

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A POPULIST AGENDA FOR U.S. - THIRD WORLD ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Unifying Principles

- 1. Self-determination.** U.S. assistance to the Third World, both public and private, should promote participatory development, social justice and self-determination, as well as the right of all people to be involved in decisionmaking that affects them, as these are the bases for economic, social and political stability and democracy and are central to the achievement of true long-term U.S. and Third World security objectives.
- 2. Self-reliance.** Third World countries should be supported in their efforts to achieve greater control over their resources, a higher level of national and regional economic integration, and increased economic self-reliance, particularly in food production, rather than encouraged to emphasize policies of export-led growth, especially during the current period of depressed commodity prices and increasing protectionism in Northern markets.
- 3. Environmental sustainability.** Increased national self-reliance also requires support for a self-sustaining development process defined by local populations, rooted in the availability of productive land for subsistence farmers and in the protection and restoration of the natural resource base, and consistent with local cultures and environmental conditions and the rights of indigenous peoples.
- 4. Consultation.** As people at the grassroots level, who best understand local realities, are an indispensable source of development knowledge and expertise, aid policies, programs and projects must, to be effective, be developed in close consultation with, or in response to the initiatives of, the people of the Third World through their own organizations.
- 5. Women's rights.** Aid should be directed to developmental efforts that increase the involvement of women and their grassroots organizations in the planning and implementation of development policies, programs and projects, facilitate their equal participation in positions of leadership, and afford them equal status and rights in work inside and outside the home, as support of women and their activities is key to social and economic equity and progress in the Third World.
- 6. Family security.** The international and national distribution of resources should be made more equitable so as to help produce an economically secure environment at local levels in the Third World, one in which the premium placed on family size is reduced, reproductive health enhanced, and the choices available to women expanded.
- 7. Popular involvement.** As control over the development process has been concentrated in the hands of privileged sectors of Southern and Northern societies, aid should be directed to representative organizations, both public and non-governmental, that seek to close the gap in income and wealth existing between the rich and the poor, that enhance the effective functioning of popular organizations, and that promote the economic participation and rights of women and the civil and human rights of the citizenry as a whole.
- 8. NGO responsiveness.** U.S. and other Northern non-governmental organizations should assume a responsive rather than directive posture vis-a-vis Southern NGO activity; work actively in partnership with Third World popular organizations to involve them and their perspectives in international policy deliberations, in the monitoring of the activities of aid institutions, and in public education related to development, the environment and human rights; and organize and manage themselves in a manner consistent with the values and positions they articulate regarding social justice and development.

9. **Aid quality.** In an effort to enhance the quality of aid programming, the amount of assistance provided by Northern institutions should be no greater than that which can be used effectively by Third World organizations that incorporate the poor or represent their interests, even if that means a reduction in development assistance in the short or medium term.

10. **Aid autonomy.** Development assistance institutions must be structurally and operationally independent from the pressures of short-term foreign policy and from special economic interests so as to be responsive to Third World organizations that are representative of the poor and their interests.

11. **Aid decentralization.** The World Bank and other bilateral and multilateral aid and financial institutions must make fundamental changes in their economic policy frameworks, their internal organization and their lending operations if their work is to be supportive of the development efforts of the Third World poor, and they must routinely make available program-related information so as to increase the capacity of Third World peoples to influence the development decisions that directly affect them.

12. **Anti-poverty focus.** As there exist significant economic inequalities within most nations, bilateral and multilateral aid resources, including those of IDA, should be directed to activities in both poor and middle-income countries that involve and benefit the poor.

13. **Policy redefinition.** Structural and sector adjustment programs promoted by international aid and financial institutions must themselves be restructured in response to local imperatives so as to replace their emphasis on export promotion, trade liberalization, and austerity with the promotion of agrarian reform, environmental protection, reductions in military spending, constraints on capital flight and the recovery of that capital, thus removing the burden of the massive Third World debt from the poor, who played no role in incurring it.

14. **Debt relief.** Cancellations, moratoriums, acceptance of legitimate repudiations, and other forms of relief related to debt repayment should be based upon a determination of responsibility for the creation of the debt and should be pursued in conjunction with actions by debtor governments (and local NGOs) to reallocate available resources to programs of economic transformation designed to increase economic self-reliance, public participation, environmental sustainability, and economic and social equity within their respective systems.

15. **Debt swaps.** The purchase and swaps of debt for local currencies to be used for investments in development, the environment or other such purposes should have the approval of local populations that will be affected, be confined to that portion of the debt legitimately incurred and outstanding, leave those resources and program control in the hands of representative Third World organizations, and should not divert local currencies from other social programs.

16. **Non-exploitative production.** Production in the South that contravenes internationally recognized labor rights, inflicts irreparable damage upon the natural environment and/or diverts land and other critical resources from production for local needs should not be underwritten by multilateral, bilateral or non-governmental agencies, and goods derived from such operations, which thus gain an unfair competitive advantage, should not be provided duty-free access to the U.S. market.

17. **Equitable trade relations.** Third World regional integration and trade should be promoted so as to enable those countries to develop over time the capacity to compete on a more equal basis in international markets, while multi-year, multilateral trade arrangements should be fashioned that ensure Third World products long-term access to Northern markets at fair and stable prices without undermining the achievement of regional food self-reliance.

18. Corporate constraint. U.S. corporations should be constrained from dumping in Third World countries goods and materials that do not meet U.S. health and safety standards, and they and other commercial concerns should be prevented from taking actions that lead to environmental pollution and deforestation.

19. Northern economic reform. As inequities in the international economy are, in conjunction with those that exist within nations, responsible for much of the suffering among the world's poor, the United States and other major Northern debtor countries should implement economic reform programs of their own that, rather than impose hardships on their more vulnerable populations, comprise measures that promote economic justice and the protection of the environment and curtail wasteful consumption.

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Other organizations interested in endorsing these principles should contact The Development GAP (Drafting Committee Coordinator), 1400 I Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005 Tel: (202) 898-1566