

THE AFRICA FAITH LEADERS POSITION PAPER ON THE BEYOND POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

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**Convened by the
Africa Interfaith Initiative on the Post 2015 Development Agenda**

Introduction

As people of Religions, we gratefully experience communion with God, and we believe that God mercifully reaches out to all people, especially people who are poor and marginalized. We are moved by the joy that God gives us to work for justice for all God's servants and the preservation of His entire work of creation;

Exercising our God given mandate to give voice to issues that concern the poor, the marginalised in society, children, young people, persons with disability and people living with HIV and AIDS, and having fully participated in the African Leaders Summit on the Post 2015 Development Agenda;

We, Religious Leaders gathered at Munyonyo in Uganda, from the 30th of June to the 2nd of July, do hereby present this collective position as our humble contribution to the Post 2015 Global Development Framework.

We believe that all of us, men and women, are made by God to serve Him, and have as a result equal dignity in relation with one another. Together, we must build an equal, fair and secure society where each woman, man, or child can flourish and contribute to the betterment of humanity. In common, we cherish values of dignity, participation, environmental stewardship and ensuring the greatest positive impact for those among us experiencing the greatest deprivation and marginalisation.

We desire that the priorities and perspectives of people directly affected by poverty and injustice are taken into account, in decision-making, monitoring and implementation of the post-2015 development framework. Indeed, as Religious Leaders across the African continent, we are convinced that the post-2015 development agenda has the potential to set the tone and direction of a universal, ambitious, equitable and inclusive agenda applicable by and committed to by all countries.

We place the life, dignity, rights and wellbeing of each person-now and in generations to come-firmly at the center of all discussions and endeavors for development¹ to be even and contextualised. We bring together socio-economic and spiritual concerns of communities and amplify rarely heard voices of the marginalized and excluded. We are guardians bestowed with the stewardship of our planet and the duty to protect and care for our natural environment, the earth and its abundance for our benefit today and the benefit of future generations.² We stand for truth, equity, justice and strive to bring peace and justice to the world. In respect to climate and the history of human development, we subscribe to the principle of Common but differentiated responsibilities among peoples and countries.

We recognize that the current global development framework, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) greatly improved coordination of global development priorities and have helped to shape thinking and action on the priorities for wellbeing for majority of developing countries. We also recognize that the Millennium Development Goals were created through a top-down closed door process with the consequence that they failed to engage and respond to the structural realities of people living in poverty.

We are gratified that the process to define the post-2015 frame work has been more participatory, inclusive and attentive to the voices of those who live in poverty and are marginalized. This process is very important to us as it calls to conscience solidarity amongst our one human family, and challenges a growing peril in the globalisation of indifference³. Everyone ought to be at the table and certainly, no one should be left out or behind. This process of inclusion and participation should be embraced till the final adoption of the framework in September 2015.

The Regional Context

Africa is a diverse and richly endowed continent of great potential and promise. It is rich in natural and human resources, is culturally diverse and has the youngest population in the world. The continent has abundant natural resource endowment with approximately 12% of the world's oil reserve, 40% of its gold, vast arable land, water and forest resource. Africa too has a rich and diverse tapestry of cultures, civilizations and institutions and a history steeped in resilience and victory against great odds.

Our Journey with MDGs

We adopted the MDG framework with reluctance. At the beginning, we were not sure whether it was a framework for social accountability or a continuation of what we were already doing in development work as religious groups.

Like the African Union, we have agonized on the capacity of the MDG framework to bring about economic transformation and better people's lives beyond initiatives such as Development Action Plans, Structural Adjustment Programmes and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. There has not been an economic transformation on account of the MDGs. While Africa has experienced sustained economic growth over the longest time since half a century ago, this growth has not been inclusive

¹ African Faith Leaders Statement on Priorities for Post-2015 Development Agenda: African Interfaith Initiative on the Post 2015 Development Agenda, New York, 2013.

² -ibid-

³ Pope Francis on the Globalisation of Indifference in Today's World

and widespread. This economic growth has failed as an instrument of fundamental transformation of African societies and communities to greater inclusion, fairness, equity and justice.

Increased economic activity has, instead, widened existing inequalities, making worse past failure of economic policy and trading regimes. The MDG framework has proved incompetent to lift up human development in the wake of the dominant capitalist, neo-liberal economic dogma. To a large extent, much of what the MDG's sought to achieve could result from a correction of the policy prescriptions from this dogma that over the decades have left countries in unending debt, ruinous socio-economic realities and environmental and financial crisis.

The MDG deadline

In preparation for 2015, the UN Task Team has held open, inclusive consultations with over half a Million people globally. This task force has reported that whereas there was considerable improvement, accelerated progress is needed to achieve the MDGs by the end of 2015. The task force also reports that future goals must address challenges of sustainability, rule of law and governance, security from violence and jobs. In addition people must participate, both in agenda setting as well as monitoring progress towards the future development goals.

We do not come to this place by chance:

Our Role, Niche and Comparative Advantage

Our Convening power

We are a dependable presence in community with an unparalleled convening capacity and infrastructure. Millions of people rise to attend prayer and worship every day from Monday through to Sunday. No other institution in the World has and can sustain that capacity. Our role as conveners, amplifiers, participants and informed experts is prior to political arrangements, states or conventions on development such as MDGS.

Our Commitment, staying power and trustworthiness

As faith communities, our commitment to developing the human person and protecting the earth is robust and binding. Our calling and conviction gives us endeavor, commitment and longevity that exceed the limitations of time in the instant and eternity.

Our conviction to empower the poor is built on the belief that if one body of the whole suffers, the whole body is unwell. In practice this ensures that no person or part of the population is left in poverty living a life unworthy of servants of God.

By and large, our work is self-sustaining as it is built on collective responsibility and the trust and faith that communities have in us.

A Robust Development Institution

As Religious communities we have a unique duty and role to make poverty history. We are convicted that poverty and inequality grimly violates human dignity and wellbeing and have grave moral and spiritual dimensions. As it were, millions of Africa's men and women continue to eke out an existence as lesser persons in our midst; millions of her children are orphaned by avoidable disease and civil conflicts. Generations of Africa's young people have been deprived of the opportunity to master, deploy and benefit from their youth and talent and in this way denied an opportunity to make beneficial contribution to family, community and society. The combination of poverty, inequality and daily strife has put a severe strain on the institution of the African family and the values of community, hospitality and reciprocity so beholden to our way of life. Run away poverty and inequality poses grave risks to African political, economic and social institutions and the stability of community and state. It is our calling as faith communities and faith leaders to speak and seek redress to the conditions that give rise to this reality.

We are moved by conviction and faith to play a critical role in the lives and cultures of majority of peoples in Africa. We have a long history of action on development and often deliver a multiplicity of services to individuals and communities blighted by poverty, conflict, humanitarian and natural disaster. As a result we are closely embedded and committed to local communities. As Faith Communities we work across and promote links among communities across cultural and national boundaries. We also spur people to consider ethical issues ranging including corruption and social equity.

As Faith communities, we possess perhaps the largest infrastructure for development in many communities and play critical roles in community building. Communities around the world have come to trust faith leaders and institutions as we work to boost local resilience and copying capacity.

As Faith Communities work to give hope and bring meaning to the lives of millions of people. We are also compelled to stand in the gap, to engage in advocacy, coordination and social accountability and mobilizing spiritual support for marginalized and impoverished communities including the internally displaced and refugees.

As key actors in promoting wellbeing, and given this centuries old engagement in many dimensions of people's lives, it is essential that we are engaged and take an active role in the development of a new successor charter to the Millennium Development Goals.

Our Recommendations for the Post 2015 Agenda

I. The Agenda Setting for post-2015

The post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals Framework ought to build on a single, integrated agenda that recognizes past achievements and ensures that development is anchored on a genuinely global sustainable pathway and which reflects the intricate links between socio-economic, cultural and environmental dimensions of development.

We welcome the determination of the Open Working Group to adopt a Human Rights Approach in dealing with poverty and tackling inequalities within and amongst nations.

Specific targets under different Goals should be explicit on mechanisms and means for the protection, survival and development of Children to their full potential, including through Education, as stipulated in Paragraph 11 of the Rio+20 document (FAD 12, Goal 4). The recognition of Girls and Women's rights/ gender justice (FAD 12, Goal 5) and the rights of our brothers and sisters with disabilities (FAD 12, Goals 3, 4 and 5) points in the direction of the World we all want to live in. These provisions will go a long way in promoting the dignity of men and women given by God the Creator and Giver of life.

We appreciate the determination of the Open Working Group to source sustainable development within the limits of Mother Earth, and to making such use of the planet's resources so that future generations will not have to pay for our unsustainable consumption. We find these SDGs sufficiently global and aspirational as they integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.⁴ Like the African Union has already published in the African Common Position on Post-2015 agenda, the post-2015 vision must commit to promoting science, technology and innovation in Africa, including in the area of education, health and bio-sciences, agriculture, and clean energy,⁵ and to invest in human development of Africa's mostly young one billion population.

For Africa, producing the food we need in a manner that protects our environment is a top priority for our collective survival. This alongside accountable governance constitutes our primary goals. We strongly recommend that Goal 2 of the FAD affirms unambiguously that **FOOD IS A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT FOR ALL**, and thus needs to be produced adequately and sustainably. We recommend reinstating food security in this goal from the previous iteration. The targets must include the basic right to food for all, guarantee the rights of small producers, address the price of basic foods, and protect traditional seeds.

In our view, the proposed 17 Sustainable Development Goals seem to capture very creatively the global concerns of our people in our time. The Open Working Group should sustain the momentum by ensuring that no one is left behind. They are transformative enough and should constitute the basis of the Co-Chairs Report.

OUR REACTION TO THE FAD 12 OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP

I. Eradicating poverty: a human rights imperative in the Post-2015 (FAD, Goal 1)

We welcome the centrality placed on fighting poverty in the new global development agenda. We are also concerned that the MDGs did not focus enough on reaching the very poorest and most excluded people. It did not narrow the inequalities in incomes, access to education, energy/power, and health care services. Gainful employment opportunities, especially for women and jobless youth continue to widen and yet it is generally agreed that gainful employment is a necessary condition for poverty reduction.

⁴ Faith Based Leader's Statement on Priorities for Post 2015 Development Agenda; African Interfaith Initiative on the Post 2015 Development Agenda, New York, 2013.

⁵ Africa Union Agenda 2063 Framework; p18

The post-2015 framework must demonstrate seriousness by embedding poverty eradication in all goals and targets and should aim to get to zero poverty, not just reducing it. Poverty must be understood as a multi-dimensional phenomenon that encompasses a shortage of resources, capabilities, choices, security and power. In order to capture our concerns for poverty, we urge an ambitious, inclusive, equitable and sustainable Framework.

2. The dignity of work and the rights of people (All Goals of the FAD 12)

We should seek to achieve an inclusive, pro-poor and sustainable economic transformation, not necessarily unlimited economic growth. We need an economy at the service of people and the common good, and not one that shackles people to its means and ends. This new economy must supply decent work to our youth, majority of who remain unemployed.

3. The Goal addressing inequalities (goal 10)

This goal flows logically from the equal dignity between us as members of the one human family. We commend its re-introduction. As humans created to serve God, we are equal in our worth and dignity. The vast current income and opportunities disparities are unconscionable as they disfigure our common nature as children and servants of the same loving and caring God.

We support this goal strongly, recognizing the importance of equity and equality in relation to sustainable development and poverty eradication. Addressing inequality of income and opportunities within and between countries will only be possible if all countries take action according to their own particular context. This goal must contain action to target specifically those who are most marginalised and vulnerable. These actions need to be included in the implementation and outcomes of the post-2015 framework.

We strongly recommend that this goal includes targets on the reform of financial institutions, regulation of financial transactions, progressive tax systems at country level to ensure income redistribution, systematic measurement of the share of wages in GDP, and targets on labour rights and the establishment of social protection floors.

4. Listen and respond to the needs of the people on the ground (All Goals of the FAD 12).

The option for the poor is an imperative.

The post 2015 development agenda must ensure that marginalised people experience the greatest positive impact as outcomes of the ongoing process. Government and business must serve society and the poor. All activities in society, including especially economic activity should serve the greater purpose of the common good. For the sake of poor people, governments must ensure that the private sector respects human rights and the environment while at the same time promoting sustainable development.

5. The principle of participation should be mainstreamed in all our policies and programmes.

People, irrespective of their race, gender or social class have both the right and duty to participate in all aspects of society and we should be ensuring that the post-2015 framework enables them to do just that.

We call on the United Nations to intensify what is already yielding very positive results in the sense of ownership of the overall post-2015 agenda: the participation of all sectors including Faith Communities, Governments, Private sector and Civil Society at all levels - local, national, regional and global.

The Multi-stakeholder partnerships in Goal 17 should guarantee and enable active and meaningful participation of all people in the design, implementation and monitoring of public policies and programs, especially over the generation and use of public resources and the delivery of essential services.

6. Peace and Security is critical for the World, even more so for Africa. Pillar five of CAP.

Daily life with ordinary people has taught us that human security and personal safety is a top priority for people who go through extreme poverty and experience vulnerability.

In agreement with the African Union, we acknowledge the importance of peace and security in Africa and in the World and the inextricable links between development and peace, security and stability. We reaffirm that peace and security is essential for the achievement of the continent's development aspirations, particularly for countries affected by conflict and those emerging from conflict.⁶

We welcome the maintenance of goal 16 on "Peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law, effective and capable institutions. We must ensure that this goal also lays emphasis on the requirement for participative and inclusive governance. We pray and recommend that a consensus be reached in this critical area of life in today's Africa and the world at large. We call on all countries to commit themselves to pursuing peace and security as a universal goal.

To make this goal operational, the SDGs should include mechanisms and targets that will facilitate dispute resolution and social cohesion in the Global Framework. We propose the inclusion of the following targets:

- by 2030, significantly reduce international stresses that drive conflict, violence and insecurity, including global inequalities in wealth, land and resource ownership; irresponsible trade in arms and conflict commodities; and the illicit drugs trade**
- tensions, grievances and disputes in the world and within each state are resolved peacefully, inclusively and constructively, showing tolerance for all people involved**

⁶ Common African Position, Pillar 5

7. Our duty to sustain the environment and the ecosystem (FAD 12 Goals 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15)

Nature is not a bottomless reservoir of resources from which we can simply draw at will. Our current lifestyle is built on unlimited exploitation of natural resources with terrible consequences on the balance of the ecosystem. We are also not the only life on this planet. As humans we are only part of creation and we have been entrusted with the stewardship of our environment. All of us, rich and poor alike, are called to acknowledge that environmental resources have been given for use by everyone, including future generations. The current unsustainable development path must be re-directed so that development remains within safe planetary limits. The goal on sustainable consumption and production has the potential to bring about the required social transformation to support this.

8. Proposed goal 13: Tackle climate change and its impacts

We are alarmed by the continuing global rising of emissions of greenhouse gases. Africans are paying for the sins being committed by highly industrialized countries. We call for the widest cooperation by all world governments to collectively address this great challenge of our time. No single country can go it alone, but we need to accept differentiated responsibilities based on the level of countries' contribution to the pollution. The Post 2015 agenda needs to commit the world to not exceed global warming of 2/1.5 degree Celsius in accordance with international agreements.

We strongly support a stand-alone goal on climate change, and suggest it should include **more concrete and ambitious targets**.

We believe that a strong climate change goal in the SDGs, including a dynamic application of the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibility, can be conducive to driving urgent international action on climate change at the high ambition required.

As it currently stands this goal cannot deliver the expected result. The Framework must recognise the reality and impact of climate change.

We must ensure that Development is promoted **within the carrying capacity of the planet** – It is essential that the reference to the **carrying capacity of the planet** is brought back to the proposed targets (especially on **Target 8.1**).

9. About partnerships and means of implementation (FAD 12 Goal 17)

In concurrence with Beyond 2015 Campaign, we accept that the target on data disaggregation (**17.15**) is a transformative element and should not only cover the increased availability of data but also how this data will be used by the people.

Where **17.16 stipulates that** regular voluntary monitoring and reporting of progress on SDGs, led by governments should be undertaken, we support the call to add the words "**with the active and meaningful participation of civil society and local communities**", within a shared accountability framework, including means of implementation, the global partnership among Member States and multi-stakeholder initiatives and partnerships

Bridging the gap between Policy and implementation in Africa

African governments have created continental institutions without adequate resourcing and often not even granting these institutions legislative powers. A result of this is that many good resolutions are made, but not implemented. This is a big disadvantage in a context where mutual, equitable and productive engagement of developing countries in global trade and Economic Partnerships (EPAS) call for solidarity and regional cooperation for effective bargaining power.

Africa is further disadvantaged by relations built around an “us and they” global mentality. The richer countries rarely met their promises of funding development. That mentality is averse to “UBUNTU” which values sharing and finding meaning in each other's welfare. The poor and marginalized are part of UBUNTU. They must not be excluded because they have as equal a say in building an equal, fair and secure society where all persons can flourish and live free of violence, discrimination and fear. This, for us, is the only way to guarantee that new development interventions are responsive to the complex factors that often inhibit the poor from living in dignity. ⁷ It is indeed very high time we globalized solidarity in place of the ongoing globalization of indifference.

Global economic and political institutions need to be reformed to ensure that they are accountable to all citizens especially those who are the intended beneficiaries of Post-2015 Development Framework.

10. In Conclusion

We call on the UN to ensure that Religious Groups in Africa are consulted at all levels considering the role they play in promoting people's ownership of their own development. Through the Religious institutions, the marginalised and poor people build resilience to shocks and stresses as well as acquire knowledge and skills to effectively participate in decision-making processes and become "real artisans of their own destiny".

The rights-based approach adopted by the Open Working Group makes it an obligation for all state governments to show evidence of progressively guaranteeing all human rights for every person in their country on all existing legally codified commitments, no matter their age, status, gender, ethnic origin or religion.

As Leaders of Religious Groups across the African continent, we commit ourselves to putting in place mechanisms that will ensure a multi-stakeholders monitoring of the implementation of the Post 2015 Development Framework and promoting accountability and transparency in the management of public resources including the Environment so that no one will be left behind.

Issued this day being the 2nd day of July 2014.

⁷ Faith Based Leader's Statement on Priorities for Post 2015 Development Agenda; African Interfaith Initiative on the Post 2015 Development Agenda, New York, 2013.

Endorsed by:

1. African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL)
2. All Africa Council of Churches (AACC)
3. Arigatou International – Ending Child Poverty/Global Network of Religions for Children
4. Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA)
5. Bible Society of Uganda
6. Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA)
7. Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network (EDAN)
8. Faith to Action Network
9. Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA)
10. Hindu Council of Africa (HCA)
11. Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE)
12. Inter-Religious Council of Kenya
13. Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) and constituent members
14. Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA)
15. Organization of Africa Instituted Churches (OAIC)
16. Programme for Christian Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA)
17. Religions for Peace International (RfP)
18. Southern African Catholic Bishop Conference (SACBA)
19. Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SCKM)
20. Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM)
21. The Baha'i Communities in Africa
22. Union of Muslim Council for East, Central and Southern Africa.
23. World Student Christian Federation (WSCF)

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