

2011 ELECTION PLATFORM END GLOBAL POVERTY AND INJUSTICE

Canada has long been respected as a good global citizen. Our diplomacy, participation in the multilateral system, and the contribution of Canadian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) gives Canada credibility to be a strong advocate to end global poverty and injustice. But this reputation is under threat and cannot be taken for granted. Canada should be a leader on the international stage. What is needed is a global vision and an ambitious multi-sector agenda to help end global poverty. The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) has outlined its vision in this Election Platform to End Global Poverty and Injustice.

MORE AND BETTER AID

Poverty is a violation of human rights on a massive scale. Although aid alone will not end poverty, it is a unique and important resource. Unfortunately, Canada is far from reaching the internationally-agreed-to target for aid spending of 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI). Its aid spending is stalled at 0.3% of GNI. Canada must also increase the quality of its aid. To do so, under the recently passed Canadian ODA Accountability Act, Canada must focus aid spending on poverty reduction and respect for human rights, promote local and democratic ownership of development and be accountable to people living in poverty.

Canada Must:

- Develop a consultative process, co-ordinated by the Minister of International Cooperation, that would elaborate new approaches for CIDA to implement the ODA Accountability Act in the context of Canada's human rights obligations and taking into account the perspectives of the poor;
- Commit to a realistic 10-year timetable for increases in Canadian aid to achieve 0.7% of Canada's GNI;
- Renew the 40-year partnership between CIDA and Canadian civil society organizations through a new deal based on shared values, responsive funding modalities and a CIDA policy for its support to Civil Society Organizations as development actors in their own right.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Gender inequality is a leading cause of poverty. But while gender inequalities are well-documented, giving attention to women's rights is too often viewed as a low priority or simply left out of policies to address poverty, peace and environmental sustainability. Women are denied the chance to shape and contribute to social, political and economic development. Ending poverty means ending discrimination.

Canada Must:

- Ensure domestic compliance with international obligations to women's rights and equality;
- Ensure all Canadian international initiatives reflect and support Canada's obligation to fulfill women's rights and gender equality;
- Provide significant political and financial support to UN Women, the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Good health and education are prerequisites for ending poverty. Considered as basic rights for Canadians, universal free education and health care are not the norm for millions of children and adults in developing countries, especially girls and women. 104 million children have no access to education and 13 million people die every year from preventable diseases. This must end.

Canada Must:

- Ensure that generic drugs reach people living in poverty by removing the unnecessary red tape in Canadian laws and World Trade Organization rules that discourage the export of affordable medicines to countries in need;
- Invest aid resources in developing countries' public health care systems and pay our fair share of the funding needed by the Global Fund to fight AIDS Malaria and Tuberculosis;
- Ensure aid programs support the achievement of full gender equality in education with increased and effective aid to the education sector.

RIGHT TO FOOD

The world is facing a major and complex food crisis that requires a comprehensive response. More than 70% of the people in developing countries live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Half of all hungry people are smallholder peasants. The current food crisis results from many factors, including the chronic neglect of agriculture in foreign aid policies, international trade rules that have undermined the livelihoods of small farmers, and a failure of multilateral institutions to work effectively. The right to food is a basic human right that cannot be denied. Urgent attention to the global food system is required.

Canada Must:

- Focus the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) priority for food security on support to smallholder farmers in building sustainable livelihoods and adapting to climate change;
- Play a leadership role to reform multilateral food and agriculture institutions and ensure international trade rules provide real benefits to small farmers and food-insecure people;
- Establish a national legislative ban on terminator technology (genetically modified plants that produce sterile seeds, forcing farmers to buy seeds every year).

GLOBAL ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The richest 2% of adults own more than 50% of the world's assets, while the poorest half hold only 1% of the wealth. The collapse of the Doha Development Round negotiations demonstrates the gap between the policies pursued by rich countries and the real needs of developing countries. Canada must play a leadership role in pushing for equitable and accountable rules and institutions for international trade, finance and investment. Canada must put human rights before profits when negotiating multilateral and bilateral trade agreements. Canada's trading partners must show genuine commitments to fulfill their citizens' rights.

Canada Must:

- Ensure that trade, finance, and investment rules protect policy space for developing-country governments and their citizens to determine the best domestic policies to end poverty, promote decent work and protect public services;
- Promote the immediate and unconditional cancellation of 100% of the multilateral and bilateral debt owned by the poorest countries;
- refrain from signing a trade agreement with the Honduran government until there is a verifiable improvement in the human rights situation in Honduras and until an independent human rights impact assessment of the proposed Free Trade Agreement has been conducted, and acted upon.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Ninety percent of Canadians believe that corporate social responsibility should be a top corporate priority. In March 2007, the Advisory Group for the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility, comprised of representatives of industry, civil society, academia and labour, reached an important consensus on a Canadian corporate social responsibility framework for the extractive sector. The Advisory Group's report urged the government to adopt a set of standards to be met by Canadian extractive-sector companies operating abroad and to reinforce these standards through appropriate reporting, compliance and other mechanisms.

Canada Must:

- Implement the recommendations contained in the Advisory Group report;
- Develop legislation to hold Canadian companies and their directors accountable in Canada when found responsible for human rights or environmental abuses overseas;
- Amend legislation to clarify that fund managers' consideration of social, human rights, or environmental issues in investment decisions does not conflict with their legal obligations.

PEACE AND SECURITY

Civilians bear the toll of modern wars. In places like Afghanistan, eastern Congo and Sudan, new approaches to stop violence against civilian populations is required. Yet, insufficient resources are dedicated to building peace. Canada must play a leadership role in supporting broad-based peace processes that include community peace-building efforts, involving women and elders. Our approach to conflicts should always prioritize diplomacy; to do this Canada must strengthen its civilian peace-making and peace-building capacities.

Canada Must:

- Exhaust all avenues for diplomacy and local initiatives for peace prior to the consideration of military force;
- Put in place, a clear and transparent strategy for promoting peace in all our engagements with conflict-affected societies. This strategy should be based on solid conflict and gender analysis and reflect international human rights standards;
- Ensure that Canada's role in Afghanistan focuses on diplomacy, peace-building and long-term development.

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Development policies solely focused on "economic growth" have largely contributed to the global environmental crisis we are facing today. Through climate change, biodiversity is depleted, soils are degraded and deserts are expanding. This crisis hits vulnerable and poor people the hardest since their lives depend most directly on the environment. An agenda to end global poverty must integrate a holistic environmental justice perspective. This would encompass democratic development, sustainable agricultural practices, and effective community development strategies that deal with the full range of vulnerabilities facing poor and marginalized people.

Canada Must:

- Meet its obligations under the Biodiversity Convention, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change and other international environmental treaties;
- Invest \$400 million or more in new and additional funding in 2011 and 2012 fiscal years for global climate financing that gives priority to climate impacts on poor and vulnerable populations, and make these allocations additional to reaching the 0.7% target for ODA;
- Support an ambitious, just and globally equitable post-2012 framework for addressing global climate change that keeps global temperature increases below 2oC, and that takes into account the interests, knowledge and capacities of vulnerable people;
- Develop long-term policies for international co-operation with developing countries that integrate ecological sustainability with poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods.

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

There is a growing and serious concern that significant democratic and human rights principles and institutions have been eroded in Canada and that the space for voices of dissent and advocacy has shrunk dramatically. Citizens need support to claim rights that are universally recognized in international human rights law. It is through Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that citizens broaden their efforts, increase their influence, amplify their voices and support collective action for change. Strong democracies depend as much on public debate and citizens' interaction with decision-makers as they do on effective, democratically elected governments.

Canada Must:

- Launch a credible, independent and public process that will examine and make recommendations regarding the state of democracy and human rights in Canada;
- Put in place a system that will ensure that decisions about funding civil society organizations in Canada are done transparently, without discrimination, and reflect a variety of policy perspectives;
- Review and strengthen the measures that are in place to protect watchdogs, civil servants and other bodies and individuals with similar responsibilities from recriminations when they criticize government policies.

DEMOCRATIC AND EFFECTIVE MULTILATERAL SYSTEM

Whether at the United Nations or in the economic institutions that govern multilateral trade and finance, developing country governments have less influence in decision making than their Northern counterparts. Moreover, since the turn of the Millennium, some governments have increasingly acted unilaterally, weakening the effectiveness of the multilateral system. Reforms are needed to address power imbalances, ensure the primacy of UN norms of human rights and environmental stewardship, and reaffirm the importance of multilateralism.

Canada Must:

- Recognize, in Canada's foreign policy, the dual importance of supporting multilateralism and introducing multilateral reforms, based on the primacy of United Nations human rights and environmental norms;
- Enhance developing countries' power in global economic and political decision-making bodies, particularly the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund;
- Utilize the approach set out in the "Responsibility to Protect" when national authorities fail to protect their citizens from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity or ethnic cleansing.

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CCIC is a coalition of nearly 100 of Canada's leading civil society organizations working to end poverty and to promote social justice and human dignity for all.

To find out more, visit CCIC's website at www.ccic.ca and read *The Global Challenge to End Poverty and Injustice: A Canadian 10-Point Agenda*.