Commission on Africa, with all of the attendant triumphalism, and it seemed to promise a new dawn for the African continent. In particular, they promised a breakthrough in addressing the pandemic of HIV/AIDS.

The two centerpieces of Gleneagles are etched in everyone's memory: foreign aid (Official Development Assistance) to Africa would double from \$25 billion a year to \$50 billion a year by 2010. Equally, by 2010, the G8 pledged to do everything in its power to achieve universal access to treatment for those who need it.

Bob Geldoff, in one of his more memorable spasms of hyperbole gave the G8 "ten out of ten".

Some of us never believed Gleneagles for a moment. The fundamental dishonesty of the pledges came to light just two months later, in September of 2005, when the G8 countries at a pledging conference for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, fell billions short of their commitments. You have to wonder how western leaders can be so stunningly cavalier about the lives of millions of people, the great majority of them in Africa.

Fast forward, then, to 2007 and the G8 Summit just completed in Germany. In the weeks prior to the Summit itself, quite predictably a number of groups and institutions took stock of the extent to which the promises at Gleneagles had been honoured. Every single assessment found a staggering shortfall.

The first was the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD, one of the most authoritative vehicle for expert western analysis. It found that, incredibly enough, Official Development Assistance had actually declined internationally between 2005 and 2006, and for Africa the verdict was virtual stagnation.

This finding by the DAC, shocking though it seemed, was given the stamp of accuracy by the very group that was established by Tony Blair at the time of Gleneagles to monitor progress. It's chaired by Kofi Annan, and has a membership comprising a number of celebrated figures from Michel Camdessus to Graça Machel to Bob Geldoff himself. They did an analysis of the aftermath of Gleneagles and came to the same conclusion as that of the OECD. Geldoff on this occasion used the word "grotesque" to describe the behaviour of the G8.

Then, in addition to those two definitive commentaries, Bono weighed in with his advocacy group, 'DATA' whose findings were every bit as damning as the others.

It seemed implausible to most of the world (and I deliberately exclude myself because I've put in writing my complete skepticism of the G8 process)--- that after the absolute commitments of Gleneagles, everything could go so lamentably off course. But one learns, painfully, that the betrayal of Africa is almost a matter of principle for the G8.

With that in mind, no one should have imagined significant progress in Germany this year. The good intentions that flowed from President Merkel were no different in tone and content from those which preceded Gleneagles. People were willing to give her the benefit of the doubt, in part because of George Bush's announcement, just ten days before the Summit, that he would recommend a doubling of his original PEPFAR pledge, from \$15Billion to \$30 Billion over the five years from 2009-2013. The pledge was greeted with the uncritical applause of a compliant media, completely failing to grasp, as the Global AIDS Alliance immediately pointed out, that PEPFAR had

already reached over \$5.4 Billion for 2007, and would probably exceed that sum in 2008. Since that's the case, it means that the new \$30 Billion dollar total, divided by five years, will amount to a real increase of only several hundred million each year (if that). Worse, there was no recognition of the fact that the minimum amount that the President should have announced --- measured against the United States share of world GDP --- was \$50 Billion over the five year period, and even then, a shortfall would almost certainly result.

However, the heady use of the deceptive PEPFAR figures (and this is to say nothing of the continued preposterous 'abstinence' clauses, and the continued underfunding of the Global Fund), seemed to proffer hope that the G8 would somehow restore its credibility.

Well, we really have our work cut out for us. What actually happened in Germany is deeply, deeply troubling, and it's worthy of every piece of scorn that can be heaped upon it. The G8 communiqué is deficient in so many ways: fundamentally, it's intellectually dishonest and riddled with arithmetic sleight-of-hand. It's hard to know where to begin, but let me at least take a crack in five areas.

1. The text says: "A vigorous impetus seems necessary to ensure that Africa will meet the Millennium Development Goals". I shudder at this piece of shameless dishonesty. They have no intention of providing such an impetus: without it, the G8 well knows that all the statistical evidence shows that Africa cannot reach the MDGs ... that poverty and disease and conflict are too deeply ingrained to be reversed by 2015. Why go through this abysmal charade of words without meaning?

2. The text says "Trade is a key engine of growth for Africa." And except for some fatuous gobbledegook about how the G8 will help African exports, the trade section is empty of meaning. Contrast Germany with what was said at Gleneagles: "An ambitious and balanced conclusion to the DOHA round is the best way to make trade work for Africa. The Hong Kong Ministerial in December (2005) will be a critical step towards a successful outcome of DOHA in 2006. The World Bank estimates that implementing the negotiations could lift 140 million people out of poverty."

DOHA has totally disappeared from this year's G8 communiqué. But the rub is that it should never have been in Gleneagles. The G8 knew in July of 2005 that DOHA was dead. But they were prepared to toy with the rhetoric of 140 million people to fatten their text. Where Africa is concerned, the G8 is a consortium of fabrication.

3. After describing the carnage of the pandemic which, they point out, apart from the suffering is "causing massive impacts on the economic and social development of the countries concerned", they make their infamous commitment of \$60 billion "over the coming years".

Now what in heaven's name is that supposed to mean? In the inelegant language of diplomacy gone wrong, those are called "weasel words". They're meant to convey everything and nothing. No group of counties, let alone countries with the manipulative sophistication of the G8, would use that language unless they were looking for a way out. Some commentators are working on the assumption that the language really means the same five years encompassed by the new PEPFAR initiative. I have a message for the trusting naiveté which that suggestion reveals: if they meant five years, they would have said five years.

The promise of Gleneagles was an extra \$25 Billion a year by 2010, with increases every year thereafter, not \$60 Billion "over the coming years." Worse, most of the \$60 Billion isn't even new money: it encompasses the \$30 Billion just announced by George Bush, plus additional Billions already announced by other G8 countries. To be sure, the original pledge for 2010 is again repeated, but we already know the worth of those words. According to UNAIDS, we'll need \$18 Billion this year, \$22 Billion next year, \$30 billion by 2010, with the dollar figures rising after that. The shortfall is astronomical. What in the world will happen to the millions of Africans, struggling with AIDS, for whom the resources are the difference between life and death, let alone the millions upon millions of orphans for whom any kind of life is compromised?

Allow me a juxtaposition. According to all estimates, including those of the Congressional

Research Service of the United States, enhanced by data from the other troop contributors, the G8 countries are spending at least \$120 Billion each year to fight the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The same countries can't even guarantee a paltry total of \$60 Billion over an unknown number of years to fight a pandemic that has taken 25 million lives and has 40 million people in its grip. I keep asking, what has happened to the world's moral anchor?

4. All of this is crucial, of course, because what hangs in the balance is universal access to treatment by the year 2010. What is ominously instructive in this instance is to compare the language of 2005 with that of 2007.

In Gleneagles, the text read: "Implement a package for HIV prevention, treatment and care, with the aim of as close as possible to universal access to treatment for all those who need it by 2010." In Germany, the text reads "The G8 countries will scale up their efforts to contribute towards the goal of universal access by 2010".

Two years ago, we were getting 'as close as possible' to universal access; now we're 'scaling up our efforts to contribute' to universal access. Language is everything. The current language is frighteningly ambiguous. And it's not helped by throwing the figure of five million people into the text, when it has become clear, according to UNAIDS, that the numbers requiring treatment by 2010 will be significantly higher.

It is simply unconscionable for the G8 to be so recklessly cavalier about human life. They have it within their grasp to guarantee full universal access by 2010; if they wanted it to happen, it would happen. They similarly have it within their capacity to guarantee every penny required by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, but instead they merely acknowledge the financial targets which the Global Fund has recently set.

In a highly provocative fashion, the G8 is challenging all of us: we, collectively, have to find a way to force the G8's hand, to pummel them into sanity. In the annals of social change, it's rare that advocacy has confronted such an adversary.

5. There remains, however, one other aspect of the communiqué that requires further elaboration. The text offers obligatory obeisance to the vulnerability of women. And the language is pointed and strong.

But nowhere --- and this is frankly astonishing --- nowhere is there mention of the prospective international agency for women, actively under discussion at the United Nations, as a vehicle to make a significant dent on the pandemic. Why? In the final analysis, probably because it would cost money. The deliberate omission of the most significant initiative on behalf of women to emerge in the multilateral system ... an initiative proposed with representation from five of the G8 countries, shows the pro forma quality of the paragraphs addressing the desperate dilemma of women and girls.

And that reality lies at the heart of what we're dealing with. For some inexplicable reason, the G8 is not prepared to provide the resources to subdue the pandemic in Africa. That leaves all of us as advocates with a difficult question of strategy.

There's no use denying that we failed in Germany. At Gleneagles we were left with the illusion of progress; post-Gleneagles no illusions remain. All of the concerted eleventh hour lobbying, all of the celebrity pressure at the highest levels failed to move the G8 to decent and tenable positions. That's the simple reality of it.

So what do we do? Well, let me first suggest what we don't do. We don't issue the kind of congratulatory statement that came from UNAIDS in the immediate wake of the G8 in Germany: "UNAIDS ... welcomes G8 leaders affirmation of their commitment to work towards the goal of universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010, and UNAIDS also applauds --- [applauds!] --- the G8 announcement of a projected \$US 60 billion in investment ...". It

just doesn't ring true, and everyone knows it. It smacks of currying favour, of appeasement, of polishing disappointment with the anxious gloss of the supplicant. For several years now, I've felt that the UN always overdoes this sort of thing: strewing rose petals in the path of the donors to keep them happy. It doesn't work. It has to stop. It's based on the mistaken assumption that if you bend over backwards, it will improve your posture. It's time to stop posturing.

For all of us, in this grand coalition of civil society, it's necessary, I think, to take a much tougher road. And to choose our targets carefully. There is hope in the offing.

It seems to me that there are five countries we should target. First, Japan, because they host the next G8 and because they show the possibility of approximating their financial promises. Second, Germany, because President Merkel provided twitches of enlightenment, albeit the dollars were deficient. Third, France, because the appointment of Bernard Kouchner as Foreign Minister augers well for humanitarian imperatives. Fourth, the United Kingdom, because Gordon Brown has shown more conscience and commitment on the issues of poverty, disease and Africa than the rest of the G8 leadership put together. And finally, the United States, because a decisive election is coming, and whether or not there is a change in Administration, there must be a dramatic new impetus in public policy.

That's why the work of RESULTS is indispensable. You understand the meaning of the grass-roots and grass-roots communication. You recognize, almost intuitively, that advocacy is a full-time job ... it never ends ... and what is needed is a powerful social movement to provide awareness on the one hand, and political pressure on the other. Nor should that pressure be directed solely at the ultimate leader, or the putative Presidential candidates, of whichever party. We've tried that, and we can continue to gnaw at that particular political bone. But we must also apply pressure at every political level in every country, building a formidable coalition in the process.

You have people of tremendous experience to draw upon. You have all of the Millennium Development Goals to keep you on fire. You have millions of lives, hanging by a thread, begging for your intervention.

The problem with the G8, it seems to me, is its congenital divorce from reality. We're part of an era where human life is devalued. Just look at Iraq, just look at Darfur, just look at HIV/AIDS. The international community has lost its bearings. When that happens, the human dimension slides into obscurity. The grandmother who buries her children, the orphan who weeps through the night, the women scarred forever by sexual violence, they recede into the mists of statistical calculation. We dehumanize them, their faces blurred, their identities lost.

It's a terrible thing we do to the uprooted and disinherited of the earth. Together, we must bring it to an end.

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