

2003 EURODAD ANNUAL CONFERENCE REPORT

IDEOLOGY and EVOLVING ACRONYMS:

Progress or Doublespeak?

PRAGUE, December 1-2

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P O V

E R T Y

P R S P C A S C D F

H I P C E S A F P R G F

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Foreword

By Tom Streater

(Eurodad Programme Officer: 2003 Conference Organiser and report author)

Over the years the Eurodad Annual Conference has built up a reputation as being one of the most interesting and productive dates on the European (development) advocacy calendar; the 2003 Annual Conference Prague continued this proud tradition. With over 100 international advocates for change participating² (from the worlds of civil society, academia and the institutions alike), including a number from the 'South' (from Latin America, Africa, and Asia) and for the first time a significant number from Central and Eastern European (EU accession) countries, the 2003 conference brought together some of the greatest minds and most active advocates within the industry. The innovative thinking that occurred, and the discussions, debates and joint strategising that ensued, resulted in the conference being a highly appreciated success that yielded coalitions around honed common advocacy positions. The debates and coalitions spawned from the conference will hopefully evolve through 2004 and subsequently render European advocacy work more effective in achieving our shared aim of a more just system of international frameworks and pro-poor development.

Enlisting knowledgeable, powerful and well respected speakers for the conference was considered very important from the outset, and we were delighted that the excellent Mathew Martin participated and did such a fine job as our sole keynote speaker. We made every effort to have as balanced a representation in the panels as possible, whilst of course at the same time ensuring that individuals had the specific expertise required to give informed, insightful, thought-provoking presentations, as well as being more than able to contribute meaningfully to the debates and discussions in question. We aimed for a 'fifty/fifty' balance of panellists with regards to gender and geography ('North'/'South'), and we wanted a good mix of civil society practitioners, academics, and institutional professionals; our initial list of candidates reflects these ideals. However, due to the conference being at a particularly busy time of year, as well as many of our 'Southern' candidates having great problems obtaining visas for the Czech Republic, we were unable to assemble the panels in a way in which they would reflect the desired degree of aforementioned balance. The specific make-up of the panels was further complicated at the last minute due to forced withdrawals of certain people for family/personal/health reasons. This said, we still believe that we managed to put together three excellent panels that did Eurodad, and their own organisations proud.

Unfortunately, after initially accepting, The World Bank declined our invitation with less than a week to go until the conference. Having secured the services of Elliot Harris from the IMF to sit on the first panel that was to assess development frameworks from an economic perspective, we desired a similar institutional voice on the second panel; this panel was to discuss the frameworks from a more political perspective and assess the intentions of the drivers of the 'new development agenda'. In light of the World Bank's conception of itself as the 'knowledge Bank' who greases the cogs of the development policy production line, we thought it appropriate to have the Bank represented on this panel. However, after initially accepting, the World Bank declined our invitation with less than a week to go until the conference. Their declination was given on the premise that; they had nothing new on the table that they would like to discuss, and that they believed the Fund would accurately represent their viewpoint. We consider this to be a great shame, as The World Bank was a topic of many debates throughout the conference.

² See [APPENDIX II](#) for the full list of participants and their contact details.

Finally, although the structure of the conference and this report will be addressed properly in the introduction (section 1.5), it was considered relevant at this point to say a few brief words on this issue. The 2003 conference placed emphasis on, and allocated the majority of the time to discussion, debate, and strategising, as opposed to formal presentations, of which there were very few. Panellists were advised on what we generally envisaged their contributions to be in their respective sessions, but the specific content with regards to their presentations / discussions was left open to their individual interpretation. The idea was to create fluid holistic discussions that were not confined by the boundaries of specific discourses or issues. In light of this, we thought it sensible to create a more holistic report that reflected the fluid nature of the conference and the innovative thinking that took place. Therefore, the 2003 Annual Conference report will be structured somewhat differently as compared to the standard format used in previous years. Rather than providing transcripts of all of the sessions' presentations, the report will be based around the main issues that were discussed and debated in each session. Short summaries of the formal presentations are included in the report proper, whilst the full presentations are made available in the appendix.

Acknowledgements

Our greatest thanks go to Jiri Silny and Eva Knappova (both of Ecumenical Academy Prague³, our local host partners), and their team of assistants. Without your tireless negotiating with the hotel that served as the venue for the conference, as well as the behind the scenes work you did prior to and during the conference, the event would by no means run as smoothly as it did. We look forward to your organisation (and hopefully other CEE CSOs) joining Eurodad.

We would like to thank Mathew Martin for providing such a wonderful keynote speech to open the conference, and for instantly engaging everyone first thing on a Monday morning, which is by no means easy. We thank all of our panellists, especially Tim Kessler and Sarah Bradshaw who stepped in at the last minute due to cancellations from expected panellists. We also thank the moderators of the three panels; Alex Wilks, Jean Somers, Paul Ladd; you all did a great job of introducing the sessions and panellists and you ensured that we didn't run over time by too much, so thank you. Also, thanks to all the facilitators of the strategy shops. Your expertise and facilitation skills were invaluable when debating the specific issues, strategy options and plans for European advocacy over the coming year.

A special thanks to Tomas Tozicka, founder of Jubilee Prague 2000, for addressing and taking questions from the participants (who were mainly from organisations from CEE accession countries) in the 'Introductory Session: overview of key topics and terms' on the Sunday prior to the conference proper. Well done for greatly contributing to the facilitation of CEE CSOs entrance into 'our' (i.e. European) development advocacy community.

We would also like to thank Adam Novac of Alternatives Inc.⁴ who are funded by the CIDA-ODACE programme of Canadian government. They contributed to the budget of Ecumenical Academy specifically so that CEE participants could participate in the conference and have a session tailored to their needs and interests.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who attended and participated in the conference, especially those who took the trouble to get a visa and fly half way around the world (Your non-European perspectives enriched the conference immensely!); without all of you the conference could not and would have taken place, so thank you.

³ See appendix [APPENDIX VI](#). for more information on Ecumenical Academy Prague.

⁴ Alternatives, Inc. is a non-profit New Jersey corporation. For more information see: <http://www.alternativesinc.org/>

"We cannot allow the fundamental task of developing the undeveloped nations of this planet to fail for lack of resources."

McNamara (World Bank president) - 1970

PROGRESS or DOUBLESPEAK?

"No country genuinely committed to poverty reduction, good governance and economic reform will be denied the chance to achieve the Millennium Goals through lack of finance."

G8 Action Plan for Africa - 2002

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is the theme of the conference? What does; 'IDEOLOGY and EVOLVING ACRONYMS: Progress or 'Doublespeak' actually mean?

Cyclical assertions such as those quoted on the previous page have led 'us'⁵ to the question of whether the 'new development agenda' constitutes *real* progress, or yet more 'doublespeak'?

This year's conference focussed on the methods and motivations of the 'development industry' and our own role as NGOs within it. The conference aimed to take us outside of the individual frameworks and acronyms through which we so often view the challenges at hand in order to question; not only the underlying economic assumptions, political motivations and respective roles of the key actors, but also 'our' own responses to them. Elaborating on the question of progress 'vs.' doublespeak, it can be said that the fundamental question underlying the conference was:

Although we -(NGO's and other advocates for change in the development industry) are winning a few policy battles in our assault on the acronyms, are we losing the war for social and economic justice?

1.2 Why did we choose this theme, what is the relevance?

We at Eurodad feel that this theme and subject matter is particularly relevant at present in light of growing concerns over the initiatives that constitute the 'new development agenda' (i.e. MDGs, PRSP, PRGF, HIPC etc.). These initiatives were introduced with specific criteria that in the majority of cases differentiated them from previous failed initiatives in terms of process and content (e.g. new approaches were supposed to be participatory, country owned, streamlined etc.). So far, many of these initiatives are failing to live up to their mandate, and despite the rhetoric it appears that in reality little has changed for poor people. Few of the longstanding obstacles to success in achieving the goals of development initiatives have been successfully overcome. The theory may appear to be more 'pro-poor', but in practice the 'new agenda' mirrors the 'old' efforts to too great an extent.

In light of this, we felt that a return to the basics, to the root of the problems, was long overdue. Therefore, with this conference we aimed to take a fresh perspective in our analyses and tackling of the problems. Our reasoning is explained further in Section 2.1 where we take a look at Jacqueline Woodman's -(Eurodad Coordinator)- opening speech.

1.3 What do we hope achieve by the conference?

Specifically, the aim of the conference was to stimulate debate and innovative thinking in order to critically analyse the current situation and consider solutions to the problems and alternatives to the current frameworks, looking for evidence and solutions outside of the confines of the current discourse (the 'new development agenda'). The conference was to provide a forum for Eurodad members and others (who may not have much

⁵ When the term 'us' or 'we' is used in this report it is invariably referring to the European development CSO community, and like-minded advocates for change/critics.

contact with each other in their day-to-day work) to come together and share knowledge, experiences and ideas, in the hope of creating a more cohesive and coordinated European Civil Society and advocacy work around the network's key issues.

We wanted to structure the conference in a manner that will best facilitate a logical flow of innovative ideas. With this in mind, the conference began on 'day 1' by looking at the current development agenda and plethora of acronyms; first to consider their goals, then the core economic elements and their efficacy, and finally the motives of the architects. Armed with this information, the idea was to use 'day 2' to consider our own strategies and how to hone them.

We purposefully devoted the afternoon of day 2 to joint strategising. The 5 strategy shops (which concurrently ran twice allowing each participant to participate in the 2 of their choice) were designed to ensure that small groups could get together and debate the issues in hand, considering the best ways to move forward with campaigns and strategies. It was hoped that coalitions and common positions would emerge from the strategy shops, which could then be built upon in 2004 and subsequent years.

1.4 Why did we choose to hold the conference in Prague, and to involve CEE CSOs?

The reason that we decided to hold our conference in Prague this year was to facilitate and encourage greater participation of emerging CEE CSOs working on development issues (like Southern participants, CEE participants were charged the subsidised registration fee of only €50).

There was an introductory session on Sunday 30th November (which was free for CEE participants), the aim of which was to bring such CSO representatives up to speed on the issues on the Eurodad agenda. The session was opened by Dr. Tomas Tozicka (Jubilee Prague 2000) who provided a brief overview of, and insights in to the evolution of CEE development oriented civil society from his experiences campaigning for debt cancellation in the Czech Republic. This was followed by questions for Tomas and an informal discussion of the issues. The session then proceeded with a crash/refresher course on the issues, frameworks, and terminology/acronyms, which was facilitated by Eurodad staff (see section 4 for more details, and see appendix I for the background reading document for this session⁶).

In light of this, we are proud to announce that our local host partner NGO (Ecumenical Academy) were able to provide funds to cover the registration costs of 15 CEE CSO representatives, as well as a limited pool of 'special circumstance funds' available for those organisations with very limited financial resources. This resulted in 18 CEE participants attending the conference, many of whom were able to forge/consolidate links with Eurodad members, and some who have enquired about their organisations joining Eurodad.⁷

1.5 Structure of the Conference and the Conference Report

⁶ The crash/refresher course presentations were loosely based around the 'Background reading material' document put together by the Eurodad staff and distributed to participants who had registered for this introductory session, prior to the conference. This document can be found in [APPENDIX I](#). and contains a very useful **glossary of acronyms**.

⁷ Our local host partners, Ecumenical Academy are among those considering joining.

The conference structure can be best understood as comprising of two parts spread over two days, the first flowing logically in to the second. The first day consisted of thrashing out the issues: through one keynote presentation and two panel sessions we discussed and debated; first the overarching issue of financing for development and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's), and then the merits and shortcomings of the specific current economic policy approaches, before finally considering the political aspect of the question by looking at the frameworks, institutions, and their intentions. The discussions and debates of 'day 1' laid the foundations for the focus of the second day's work; NGO strategising. On 'day 2' the range of NGO approaches were first assessed and debated in a panel session in the morning, and then through five specifically focussed strategy shops the assessments continued and specific strategies/campaign options were discussed and conceived, the main findings of which were briefly reported back in the final session.

Despite the symbiotic relationship between these two parts, we thought it made sense that the structure of the report should mirror that of the conference itself, as has been the case in previous years. Therefore, the findings of the conference will be presented in two separate sections; first from the context of the discussions and debates of 'day 1', and then how these debates led into the discussions and workshops on strategic approaches on 'day 2'.

However, as stated in the foreword, rather than providing a transcript of the dialogue⁸, this report attempts to draw together (under specific headings) the often-disparate strands of participants' ideas that were expressed in the debates, in order to highlight the areas of consensus and disagreement more coherently. Finally, there will also be a short section on the implications of the 'Introductory Session' in an attempt to ground the conference, its debates and ideas, in the CEE context that served as the forum these discussions. The report ends with some final conclusions and a brief summary of the follow-up actions.

⁸ Nb. The formal presentations (Keynote and plenary) are only briefly summarised in the relevant sections but are given in full in [APPENDIX III](#).

2. KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE DISCUSSION AND DEBATES OF DAY 1

Section 2 considers each of the sessions in turn, before summarising and reflecting upon the debates and discussions of the whole day at the end of the section.

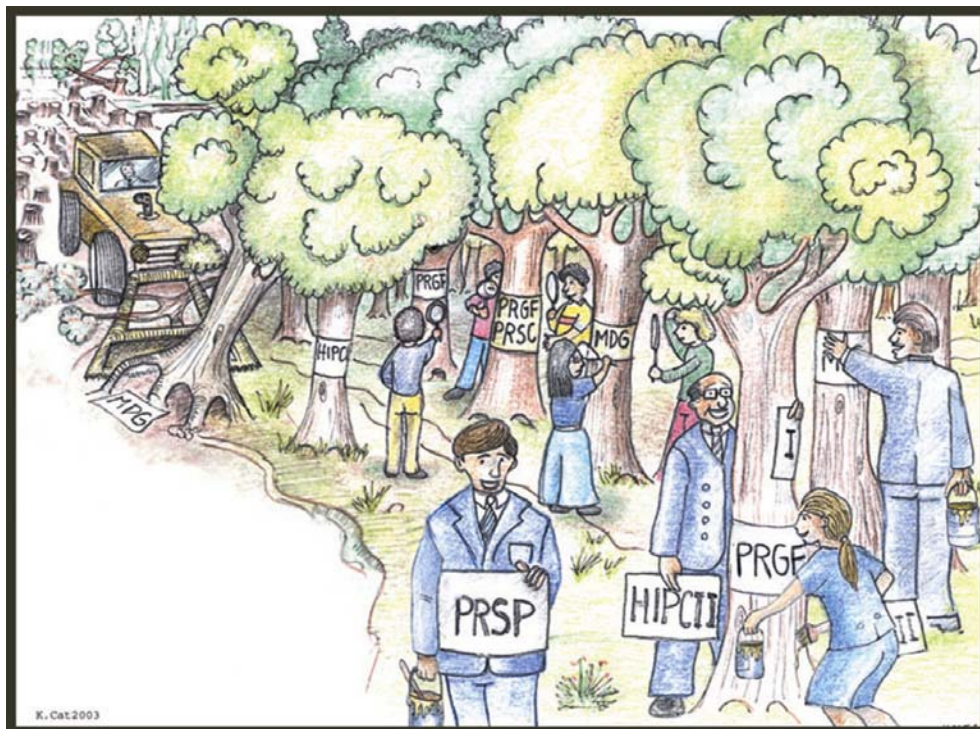
2.1 OPENING SPEECH BY THE EURODAD COORDINATOR

*Jacqueline Woodman (EURODAD Coordinator)*⁹

The conference was opened by the Eurodad Coordinator Jacqueline Woodman, who set the tone and mood of the conference by explaining the rationale behind the choice of theme for 2003 (see section 1.2 above). Jacqueline explained that:

“So why ‘Ideology and Acronyms’? Well, what else do we talk about, that’s all that we talk about, day in and day out, particularly in our branch of the development industry, the department of dissent you might like to call it.

“It’s easy to lose sight of the forest, when we are busy examining the acronyms on any particular tree. Meanwhile, the facts speak for themselves; there are bulldozers destroying many of the principles, and many of the people for whom we are fighting.”



⁹ See [APPENDIX III](#). for Jacqueline’s full presentation.

Jacqueline continued with an introduction to the concept of the 'dialogue of the deaf', highlighting the fact that a back-and-forth dialogue and discourse between ourselves (NGOs) will not bring any positive change to the lives of poor men and women. She explained that; *"if such positive change is indeed the end goal, then we must frequently ask ourselves; how we can best achieve this?"* This question, she said, was the reason why we were all there for the conference.

2.2 KEYNOTE PRESENTATION: More development goals and the inevitable finance gap

Mathew Martin (*Debt Relief International*)¹⁰

Mathew launched the conference proper by giving a presentation on the topic that we at Eurodad consider to be the most important issue¹¹ under this far reaching umbrella of 'ideology & Acronyms', the question of **how to finance the perpetual production of development goals and initiatives?** Mathew looked specifically at the **MDG's**; the prospects of attaining them, the apparent financing gaps, and what CSO's can do to mobilise support for the MDG's.

The floor was then opened to allow people to put questions to Mathew and discuss his presentation. There was debate around **three main issues** which were picked up on by participants; **the MDG's themselves and specifically the problems with goal 8¹²; CSO actions and spending and specifically the priorities and accountability of Northern CSO actions; and finally financing for development, specifically the International Financing Facility (IFF¹³) as an alternative financing tool for international development** as discussed by Mathew in his presentation. The debates around these three issues and Mathew's stance is summarised below:

1. There were concerns raised over the incoherent and contradictory nature of **goal 8 of the MDGs**. The first sub-component of goal 8 states that it is about developing further an open trading and financial system. However, it was pointed out that many LIC's actually want a *discriminatory* trading system that favours smaller countries, therefore goal 8 actually contradicts it's aim of creating a '*global partnership for development*' in that it doesn't reflect the opinions of many LIC's. In light of such problems, questions were raised by many as to whether it is wise to even attempt to engage with goal 8?

Mathew was in agreement, and stated the need for more precise definitions of the goal at national levels (i.e. country specific), but more importantly, at the OECD levels, before we can begin to effectively understand, let alone engage with goal 8.

¹⁰ See [APPENDIX IV](#). for Mathew's brief biography and [APPENDIX III](#). for his presentation.

¹¹ A view that had already been vocally endorsed by Elliot Harris of the IMF in the informal introductory session of the previous day (Sunday 30th).

¹² Definition of goal 8: 'Develop a global partnership for development' More information is available at (10/12/03): <http://www.undp.org/mdg/>

¹³ A British proposal that would immediately provide the funds for the MDG's through the frontloading of aid.

2. The variation in the priorities of **CSO spending** between the North and the South, and the implications for the legitimacy/accountability of Northern CSO spending and activities in (and on behalf of) the South, was put under the spotlight.

Mathew responded by stating that it was imperative that we have monitoring of Northern CSO spending in the South and that this monitoring should be done in the South, and by those of the South. This would result in Northern CSO's being accountable to those on whose behalf they are apparently acting, namely people in the South.

3. Due to the fact that the **IFF** was essentially still a loan (it involves the frontloading of money borrowed against the stock exchange), it was proposed that it was not the best option to support, and that there are better alternatives on the table.

Mathew conceded that there may be better options out there, and in fact that more appropriate sources of innovative finance had been proposed in the past. However, he explained, the IFF was the only source of innovative FFD that the G8 had taken seriously, in the past they had never even listened to such proposals. This meant that the IFF was a real possibility, and therefore we should put our support behind it, especially in light of the approaching UK presidency of the G8.

2.3 PANEL 1: Acronym overload, what's the difference?

Moderator:

Paul Ladd (Christian Aid)

Panellists: -in order of their presentations

Elliot Harris (IMF)

John Weeks (School of Oriental and African Studies -SOAS)

Mansoob Murshed (Institute of Social Studies)

Mathew Martin.

This panel was asked to look at the policies behind the pursuit of a liberal globally integrated market economy from an **economic** perspective, looking at the policies theories and assumptions. To what extent do the various frameworks represent differentiated policy approaches and with what impact on their prognosis for success? Panellists were asked to comment on several key policy areas and methodologies and their relative efficacy in the context of the current economic realities.

2.3.1 PRESENTATION SUMMARIES¹⁴

- 2.3.2 **Elliot Harris:** Elliot began by briefly reflecting upon the changing perceptions of the development agenda and the 'new' approaches contained within it (MDGs and Monterrey, PRGF and streamlined conditionality, HIPC), as well as the linkages between the frameworks of the 'new' agenda. He then briefly outlined the 'success' of these initiatives to date (measured against their own criteria) before discussing the shortcomings, misconceptions and expectations. He concluded by giving his prognosis for the future and the role of civil society. The points that he emphasised most strongly in his presentation were that; the

¹⁴ Please note that in the main body of this report only summaries of the presentations are included. The full presentations (as provided by the speakers either prior to or after the conference) are provided in [APPENDIX III](#).

perceived conflict of interest between the objectives of growth and poverty reduction were in fact inaccurate, and that the frameworks are continuously evolving and becoming more effective over time but that progress may be incremental and hard to measure.

2.3.3 John Weeks: John's presentation was specifically on the purpose of the PRSP. He explained that there are major problems with the PRSP as it stands today: 'partnership' relations are the same as in pre-PRSP years, the extent of true participation is highly dubious, there is an inadequate focus on poverty. He then stated that major reforms were needed and listed the basic changes that he would like to see in order for the PRSP to facilitate true national ownership of development the strategy. These reforms included; a poverty reduction strategy with a *derivative* facilitating macro policy (as opposed to vice versa); a process of national debate to establish a development strategy, approved or rejected within the appropriate domestic political process; and finally, if substantial external involvement is necessary, this should be led by the United Nations Country Team as opposed to the creditors. The points that John emphasised most strongly in his presentation were that; streamlining is *not* an attractive goal, rather we should be pushing for the opposite, i.e. a greater division of labour, with many organisations debating the policy choices. Also; at present the PRSP was a macroeconomic conditionality framework with a poverty component, when it really should be a poverty reduction strategy with a derivative facilitating macroeconomic policy. John believes that PRSPs will only engender real positive change when they change the power relations and the way that we operate.

2.3.4 Mansoob Murshed: Mansoob's presentation was entitled 'Old wine in new bottles: Acronym Overload', and it highlighted three main areas. First he explained how the PRSP is 'conditionality in drag', i.e. conditionality in reverse, in that the recipient country still has to meet the IFI's agenda just as a job applicant has to fit in to the interviewer's agenda. He then discussed debt relief ranging from 'debt overhang' in the '80's, to HIPC; and the arbitration problems and ethical/moral issues regarding LIC debt. The third and final topic that he discussed was trade policy: from special and differential treatment, to TRIPS and agricultural subsidies. In addition to the 'conditionality in drag' issue, he emphasised that there was a big problem with current debt arbitration as the creditor is 'both judge and plaintiff', and that there are double standards in N/S trade liberalisation policies and practices. He concluded by saying that the current development frameworks follow pro-cyclical policies, e.g. when there are shocks the frameworks tighten the financial belt, rather than loosen it as they should. The result is that the problems are perpetuated/institutionalised and the country remains vulnerable to shocks.

2.3.5 PANEL 1; DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

Following the presentations the floor was opened to allow participants to put questions to the panel and discuss and debate the issues introduced in the presentations, as well as other important issues identified by the floor. The panellists were also invited to comment on each other's presentations. The different strands of the discussions and debates of this session (which if you remember, was designed to evaluate the policies and problems from a fundamentally **economic** perspective) have been grouped under the headings below:

- **What is pro-poor growth?:** In response to Elliot's comments on the compatibility of growth and poverty reduction, John Weeks explained that there was a need to explicitly define 'pro-poor growth' as opposed to just 'growth', because only the former can result in poverty reduction. In his opinion, pro-poor growth can only be achieved if macroeconomic policy programmes are measured by their poverty outcomes as opposed to just GDP growth, and such programmes must derive from clear poverty goals. He believes that equity within countries is a big problem, and that growth without wealth redistribution was *not* pro-poor, but rather just plain growth. Mansoob strongly disagrees with this stance, he believes that equity within countries was a big issue for *Middle Income Countries (MIC's)*, but less so for Low Income Countries (LIC's) who just need traditional economic growth. He is of the opinion that *global* inequality and wealth polarisation (N/S) was a far more important issue to address than the more localised inequalities. Paul Ladd then reminded us that achievement of the MDGs was not incompatible with the 'Northern rich' getting richer, and that both can happen at the same time.

- **Programme evaluation, and legitimacy of the IFIs:** Tying in with the issue of pro-poor growth, Mathew Martin questioned why IMF programmes were/are evaluated according to financial indicators as opposed to poverty reduction indicators? He praised the use of PSIAs, but categorically stated that they should not be carried out by the BWIs (Bretton Woods Institutions). Mansoob Murshed concurred, and questioned the legitimacy of the IMF with regards to working on poverty reduction. He explained that the Fund was never designed to deal in poverty reduction, and the only reason that they became involved in the first place was due to the increasing (negative) influence that macroeconomics was having on poverty levels. Caoimhe De Barra (Trocaire) called for the yielding of poverty reduction policy space by the IMF. She explained that the political space that they had granted countries (through participatory approaches and ownership) was useless, unless the fund provided space for others to advocate *alternative best practice policies*. She stated that at the moment, IFI policies were still the only ones on the table, and that this wasn't good enough!

- **PRSP conditionality, ownership, and the ethics of financial lending:** Elliot Harris and John Weeks disagreed strongly over the issue of IFI lending procedures. Elliot stated that JSAs (Joint Staff Assessments' – of the WB & IMF) should continue to play a key role in the lending process, and that they should *not* be de-linked between the Fund and the Bank (as had been suggested by various participants). He explained that the IFI's couldn't just accept 'any old PRSP'; they have to first be convinced that the PRSP will engender growth and poverty reduction. He said that this was not contradictory to the principles of ownership, and he likened it to someone deciding whether or not to lend money to a friend, and the lender wanting to know what the money will be spent on. He was though; quick to point out that this does not mean that countries cannot include policies (in their PRSP) that deviate from the preferred WB/IMF policies. John Weeks on the other hand, said that this was a ridiculous analogy, and to back up his point he explained that; he himself had taken out numerous loans from friends and banks (mortgages), but that he had *never* had a condition imposed upon him! He called for independent evaluations of PRSPs (as opposed to doing it via the JSA), the reports of which would then be sent to the IFI's. Conditionality, he stated, was in almost all walks of life a thing of the past, and so should it be in this case.

- **Streamlining of IFI conditionality:** Soren Kirk Jensen (Eurodad) made the point that the typology of streamlining is very mixed to date, and posed the question to Elliot Harris of what the experience of streamlining had been in 'early stabilisers' (e.g. Nicaragua). Elliot agreed that the typology is mixed, but that the IMF are really trying

to fulfil their mandate of only imposing structural conditionality if it is likely to have a direct impact on the macroeconomic framework, all other types of conditionality were *only* being done by the WB, according to Elliot. He also stated that one could see that the degree of (IMF) structural conditionality is lower in the 'post stabilisation' countries than it is in the 'early stabilisers', who are deemed to require a greater degree of IMF policy intervention in pursuit of stabilisation.

- **PRGF and its signalling role:** Peter With (Ibis/North-South Coalition) raised the issue of the 'off-track switch' (i.e. when a PRGF goes 'off-track' financial disbursements from many sources are generally suspended, which can be, and often is, disastrous for a country), which he stated needed to be 'dimmed'. Elliot Harris concurred, recommending that harmonisation between different disbursement mechanisms needs to be staggered, so that if a country goes 'off-track', all financial disbursements are *not* immediately cut off at the same time. Mathew Martin went one step farther, stating that what we need is not a dimmer switch, but rather a timer switch. That is, disbursement should be guaranteed, for example, for one year. Therefore if a country goes off-track, it will have time to prepare for the reduced level of financial assistance that it will receive as a consequence.
- **HIPC failure:** Jack Zulu Jones (Jubilee Zambia) put to the panel the question of why HIPC had failed so miserably in having a positive impact on Zambian poverty levels, and how can HIPC be made to work in countries such as Zambia? This question was not addressed directly, however Mathew Martin explained that the reason for HIPC failure was, in many cases (he used the example of Uganda), due to the country's vulnerability to shocks. He went on to say that; overall the initiative had freed a great deal of money, but that it couldn't work for all until all countries had a degree of protection against shocks.
- **Good governance & conflict:** Mansoob Murshed, Mathew Martin and Jack Zulu Jones (Jubilee Zambia) all articulated the general consensus that corruption and conflict were huge problems and massive constraints on growth in LICs. The former explained that; despite recent progress in producing quantified measurements of good governance, the issue is largely ignored, in spite of the fact that 20-30% of LIC's are at civil war. JZJ reiterated the point that Africa is rife with corruption, and Mathew elaborated further explaining that poorly managed transition from despotism to democracy often results in conflict, which in turn seriously affects economic growth.
- **Justice of the frameworks, global power relations, and 'new partnerships':** John Weeks stated that the current problem is on the whole a structural one; whereas thirty years ago there was an eclectic mix of independent creditors/donors and frameworks offering choice to recipient countries, now there is one hegemonic framework controlled by a few powerful countries/institutions. Therefore, the bargaining power of LICs and MICs has been significantly eroded over the last few decades. Giorgio Gualberti (CeSPI and Campagna Sdebitarsi) questioned Elliot Harris' notion of the 'new partnership' -(in his presentation Elliot had concluded by saying that development was about a 'new partnership')- asking what exactly this partnership was. Giorgio stated that for *him*; it was about justice, and that we must radically deal with the historical unequal power relations that under globalisation have been institutionalised to become the norm. He believes that cultural and historical justice should be the number one priority of this 'new partnership'. Mansoob Murshed concurred with both John and Giorgio, reiterating the point that the current global economic and political inequalities were a result of the last 25 years of globalisation and "the end of the North's development contract with the South". There was further reflection on how we as NGOs, should engage in such

partnerships. Soren Kirk Jensen raised the issue that we must be careful that we aren't arguing for *another* type of conditionality, that is, process conditionality (eg. approaches *must* be participatory etc.), and Mathew Martin explained that we cannot just 'bash the Fund and the Bank', but that we, as constituents, must attempt to exercise influence over our own national representatives who sit on the boards of such institutions.

2.4 PANEL 2: Evolving acronyms, progress or doublespeak?

Moderator:

Jean Somers (Debt and Development Coalition Ireland -DDCI)

Panellists: -in order of their presentations

Tim Kessler (Citizens Network on Essential Services -CNES)

Pete Hardstaff (World Development Movement –WDM)

Roberto Bissio (Third World Institute –IteM)

Sarah Bradshaw (International Cooperation for Development –ICD)

Alex Wilks (Bretton Woods Project –BWP) (in order of their presentations)

The panel was asked to consider the **political** dimensions of the frameworks, institutions, and intentions. What the 'new development agenda' first built around HIPC, then PRSP, then Monterrey, and now failed Doha, has really changed in terms development thinking and practice. Does it reflect incremental normative change and progress? Or does it reflect increased attention to public relations and a deliberate attempt to dress an old wolf in new sheep's clothing. Is the multitude of acronyms a genuine attempt at differentiation between the roles of different actors; a reflection of confusion and incompetence; or a deliberate attempt at obfuscation?

2.4.1 PRESENTATION SUMMARIES ¹⁵

2.4.2 **Tim Kessler**¹⁶: The title of Tim's presentation was 'Does the PRSP even Matter?'. He explained that there are numerous debates over the *quality* of PRSP's (The extent to which it is; pro-poor, participatory, innovative etc.), whereas the precursor debate should be about *whether it matters at all*, regardless of how good it is. If the PRSP lives up to it's billing in terms of country ownership and centrality in national development planning, then why are the *traditional* policy levers (controlled by the BWIs) still in place? Why do lending conditions contain policy actions not identified in the PRSP? Tim went on to explain that the BWIs still use policy levers which are in some cases more influential than ever and he identified and discussed three main levers: the CPIA, CAS¹⁷, and traditional conditionality. He concluded with the notion that; although the PRSP rhetoric says some good things, in reality it is 'business as usual', and we (CSOs) should be cautious that involvement in the PRSP process doesn't become more of a distraction, than an opportunity to influence policy.

2.4.3 **Pete Hardstaff**: Pete's presentation mainly related to trade policy, as this is his area of expertise. He began by addressing the question of why we have so many development initiatives? He cited past failures and the inability of 'us' to learn the lessons from these failures, and 'our' *need* for the 'next solution' (in order to generate a feeling of momentum) as the main reasons for the multitude of initiatives. He also listed the political motivations behind the following initiatives: DDA, HIPC, IFF, MDGs, PRGF, PRSPs. Pete then explored whether two of the main initiatives on the 'new agenda', the MDGs and the Doha agenda, were *really* 'new' in terms of development thinking and practice. With regards to

¹⁵ Please note that in the main body of this report only summaries of the presentations are included. The full presentations (as provided by the speakers either prior to or after the conference) are provided in [APPENDIX III](#).

¹⁶ Please note that Tim stood in for us at very short notice due to the unfortunate last minute withdrawal of Nancy Alexander who could not travel due to poor health. We would like to once again thank him for his impromptu presentation and valuable contribution as part of the panel.

¹⁷ Please see full presentation in appendix III. for an explanation of these BWI policy levers.

the former he concluded that it was not a new idea, but rather that a new degree of political importance had been attached to the idea. Whereas the latter could be considered a new era in that some agenda items had been generated by the developing countries, however many of these items were ignored by the developing countries once everyone was around the table. He went on to explain that the development agenda had changed over the past ten years in that there was more CSO scrutiny, stronger developing country voices, and greater conflict between the approaches of the big institutions. Pete concluded with the question of the intentions of the architects of the acronyms, by stating that on the whole, they are created on an ad-hoc basis, but then “spun as part of a coherent and strategic package”.

2.4.4 **Roberto Bissio:**¹⁸ Roberto began with a political assessment of the MDGs. He noted that progress had been slow/minimal (60-70 countries have registered no progress to date) and that the prospects of achieving them did not look good. He explained that the initiative was limited in that it doesn’t extend beyond LICs to MICs, and that it is unfair in that it “lets governments off the hook” on their previous commitments. He stated that in fact the entire system is unfair in that despite all of the development initiatives, there was still a huge financial net flow from the South to the North. He explained that there was a system of double standards in operation with countries such as the US, France and Germany breaking the stringent financial rules that are applied to LICs; “why aren’t these northern countries subject to structural adjustment!”. The point that he emphasised the most in his presentation was that despite all of the initiatives of the ‘new agenda’ (many of which are politically motivated/ influenced in order to serve the interest of the wealthy and powerful in the North) there was still a huge power imbalance, and that development thinking cannot really change until this power imbalance is addressed. He concluded by explaining that there is a global political battle ensuing between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ -(the oppressed), and that this is exemplified by the proliferation of South-South coalitions and partnerships. He considers this a wonderful development (and had not seen anything like it in thirty years) that is a really positive start in the battle to address the aforementioned power imbalance.

2.4.5 **Sarah Bradshaw:**¹⁹ As a gender expert, Sarah’s presentation related specifically to the gender dimensions of PRSPs. She began by raising the important question of: *why gender should be addressed in PRSPs; is it a means to growth, or an end in itself?* She explained the problems that she had encountered with the gender dimensions of the Nicaraguan and Honduran PRSPs, in that they had not moved beyond the conceptions of relative and absolute poverty to assess *secondary poverty* as well. That is, they only assess poverty up to the front door, whilst ignoring the poverty dimensions within households, where gender imbalances are often proportionate to poverty imbalances. She explained that although the PRSP attempts to address gender imbalances by targeting female headed households which are considered to be the poorest of the poor, in reality women in male headed household are often

¹⁸ We were unfortunately unable to obtain a full written up copy of Roberto’s presentation for inclusion in the appendix. Therefore the summary given here may be slightly longer than some of the others for whom the full presentation is provided in the appendix.

¹⁹ Please note that Sarah stood in for us at very short notice due to the unfortunate last minute withdrawal of Mariama Williams who could not travel due to poor health. We would like to once again thank her for her impromptu presentation and valuable contribution as part of the panel. In light of the short notice at which she was asked to step in, Sarah had no time to prepare a presentation therefore as she pointed out at the beginning of her talk, her speech was more akin to a list of comments rather than a formal presentation.

more vulnerable due to a lack of access/control over the household resources. She concluded by saying that the intentions behind the inclusion of gender in the PRSP are extremely ambiguous (returning to the question that she had raised at the beginning of the presentation), and that the feminist movement would be unlikely to get behind campaigns for further engendering of PRSPs until they are convinced of the PRSP architects and advocates *true* intentions, and the PRSPs likelihood of success in addressing gender related problems.

2.4.6 Alex Wilks: Alex began by acknowledging that with regards to the production line of multiple acronyms, we (CSOs) are often guilty of *playing* the architects 'smoke and mirrors game' without ever getting to the true root of the problem; and that the continuing opacity of new frameworks *must* be somewhat intentional on the part of the architects. He went on to discuss the role of the IFIs in tackling poverty, stating that; the expertise is not sufficient (there are only two poverty specialists in the Fund), that they operate in an ad-hoc manner before putting great political spin on the new frameworks they produce (this mirrored Pete's comments earlier), and that we must be careful about pushing these institutions in to dealing with poverty, in that we are in fact empowering them to make policy decisions which they may not be best placed to make! He explained that; before we continue with advocacy, we need to decide what we think IFI's should and shouldn't do (e.g. should the WB really be a poverty 'knowledge bank'?). Alex believed that it is impossible to truly assess the institutions motivations and intentions due to the fact that their operating processes are so undemocratic and un-transparent; he explained that we must push for change in this respect. He remarked that; with the approaching 60th and the 5th anniversaries of the BWI's and the PRSP respectively, it was time for us to stand back and think about how NGO advocacy campaigns should move on. He concluded by saying that in light of the ambiguity surrounding the institutions true intentions and motivations, and the illegitimate nature of their control over the development agenda, what was needed was an opening up of policy space, rather than the inception of new frameworks and acronyms (this mirrored the point made by Caoimhe De Barra in the first panel).

2.4.7 PANEL 2; DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

Following the presentations the floor was opened in order to allow participants to put questions to the panel and discuss and debate the issues introduced in the presentations, as well as new issues identified by the floor. The panellists were also invited to comment on each other's presentations. The different strands of the discussions and debates of this session (which if you remember, was designed to evaluate the policies and problems from a fundamentally *political* perspective) have been grouped under the headings below:

- **The evolving development agenda: the declining importance of debt/IFI issues at the expense of trade:** Polly Jones (Jubilee debt campaign) raised the fact that recently trade campaign in the UK has become very powerful, whereas the debt/IFI campaign has dropped back and is receiving decreasing levels of attention. Peter Hardstaff explained that this was a response to the institutions more aggressively pushing their free trade agenda. This he explained, was being done (by governments and some NGOs) through computable general equilibrium estimates (CGE) that show that trade is the most important means to growth, and therefore to 'development' also. On the other side of the coin, aid is talked down as a route to 'development' with increasing attention being placed on countries' limited absorption

capacity. Pete believes that this is a nonsensical comparison in that CGE models are highly spurious, and you cannot compare the effects of aid and trade in such a way. However, he did explain that there are routes into the IFI/debt debates via the trade agenda in that; IFI conditionality on trade liberalisation has caused many highly documented problems for developing countries. Tim Kessler elaborated upon this point by explaining that there is growing evidence to show that some IFI conditionalities amount to unilateral trade concession in the context of the WTO. For example, conditional service liberalisation requirements in some IFI loans have imposed GATS commitments upon the country in question, even though the government of that country was never involved in the negotiation of the GATS documents. Peter Hardstaff concluded his earlier comment by making the point that trade liberalisation is *not* just about the WTO, but also about the great lack of coherence between the institutions; if there was coherence then the BWIs would not deal with trade at all! Therefore, this coherence debate is another way to push the increasingly unfashionable issues of debt/IFIs up the agenda through the sexier issue of trade.

- **Coherence:** The discussions on this issue really tie-in with much of what was discussed in the above paragraph. In response to a question from Peter Lanzet (Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst e.V.) on the likelihood of the success of the trade 'cartels', Roberto Bissio explained that -(Roberto had mentioned trading blocs as part of his presentation earlier)- such 'coalitions', as he prefers to call them, have come about *partly*²⁰ in response to the coherence issue. He stated that what developing countries want from the powers that be are for them to stick to clearly defined mandates with no institutional overlap (e.g. the IMF dealing with balance of payments problems, *not* trade and poverty; the WTO dealing with trade, *not* essential services; etc.). He went on to explain that at present this is not the case as the ball is thrown back and forth between the institutions (e.g. trade issues – the IFIs blame governments and the WTO for lack of access, whereas the WTO blames IFIs for enforcing unilateral liberalisation and opening up of markets). Roberto concluded by stating that the UN is the only place where ultimately all of these conflicts could be resolved.
- **World Bank mandate:** This issue ties in closely with that of coherence. In response to a brief anecdote used by Alex Wilks in his presentation –Alex had explained how Jim Wolfensohn (head of the World bank) had casually drawn up the CDF on a scrap of paper whilst enjoying a round of golf on his ranch- Elliot Harris retorted that; it was a good thing that Jim does continually reassess policies even if it results in new acronyms, and that; we shouldn't worry so much about the number of acronyms, but rather how they approach problems, and what they actually *do*. Alex responded to this by explaining that he wasn't personally attacking Wolfensohn, rather the anecdote was used to make a point about the overstretched and ad-hoc nature of the WB mandate. He explained that the Bank 'has its finger in too many pies', and that they have *insufficient expertise* in some of the areas that they work in. The result of this he said, was that there were so many attempts to rationalise scope of the mandate, which in turn led to many useless conferences and much consternation. Alex also raised concerns over 'thought police' within the bank and the lack of space for alternative, innovative, and oppositional voices within the institution.
- **Loans Vs. Grants:** Pieter van Veenen (HIVOS) raised concerns over the issue of aid being watered down in order to make way for more lending. Roberto Bissio agreed that this was a big concern in that; much lending was going towards social

²⁰ Roberto stated that the other uniting factor was common opposition to US trade policy amongst countries with normally very diverse interests.

investment, which in turn would not generate the growth that would be needed to repay the loan. Therefore, such lending often leads to unsustainable debts. Alex Wilks further elaborated on the debate explaining that it is a very complex issue and that you can appreciate both sides of the argument. He recalled the events of an IDA mid-term review meeting three weeks prior: the US treasury was pushing for the WB to increase its proportion of grants, whereas Clare Short and the British government were resisting the WB holding grant money. There were three main reasons for this Alex explained; the first was an issue of coherence in that the UN is the institution recognised as providing development grants (whereas the WB has traditionally provided loans, which is unsurprising considering that it is a commercial bank) and therefore by providing grants the WB would be overlapping with the UN. Secondly, the Bank could not finance a grant programme itself and therefore they would have greater dependency on the richer countries of the world. Finally, there were more technical arguments on why it was not a good idea (e.g. recurrent costs, matching grants to the countries relevant needs, etc.). Alex explained that this would be a hot topic over the coming year, and that there was a great opportunity for debate when the IDA replenishment negotiations for the WB start up again next year (2004). He stressed that NGOs *need to get their act together and get a position* on this; 'is it a good or bad idea for 50% of IDA money to go towards grants?' He also stressed that this advocacy must be done in close consultation with Southern NGO colleagues.

- **If current PRSP policy prescriptions are not working, then what would 'we' like to see in the PRSP?:** In response to the comments in Tim's presentation about the appropriateness and legitimacy of some of the policy actions contained in PRSPs, Elliot Harris challenged Tim to identify what changes he would like to see with regards to the PRSP. Tim began by explaining that; policies that were not discussed in the participatory drafting process, should not be made central components of the PRSP document. He gave the example of Mexico where privatisation was included in the final document despite the fact that it had not been discussed in the process beforehand, it was an 'add-on'. This privatisation then failed because there were no counterpart policy actions on how to maximise the potential of the privatisation. Echoing and elaborating upon Soren's earlier comments in the first panel, Tim also questioned the logic of the IMF's use of process conditionality (i.e. making a participatory process in drafting PRSPs a lending condition); "if the PRSPs are truly country owned and participatory, then why should a country have to make a compact with the IFIs to ensure this, surely the country should be accountable to its citizens alone?" Peter Hardstaff concurred and reiterated this point.
- **Are the MDGs enough?:** Jean Merckaert (CCFD) stated that he believed that the MDGs are not ambitious enough, and that we should not be happy with *just* halving the worlds hungry by 2015. He believes that we have become so cynical and desperate that we are scared to be ambitious. Pete Hardstaff concurred, explaining that the MDGs should just be considered as the *first* stepping-stone to poverty eradication, not the final answer.
- **The power of discourse:** Pete Hardstaff made the point that control over the language and discourse equates to power. He stated that; those who set the discourse agenda are on the whole; white, male, and native English-speaking economists, and that the development industry must disempower itself if it is to work. He said that he wanted to go further than John Weeks had done earlier that day (John had stated that 'we' don't have the final expertise) to say that *we don't have the expertise full stop!* There was general consensus on this point, and Sarah Bradshaw made a point of congratulating Pete later on in the session.

2.5 BRIEF SUMMARY AND REFLECTIONS UPON THE KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM DAY 1

Jacqueline Woodman (Eurodad Coordinator) set the mood and tone of the conference by explaining the theme underlying the title :**Ideology and Evolving Acronyms: progress or doublespeak?** In order to explain the concept, and to stress that we must ensure that our work is constantly contributing to our end-goal of tangible and lasting positive change, Jacqueline used the following analogy:

"It's easy to lose sight of the forest, when we are busy examining the acronyms on any particular tree. Meanwhile, the facts speak for themselves; there are bulldozers destroying many of the principles, and many of the people for whom we are fighting."

Mathew Martin began the conference proper with an engaging keynote presentation centred on the question of **how to finance the perpetual production of development goals and initiatives?** In his presentation Mathew looked specifically at the **MDG's**; the prospects of attaining them, the apparent financing gaps, and what CSO's can do to mobilise support for the MDG's. In the subsequent discussion and debate with the floor many people (including Mathew) questioned the logic behind, and the clarity of Goal 8 of the MDGs; what exactly is meant by 'a global partnership for development'? The discussion continued with Mathew responding to concerns over Northern CSO accountability by stressing the importance of Southern monitoring of Northern CSO spending in the South; and with him defending the IFF claiming that it was the first initiative of its kind that had been taken seriously by governments, and was therefore worthy of 'our' support.

Following presentations²¹ by Elliot Harris, John Weeks and Mansoob Murshed in the **first panel: 'Acronym overload, what's the difference?'**; a vibrant debate ensued. The key points in the discussion can be classified under the following headings²²: *what is pro-poor growth?; programme evaluation, and legitimacy of the IFIs; PRSP conditionality, ownership, and the ethics of financial lending; streamlining of IFI conditionality; PRGF and its signalling role; HIPC failure; good governance & conflict; Justice of the frameworks, global power relations, and 'new partnerships'.*

In the afternoon of day 1 the **second panel: 'Evolving acronyms, progress or doublespeak?'** began with presentations from: Tim Kessler, Pete Hardstaff, Roberto Bissio, Sarah Bradshaw, and Alex Wilks.²³ These presentations catalysed an extensive discussion centred around the following points²⁴: *the evolving development agenda: the declining importance of debt/IFI issues at the expense of trade; coherence; World Bank mandate; loans vs. grants; If current PRSP policy prescriptions are not working, then what would 'we' like to see in the PRSP?; 'Are the MDGs enough?'; the power of discourse.*

The first panel was loosely designed to focus and comment on the economic efficiency of the frameworks and practices, whereas the second panel was to look at the more political dimensions of the evaluation; what are the true intentions and motivations of the

²¹ These presentations are summarised in section 2.3 and the full presentations are given in [APPENDIX III](#).

²² There is a paragraph on each of these headings in section 2.3.5

²³ These presentations are summarised in section 2.4 and the full presentations are given in appendix III.

²⁴ There is a paragraph on each of these headings in section 2.4.7

architects and actors? Our panellists, the pre-conference briefing that they were given, and the presentations that they shared with us, reflect this intended loose division of perspective between the two panels. However, as becomes evident upon observing the panel discussions, the economic and political perspectives are by no means mutually exclusive, but rather intrinsically interlinked.

An example of this symbiotic relationship is that: one cannot accurately assess the economic merits of the IMF's Poverty reduction and Growth Facility (e.g. are the economic targets appropriate?) for any given country, without understanding the political context of the country; is the government fiscally responsible? Is the government representative of the people as a whole? Is there likely to be / has there been internal violent conflict that would affect the country's economic performance under the PRGF? This appears to be a rather obvious point, and a certain degree of crossover between the differing perspectives of the two panels was to be expected. However, such crossover is still important to note in that the extent to which for example, the discussion in the first so-called 'economic' panel drifted towards the political and process centred issues of coherence, legitimacy, governance, and justice, only serves to highlight *the need for a holistic approach* when tackling these problems and assessing development frameworks. To repeat the conclusion of the above paragraph; *the economic and political perspectives are by no means mutually exclusive, but rather intrinsically interlinked.*

In conclusion of this summary, it can be said that some of the main points of general consensus that arose from the discussions of day 1 are that: the 'on-track' / 'off-track' switch of the PRGF should not be the *immediate* valve that dictates nearly all of the flow of financial disbursements to a country (whether loans or grants), there is the need for a 'dimmer' or 'timer' switch; also, that 'we' must be aware of '*process conditionality*' as well as the more direct and obvious types of conditionality (this point was mentioned by different people throughout the day); and finally, that the apparent failure / limited success of many of the frameworks under the 'new development agenda' comes down to the issue of *power relations* and the diminishing bargaining power of the smaller nations due to the institutional hegemony of international bodies that has come about in this epoch of globalisation.

The major point of disagreement was between John Weeks (and others), and Elliot Harris of the IMF; the former believes that true country-ownership is not possible while the IFIs continue to monitor PRSP policies and 'strongly advise' governments with regards to PRSP and policy formulation, whereas the latter believes the opposite.

3. KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE DISCUSSION AND DEBATES OF DAY 2

Section 3 considers each of the sessions in turn (first the panel and then strategy shops), before summarising and reflecting upon the debates and discussions of the whole day at the end of the section.

3.1 PANEL 3: “Forget justice...this is economics”?

Moderator:
Alex Wilks

Panellists: -in order of their presentations
Tuya Altangerel (CIVICUS)
Max Lawson (Oxfam GB)
Jean Somers (Debt and Development Coalition Ireland -DDCI)
Angela Wood (Consultant)

This panel was asked to assess the range of our own advocacy strategies; from 'constructive engagement' on methodology, to vocal protest on illegitimacy. The session was designed to build on the findings of the previous day to consider the implications for advocacy strategies. Panellists were asked to consider the efficacy, virtues and failings of the diverse advocacy styles, and the respective roles of different advocates.

3.1.1 PRESENTATION SUMMARIES

3.1.2: Tuya Altangerel: In light of the recently convened and somewhat controversial Joint Facilitation Committee (JFC²⁵), Tuya Altangerel (who represented CIVICUS, the secretariat of the JFC) discussed whether the CSO community should engage with IFIs, and if so; when, and how? Tuya explained that CIVICUS is a membership organisation of civil society organisations working to promote citizen participation and civil society around the world. One of the programmes CIVICUS runs is working to strengthen participatory governance. They recognize that civil society engages with governing institutions on three levels- micro (local), meso (policy) and macro (governance). She continued; the main reason we took this up was because of our efforts to try and promote relevant, effective and meaningful spaces for civil society engagement with governing institutions at the local, national and global levels. Tuya explored the ways CSOs choose to engage with the WB: with regard to the World Bank we can see three broad trends on the part of CSOs. Some have opted for a position of principal non-engagement. This is a position CIVICUS defends and advocates for the rights of organisations who seek to make their voice heard from outside of formal engagements. Yet other CSOs have what we might call a selective engagement approach. Such CSOs make a decision on a case-by-case basis on whether engagement is appropriate. There is also a third trend which we might call comprehensive engagement. These are CSOs who believe that like it or not the

²⁵ The JFC is a recently formed World Bank - Civil Society Initiative which has 14 CSO's participating. This report has described it as 'somewhat controversial' due to the fact that in the autumn of 2003 it received some criticism from a few NGOs due to the alleged lack of mandate from CSOs worldwide, especially in the South.

World Bank has enormous power to influence the course of development in several countries around the world and are engaging from either a perspective of damage control or who believe that the limited possibilities that exist for the WB to add positive value must be pursued. Thus, advocating and working for the Bank to improve and make more effective its engagement with civil society made sense, notwithstanding the considerable challenges that CIVICUS anticipated. Tuya reported back the proceedings of the first JFC meeting (held on the 27th - 29th October with 14 CSOs participating), explaining that the participants agreed that the JFC is a consultative and transitional body to facilitate greater space for dialogue and engagement between the WB and civil society. Tuya stated that the space for engagement with the World Bank has been created, and now we need to consult with wider spectrum of CSOs whether it is appropriate for the civil society to use this space for dialogue. Also, we would like to receive guidance from CSOs, Southern and Northern alike, on how to best utilize this space for dialogue. In October 27-29th meetings, the JFC participants agreed that in the next months, the JFC could facilitate the following three activities, subject to approval and endorsement from wider civil society:

- Assessment (independent, CSO-led assessment on past WB-CSO engagement)
- Policy dialogue (on WB's policy issues, linked to the assessment)
- Capacity-building (of Southern CSOs- many CSOs believe that this should be an independent, CSO-led endeavour)

Tuya also stated in the coming months the JFC SCOs will consult with and seek guidance from wider civil society on whether it is appropriate for the JFC to facilitate the above activities, and if so, then the best ways of organizing/ developing them. Tuya stated that we have a JFC listserv running, which we would like to utilize to hold discussions and consultations on the JFC issues. Interested organizations and individuals can subscribe to the listserv by e-mailing to tuya@civicus.org. CIVICUS website (www.civicus.org) will also have updated information on the JFC activities.

3.1.3: Max Lawson²⁶: For the first part of his presentation Max told a story about Honduras and the IMF, in order to illustrate an example of successful advocacy. He explained that the result of Honduras having been 'off-track' for the last two years (after failing to reach an agreement with the IMF) was a loss of US\$ 400 million worth of debt relief and budget support from the IDB. The disagreement with the fund has been about the public sector wage bill (especially teacher salaries). The situation was very typical: the government is trapped, on the one side there are the teachers unions and very strongly organised politicised social movements, on the other side is the IMF who have refused to budge for the past two years. Max, who was in Honduras at the same time as the IMF a couple of weeks prior, went to see the Deputy Minister of Finance who was very clear about the fact that the Honduran authorities had a choice between an economic crisis, and a political one. Max went on to explain that there were three main people involved in this story: Nestor -head one of the main teachers' Unions, who had staged many protests across Honduras over the past year; Mauritsio -a CSO economist (works for FOSDEH²⁷) who is somewhere in the middle of the debate but doesn't believe that the country should be off-track just because of

²⁶ We were unfortunately unable to obtain a full written up copy of Max's presentation for inclusion in the appendix (although some of the powerpoint slides are included) therefore the summary given here may be slightly longer than some of the others where the full presentation is provided in the appendix.

²⁷ Honduran NGO network who work on macroeconomic issues and produced the cartoon used by max in his powerpoint presentation (see [APPENDIX III](#).)

this issue; and the final person was Max himself –working on behalf of Oxfam who have been campaigning globally to get the IMF to deliver on its PRGF and fiscal flexibility promises as well as campaigning for debt relief. Max concluded the story by explaining that it looks like the IMF is going to back down. Why? Where does the pressure come from? Essentially the pressure was political; three donors and the IMF all explained to Max that the Unions had threatened them that there would be similar scenes to those seen in Bolivia, this scared them. Max explained that Mauritsio had made some clever solutions to find ways around the standoff, and Oxfam had used its power and access to officials (e.g. the deputy finance minister). Therefore, Max stated, a combination of influence from different sources, had resulted in successful advocacy.

Max used the final part of his presentation to discuss some fundamental advocacy principles. Quoting John Clarke: “don’t just do something, stand there” – i.e. ‘we’ are not just there to provide services, but to enact change- Max said that we should take this as a starting principle for our work. He went on to discuss the extremes between the debate on whether / to what extent we should or shouldn’t engage with the IFIs,²⁸ and he concluded with a list of final thoughts: know what you want from your advocacy; don’t be compromised by your tactics; don’t be compromised by your principles; do you feel too comfortable?; no excuse for ignorance -you must have fresh evidence; see the wood not the trees -the language battle is still being fought, (e.g. why don’t we discuss equality); ‘What difference have I made to the lives of poor women and men?’ -a question that we should all be asking ourselves.

3.1.4 Jean Somers: Jean began by explaining that she considered ‘our work’ in terms of campaigning, and where we put emphasis among the different elements/activities of this campaigning was dependent upon the overall framework used. She discussed issues surrounding the conflict ‘vs.’ consensus debate: What is the nature of the relationship that we have with the decision makers that we are advocating to? Are we partners? Are we adversaries (and if so are we upfront or undercover)? We must question ourselves as to whether we have the same ultimate goals as the decision makers (e.g. poverty reduction), and more importantly do we have the same beliefs about the best way to achieve these goals? Jean warned against the dangers of the ‘false consensus’, which has been an issue recently due to the decision-makers’ co-option of our language and agenda. She then went on to consider the questions surrounding dialogue (the underpinning of CSO advocacy/lobbying), explaining that whatever type of dialogue is used, it is very important to have an ex-ante understanding of your *own* weaknesses before entering in to dialogue with decision makers. Jean flagged up various important questions that we should keep in the forefront of our minds; ‘how can ‘cosy’ and un-transparent dialogue be avoided?’, and ‘What are the rules of engagement for our advocacy interactions?’. Also; we must consider when to engage and when not to engage; how important is it that the lines of dialogue remain continually open? Jean explained her ‘law of advocacy’ and stated that there is a danger that CSOs can assume the role of think tanks as opposed to real advocates who exact change. Jean concluded with a discussion of legitimacy, explaining that Northern CSO *involvement* was legitimate, but *there needs to be greater southern participation* before all of our positions can be seen as legitimate.

3.1.5: Angela Wood: Angela’s presentation was entitled: ‘*Advocacy...where next?*’

²⁸ See diagram in Max’s PPT presentation ([APPENDIX III.](#)) entitled: ‘To engage or not to engage?’

She began by explaining that the most important thing is that we are clear about our message(s); there is a need to move away from 'their' (i.e. officials') technical language and go back to basics, that we always need to keep one eye on the 'bigger picture', and that we need to be more strategic about who we deliver our messages to (in order to avoid the 'dialogue of the deaf'). Also, that messages need to be robust, built on good evidence and good analysis, and that we must assume some social responsibility and be more thorough in our prior assessments of the implications of what we are saying. She stated that we need to consider the extent to which we are setting our own agenda, are we being proactive, or merely reactive? We need to take in to account that there are now many more voices; do we all have the same message, should our goal be to all unite behind one message? She concluded on the issue of NGO cooperation, examining whether there was too much competition between Northern NGO's, and asking us to reassess and define our relationship with southern NGOs (donor and partner relationship, provider and user of information, colleagues..?).

3.1.6 PANEL 3; DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

Following the presentations the floor was then asked to spend 5 minutes discussing (with those sitting around them) the issues that were raised in the presentations as well as any new issues that they desired to introduce. The different strands of the discussions and debates on NGO advocacy and campaigning have been grouped under the headings below:

North – South CSO dynamics; justice, representation and legitimacy: John Weeks explained that he had hoped that there would be more of a discussion of justice, pointing out that the word was only used four times during the presentations. He asked; what are the ethics and morality of NGO engagement in developing countries? This question was not addressed directly, however Gino Barsella (Sdebitarsi) strongly agreed with John that Justice was one of the main issues, and he stated that 'we' are still maintaining a colonialist frame of mind in that 'we' are not *really* listening to the wants and needs of the South. He stated that "There are *no* Southern voices at this conference!".²⁹ He stated that there was a need for 'us' to have 'the courage to listen to people from the South, and to give them space at conferences like this!'

Later on in the session Elena McCollim responded to Gino's comments with what she called a 'correction'. She explained that there *are* Southern voices at the conference (she was one of them), and therefore it was dangerous to make blanket statements from Northerners about lack of Southern voices. Elena went on to explain that the JFC had also been criticised due to lack of Southern participation, but that this is not exactly accurate. She said that it is important to point out that: in fact the JFC expansion process of last spring and summer had as an explicit criterion the need to have a preponderance of members from Southern-based civil society networks. In practice, a number of global -but not for that reason any the less Southern- oriented-networks ended up joining the JFC, most of which happen to have their headquarters in Northern capitals. Would this mean that they do not represent their Southern members and stakeholders? Presumably -(hopefully!)- not. She stated that; yes, it is desirable and essential to include more Southern groups, preferably those that (like CIVICUS whom Tuya was representing) are actually headquartered in Southern countries. However, it is also important not to get caught in a dynamic of lamenting that "we" are not including enough Southerners, when

²⁹ Please note that there were Southern participants participating in the conference.

Southerners are sitting right in the same room. To do so is to risk making that same Southern presence invisible. It also behoves Southerners to speak up in their own right and address the same issue. Max Lawson elaborated on the issue stating that we shouldn't be ashamed to speak out on Southern issues just because we are from the North and because we may have access to information that those in the South may not. He explained that there are many class dynamics in the South, and that we shouldn't idolise the South. He also said; that although it may be difficult to say, it must be acknowledged that there are just as many issues about representation, corruption, and dubious incentives in CSOs in the South as there are in the North.

Justin Alexander elaborated on issues of strategic selectivity (first Raised by Angela Wood as part of her presentation) with regards to Northern NGOs representing Southern voices. He explained that such selectivity has been a real issue in the debt campaign, and that when he worked at Jubilee 2000 (three years ago) there was a very clear decision to ignore the Southern campaigns calling for the recognition of the odious and illegitimate nature of 3W debt. He explained that despite the wishes of their Southern counterparts, the Northern NGOs really wanted to restrict the agenda to issues of debt sustainability because they believed that this would be more successful in engendering support. Justin went on to raise the question of whether we should be empowering Southern CSOs to *actually make decisions*, as opposed to just listening to their voices, and then 'us' deciding what the campaign agenda should actually be. Justin provided a recent example that illustrated how divergent N-S opinions can actually be, and are therefore hard to reconcile; he told of how he is currently campaigning for recognition of the odious nature of Iraqi debt, and that although many Iraqis are happy about this, when actually speaking to them many have said that Northern governments *should actually be paying them* compensation for lending to Saddam, rather than them paying money to the North. Max Lawson applauded Justin's call for joint decision-making, explaining that working closely with Southern (equal) partners on projects really opens ones eyes. He stated that the ignorance issue (which he raised in his presentation), isn't just about facts and technical things, it's also about politics and power relations, and this includes power relations within the NGO world. Max also said that there is no excuse for being naïve in this business. Jean Somers was not in total agreement about the problematic nature of the aforementioned selectivity issue raised by Angela and Justin. She believes that it is not a problem in that; different (Northern) groups will select different (Southern) points of view depending on their agenda, but that generally there will be a group who advocates for *each* of the varying opinions. However, she did warn against the dangers of 'us' making claims *beyond* the Southern links that 'we' have got, and we must be open and transparent about the process of representing the South. Also, she explained that we must be careful in not having a totally extractive relationship with our Southern partners. Jean concluded by saying that we really need to assess the existing multi-layer relationships in terms of legitimacy, and we mustn't be afraid to point out weaknesses and address them.

The final issue that was raised as part of this topic of N-S dynamics was that of obligatory engagement. Angela Wood recalled rumours that she had heard of certain Northern NGOs who had been forcing Southern partners into relationships on PRSP issues, and they were using project funding as a lever. She explained that the Bretton Woods project (BWP: an NGO), like Eurodad, did *not* fund partners from the South, therefore when Southern groups have engaged with them, it was due to their respect for their work, *not* out of any sense of obligation in order to receive funding. Therefore, Angela stated; the best way to remedy this problem was by *moving away from a funding relationship with Southern partners*, to one of solidarity.

To engage or not to engage, that is the question?: Roberto Bissio is of the opinion that as a general rule of thumb, we should adopt the principle of *not* self-censoring, that is, we should accept the opportunities presented to us to make our voices heard. He explained that after years of advocating for a forum housing a greater spectrum of voices and more space for dialogue, it doesn't make sense to *not* go to meetings now that we are actually being invited. Roberto explained that by never engaging, you could be very easily misconstrued as just wanting to be in opposition for opposition's sake. However, he explained, at the same time one must be aware of the political nature of dialogues, it must be considered case by case, and sometimes it may be better *not* to participate. Rudi de Meyer elaborated on this last point, explaining that we must assess the decision makers' strategies when they are engaging with us, rather than just looking at the content of what is put on the table. Jean Somers also agreed with Rudi's points that the politics are very important, and that there is a need for more studies on the strategic nature of the institutions, and their engagement with 'us'. Rudy, Jean and Max Lawson also explained that the best approach for success was a combination of action on the street, with the advocacy as part of the same campaign, this strategic coordination of campaigning techniques was considered to be extremely important.

'Sleeping with the enemy?'³⁰ - Can the JFC work, and if so how?: Tuya Altangerel said that they (i.e. CIVICUS) are aware of the criticisms levelled at the JFC regarding legitimacy and representation, and that they *did* consider whether it was worth engaging with the Bank, in light of all of the past failures in this respect. She explained that; these concerns are legitimate, however it comes back to the question of whether we should attempt to protect the space for dialogue, and if not, then what happens next? She continued by explaining that certain JFC participants strongly believe that given the current political climate -i.e. growing concern of undermining of multilateralism, curtailment of civil liberties and undermining of social and economic justice in the post-September 11 world- it is very important to maintain a dialogue, even if the dialogue is about past failures. Also; CIVICUS recognised that these trends threaten to close up some of the spaces for civil society intervention in intergovernmental institutions, including the World Bank, particularly given the prospect of a new President at the Bank in the not too distant future who may be less open to civil society engagement. She said that; the specific topics up for discussion in JFC had not been concretely decided but that PRSPs, and infrastructure and trade liberalisation have been suggested by current JFC constituency as one option. This is subject to further consultation and endorsement from wider civil society.

Alex Wilks retorted by expressing the concerns of BWP and himself in that he believes that the JFC has *major shortcomings*. He explained that they -(BWP) felt that the JFC were obliged to communicate and coordinate positions, strategies and tactics with a large number of people in light of the fact that implicitly, they are representing all CSOs to the high level representatives in the bank. Alex believes that they have failed to do this, and in order to illustrate his point he requested a show of hands from the floor of those that had, by the end of September, *even heard of the JFC* (and their forthcoming meeting with the Bank in October). No one raised his or her hands.³¹ Alex explained that; yes, of course the main constituency is in the

³⁰ Nb. The phrase 'sleeping with the enemy' is not in any way a reflection of Eurodad's opinion of the JFC and its relationship with the World Bank. Rather, it is used as the heading for this section in an attempt to capture the essence of the debate over the role and validity of the JFC.

³¹ Certain participants have requested that we note that Roberto Bissio later informally expressed to the aforementioned participants that he *had* heard of JFC before, but that he had simply not heard when Alex asked people to raise their hands with regards to this question.

South, but that he really believes that the JFC is going to have to grapple with the Northern outreach as well in order to ensure that it doesn't become like the failed NGO Working group (disbanded 2001) who had isolated un-representative meetings with the Bank. Alex concluded his comments with some important questions; do we open/protect the space for dialogue, and if so who fills this space, and where should this space be? He stated that many believe that it should not be centralised in Washington. Tuya responded that many of the CSO participating in the JFC have a large Southern constituency (such as IFCTU, Global Movement for Children, Transparency International) and that the JFC is still in its inception stage, having just had its first meeting past month (October 2003). However, she recognises and appreciates our colleagues' comments on the need to reach out not only to the Southern NGOs/CSOs, but also to the IFI-Watch NGOs based in the North as well. She explained that over the next few months they are hoping to concentrate on reaching out to a wider spectrum of CSOs and seek their guidance on the JFC issues.

Elena McCollim spoke on behalf of InterAction, a member of the JFC. She reiterated and supported what Tuya had said about JFC, and in addition highlighted the following points:

- 1) While it is correct to say that JFC perhaps could have done more to reach a broader audience of CSOs, it is also true that those CSOs approached over the spring and summer of 2003 represented the broad political spectrum, and that some of them elected not to respond to JFC's approach at all. In that sense, they 'self-selected' out of the process. Nonetheless, it is understandable and perhaps natural that, in any process, groups that may have seemed formerly uninterested in an initiative become more interested-and, in this case, gravely concerned-as it begins to take shape and pick up momentum, in this case in a direction that they find questionable. Therefore, JFC has now once again opened itself up to include participation by new members, and to that end is reinitiating its outreach process.
- 2) It was only in the later summer/early fall of 2003 that JFC was able to take on a full-time program manager (Tuya). This has made it possible for the outreach work to increase and intensify significantly, beyond the previous levels.
- 3) InterAction continues to be a member of JFC and will do so as long as support for this on the part of its stakeholder member organizations continues.

Angela Wood also commented reiterating Elena's point about the JFC essentially being a self-selecting group due to the fact that some NGOs have chosen not to engage. Therefore, the JFC needs to be very careful that they keep not only the space, but also the *agenda open* for discussions on *all topics*, representing even the opinion of those that don't choose to engage. Angela warned that they must be very careful to ensure that the groups that do choose to engage *don't* become the *sole voices* of civil society.

NGO influence in setting the development agenda: Pete Hardstaff stated that we must be careful when attempting to push certain agenda's upon institutions (e.g. for example the pressure that was put on the IMF in the 1980's to deal with poverty issues). He told a cautionary about when he was part of the environmental movement that successfully pushed the WTO in to dealing with the trade and environment debate. Pete explained that in hindsight this was a big mistake, because in reality the last people that one would want to deal with the relationship between trade and the environment, are trade negotiators. His point was that we must consider the political context, especially with regards to *who* we are asking to deal with certain issues.

The evolving language of the agenda: John Weeks opened this discussion with the notion that the language we use is often ideologically laden and misleading. He particularly dislikes the term 'South', because firstly it is geographically wrong in that the majority of the World's poor people live in countries *North* of the equator. However, his biggest problem with the term is that it makes no distinction between governments and people, and it makes no class distinctions. The dichotomy of 'North' – 'South' suggests that there are one set of rich, well governed countries, and one set of poor, badly governed countries, and this is fundamentally wrong he stated. Jean Merckaert (CCFD) raised the point that the word 'development' has virtually been *dropped* from the agenda, and now all of the focus is on 'poverty reduction'; he raised concerns that this was a regression and that no one had addressed this shift. This lead Jean M. to the important questions of; who sets the agenda, are we ready to hear voices in opposition to our agenda? Angela Wood and Max Lawson agreed with this point; they warned against focussing too much on short-term gains and subsequently losing sight of the bigger picture and where we actually want to go with our lobbying/advocacy. Finally, Pete Hardstaff commented on the use of the term 'we' during this session. Who are 'we' he asked, is it the royal 'we'? 'We', that is NGOs, are not homogeneous, even in the North. For example, there is a big difference between process NGOs and campaigning NGOs.

3.2 STRATEGY SHOPS

Five concurrent interactive workshops on current and emerging campaigns were designed to provide the opportunity for discussion, debate and joint Civil Society strategising on current and emerging priority issues. The five specific focus areas were: **the role of the IMF in Low Income Countries (LIC'S); debt sustainability; IFI monitoring and NGO information sharing; the privatisation of essential services; and gender and PRSP's.** CSO practitioners briefly presented their current and emerging campaigns and 'hot topics', before facilitating discussion, debate, and joint strategising, with the ultimate aim of coalition building.

3.2.1 STRATEGY SHOP 1: The role of the IMF in LICs

Eurodad staff (Soren Kirk Jensen) & Eurodad Network members (Max Lawson – Oxfam GB / Caoimhe De Barra –Trocaire)

This strategy shop considered the recent IMF issues paper on the role of IMF in low-income countries; the rationale for the IMF operating in LICs was debated, and opportunities for joint strategising were considered.

The shop was been split in to four parts;

- 1) Role-play: participants assume the role of LIC officials who have to evaluate an IMF programme and decide whether or not to request a loan arrangement.
- 2) Brief overview of the IMF issues paper
- 3) Open debate on the role of the IMF in LICs
- 4) Closed strategising session: This was for CSO representatives only, others non-CSO participants were asked to leave. The aim of this section was strategising to coordinate advocacy, lobbying and campaign work.

Summary of the main points / actions emerging from the two strategy shops

- **Role Play:** Would you take an IMF emergency loan if you were Minister of Finance of the fictive post-conflict country *Angleone*? That was one of the questions participants in this strategy shop had to relate to as part of the role-play that kicked this session off. The result of this shop was that participants had the key concepts and some of the issues emerging from the IMF's recent paper on this issue recapped in an interactive manner. The comment from the IMF participant (Elliot Harris) in this first part of the shop was that the fictive IMF mission was much ruder than any IMF mission would ever be.
- **Emerging critical issues:** After the role-play the session moved on to an open discussion of the emerging critical issues that arise from the paper. The facilitation team took notes from the discussion which have resulted in a preliminary draft of a civil society response to what the role of the IMF should - or should not - be in low income countries (LICs). This response includes 17 points stating how the IMF should change if it is to play a role in LICs. These points are due to be discussed in more detail as part of an ongoing process in which the strategy shop was merely the first step.

- **Follow up:** The participants agreed to a process in which the next step is to discuss the draft of the civil society response to the IMF issues paper that outlines how the Fund envisages its role in LICs. The process is being facilitated by the Eurodad secretariat in cooperation with Eurodad members Oxfam GB and Trocaire. The objective is to present a coordinated Eurodad position on the role of the IMF in LICs at the Spring Meetings in April 2004.

3.2.2 STRATEGY SHOP 2: Debt sustainability

Eurodad staff (Francis Lemoine) & Eurodad Network members (Jurgen Kaiser - Erlassjahr)

This strategy shop's main aim was to take stock of recent developments in the debt area. Both in terms of the recent evolutions in the rhetoric and thinking in creditor institutions and in terms of NGO campaigning.

The workshop was divided in three parts:

- 1) A discussion followed by a debate on the plans of The World Bank and IMF regarding "forward looking" analyses of debt sustainability and their impact on debt relief initiatives (the Fund has published an issues paper last Summer on debt sustainability and a joint WB/IMF paper will be presented to the boards of the two institutions in late December), and the alternative analysis by NGOs.
- 2) A discussion over the use of country specific campaigns to reach our goals of a renewed focus on debt problems with particular references to those countries which will go to the Paris Club in the near future.
- 3) A specific focus on the Campaign to cancel Iraqi debts led by Jubilee Iraq.

Summary of the main points / actions emerging from the two strategy shops

The upcoming World Bank and IMF propositions regarding HIPC are to be followed closely. More broadly, there is a strong sense that rather than doing the important job of tackling unsustainable debt levels, creditors are increasingly trying to cover up the fact that HIPC countries will not maintain debt sustainability by focusing on new financing issues. The need for urgent action is compounded by the fact that the Board of the two institutions have decided to keep the 'sunset clause' at end-2004.

In terms of campaigning, participants highlighted the value of campaigning on country cases for both HIPC and non-HIPC countries. Indonesia and Congo RDC, in this regard, provide good examples what can be done in collaboration with local partners.

Regarding Iraq, the discussion focused on the possibility of using Iraq's 'negotiation' with the Paris Club as an 'ice-breaker' which would clearly show the need to set new insolvency procedures to deal fairly with debt overhangs.

Follow-up

It was agreed that EURODAD would track recent developments with regards to debt sustainability assessments in IFIs. In particular, the secretariat will monitor the

publication of the forthcoming joint World Bank / IMF paper on debt sustainability and prepare an analysis of the document for members.

3.2.3 STRATEGY SHOP 3: IFI watching and NGO information sharing

CEE Bank Watch (Petr Hlobil) & IFI Watchnet (Alex Wilks & Catherine Fisher)

Discussion and debate focusing on the ways in which different organisations working on the IFIs or IFI related issues could coordinate their work and info sharing more effectively was the aim of this strategy shop. In light of the fact that the IFIs are involved in project and policy interventions at different levels on many topics, the fundamental questions being asked in this shop were; how do European NGOs keep up with the latest papers and opportunities from the IFIs? Do NGOs use the best means to reach our target audiences? What new approaches are needed? The workshop consisted of a presentation by Petr Hlobil of the substance and process of the work carried out by CEE Bankwatch Network, plus an interactive discussion led by Catherine Fisher about how people communicate with each other on their campaign and policy work.

Summary of the main points / actions emerging from the two strategy shops

- **[Central and Eastern Europe Bankwatch Network](#) operates across the region and monitors the activities of many public financial institutions** (World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, European Investment Bank, etc). They have a complex communications and information strategy, centred around twice yearly face to face meetings of the whole network. In between they use 50 e-mail lists and their website which is regularly visited by officials as well as campaigners. The challenges they recognise in this respect are:
 - Information overload/targeting information to the right people;
 - Reliability of information/how to validate;
 - Cultural differences which deter some people from being as active as others providing written comments;
 - Language problems;
 - Centralisation/decentralisation.
- **Catherine Fisher led a discussion based on her experience working with [IFIwatchnet](#)**, an initiative hosted by the Bretton Woods Project on behalf of a network of around 50 NGOs from across the world. The initiative aims to tackle some of the problems outlined by Petr, enabling NGOs to collaborate more to ensure that independent views on International Financial Institutions are available to people in a convenient way. IFIwatchnet enables all participating organisations to post information to a web calendar and document database, which then simultaneously appears on the sites of multiple participating organisations. Catherine welcomed new participants and suggestions of what could be done, and asked people to comment on their experiences of seeking and distributing such information. People shared a range of perspectives and made a number of suggestions (ie installing index/search software on your computer, making more use of conference calls or instant messaging).
- **Another thing that people learned in this workshop was the need to be brief when communicating** – or get their fingers burned. Literally, as they could only speak for as long as they could hold a lit match!

3.2.4 STRATEGY SHOP 4: The privatisation of essential services

Citizens Network on Essential Services (CNES –Tim Kessler)

This shop was divided in to three parts:

- 1) The privatization paradigm: Why is privatisation promoted, what is it good for? What are the differences (re. the wisdom of privatization) and similarities (in terms of "conventional wisdom" about liberalization and service subsidies) between the 2004 WDR and the new HDR?
- 2) Coherence and policy linkage: Other than under the guise of conventional "privatization", in what other ways are private provision of services policies being pushed through, who is pushing this agenda?
- 3) Principles and instruments: How are the IFI's pushing the privatisation agenda, what are the principles and instruments that are used? What is the importance of regulation and legislation in protecting the public interest?

Summary of the main points / actions emerging from the two strategy shops

- **CSOs need to have a good understanding of the claims about the benefits of privatization in order to do advocacy work on public services more effectively.** Especially when talking with government stakeholders or other groups that look favourably upon privatization (or negatively upon the state), it can be useful to begin from a mutual recognition of some of the potential benefits of private provision. This can help to reduce the ideological tension of policy dialogues and establish more legitimacy for subsequent questions that challenge the assumptions underlying benefits in particular contexts.
- **The main benefits of private provision can only be realized through effective government regulation.** Regulation may therefore present a useful opening for advocacy efforts. Research on regulation (technical capacity, resources, autonomy, transparency, etc.) could be an important tool with which to challenge claims of the superior performance of private provision.
- **The idea of a feasibility study of regulatory capacity was presented to the workshop, possibly involving a ranking or index of some kind.** The idea would be to conduct an ex-ante analysis of governance in order to assess the likelihood that privatization would produce intended benefits and avoid pitfalls. Regulatory assessment could develop into a standard methodology and be used on a case-by-case basis to determine if a country or locality was "ready" for private provision, and to identify key risks and costs of privatization.
- **While there was agreement that this approach had strong potential to focus decision-makers on critical issues, there were also risks.** In particular, any kind of "ranking" exercise -necessarily a subjective undertaking- could be co-opted or adapted by interests seeking to promote privatization and used to show that the policy would be effective. Accordingly, participants cautioned against a mechanical or quantitative approach to regulatory assessment.

3.2.5 STRATEGY SHOP 5: Gender and PRSP's (Nicaragua & Honduras)

International Cooperation for Development (ICD –Sarah Bradshaw & Brian Linneker)

The shop began with a brief presentation of a study done on the evaluation of PRSP process in Nicaragua to date, and a gendered analysis of the PRSPs process in Nicaragua and Honduras. This was then followed by questions on, and a discussion of the issues and debates. Finally, the shop participants discussed opportunities for advocacy, lobbying and campaigning on the issues. How can European civil society best influence the PRSP process?

Summary of the main points / actions emerging from the two strategy shops

- **Gender mainstreaming:** The need to consider gender and to engender policy initiatives is now largely accepted in development circles. However, the acceptance of the importance of gender may bring dangers, not least that recognising its importance is construed as 'doing something about it'. The feeling that we are already 'doing gender' may actually reduce the extent to which we really do anything, and gender mainstreaming may decrease rather than increase real engagement with gender issues. Recognising the importance of gender issues is a first step, but it alone is not sufficient to bring about change.
- **Non-participation:** The PRSP initiative may be welcomed for its focus on participatory processes. However, the notion of participation as the 'new tyranny' needs to be addressed. Those groups that actively choose to remain outside the process should be recognised as possible key actors in that process. That is, the reasons for a lack of engagement with the PRSP process may be as important to understand as the views of those who do participate. In particular key actors within women's movements may decide not to participate since their conceptualisation of poverty and poverty reduction may differ from the (male) norm. The voices of women who remain outside the PRSP process need to be listened to.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Official PRSP goals are already laid out and processes of evaluation are in place to monitor the extent to which the intended outcomes of the process are achieved. However, the processes that bring these goals, and the indirect effect of these processes, are *not* to be considered. As such the real impact of the PRSP initiative will not be known, especially the impact on women who may be part of the means to achieve a goal rather than a 'goal' themselves. Evaluations that consider the process as well as the outcomes, both intended and unintended, need to be facilitated with both technical and financial support.

3.3 BRIEF SUMMARY AND REFLECTIONS UPON THE KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM DAY 2

Day 2 began with the **third and final panel** entitled: "**Forget justice...this is economics**"? This panel was designed to assess the range of our own advocacy strategies; from 'constructive engagement' on methodology, to vocal protest on illegitimacy. Following presentations from: Tuya Altangerel, Max Lawson, Jean Somers, and Angela Wood,³² the floor were asked to spend five minutes discussing (with those immediately around them) the presentations and the topic in question, before the main floor discussion began. This discussion was centred around the following topics: *North – South CSO dynamics; justice, representation and legitimacy; To engage or not to engage, that is the question?; Sleeping with the enemy - Can the JFC work, and if so how?; NGO influence in setting the development agenda; and finally: the evolving language of the agenda.*

Some of the main points of general consensus that arose from this discussion are that firstly: successful advocacy is dependent upon having a robust and clear message, that is articulated both through action on the street and through high level advocacy; also 'we' must guard against strategic selectivity of issues and indeed 'Southern' CSOs should be empowered to set the agenda to a greater extent; and finally, when looking at short term challenges/gains, it is very important to always keep one eye on the bigger picture (See the wood as opposed to just the trees!).

The major points of *disagreement* were as follows: Gino Barsella was indignant due to the fact that in his opinion, 'Southern voices' were being excluded at this conference (and conferences like this all over the world); whereas Elena McCollim (a self described 'Southern voice') retorted by saying that it is up to the Southern voices who are present at such conferences to *make* themselves heard. Max Lawson elaborated upon this issue by explaining that there is a risk of romanticising the South and that we shouldn't be ashamed to speak out on Southern issues just because we are from the North. The other main area of contention was over the JFC (Joint Facilitation Committee of the World Bank³³); Alex Wilks accused the JFC of so far failing to live up to its unspoken commitments to civil society *as a whole*, in that there has been very little communication and consultation over positions being put to the bank at the meetings. Tuya Altangerel (JFC representative) defended the JFC stating that it was performing an essential function in that it was protecting the space for dialogue. She did however acknowledge that some of the concerns were genuine and that as the committee developed, outreach with the CSO world was expected to improve dramatically.

The participants spent the remainder of the morning and the entire afternoon discussing and debating specific issues/campaigns in small groups in five separate –(concurrent; therefore everyone attended two)- **strategy shops**. Finally, after two quite intensive days, the conference was drawn to a close as everyone reconvened in the main hall to hear each of the strategy shop facilitators report back on the main points / actions emerging from their two strategy shops.

The outcomes of the shops were as follows:

³² These presentations are summarised in section 3.1 and the full presentations are given in [APPENDIX III](#).

³³ The JFC is a recently established platform for self selected civil society representatives to meet with high level World Bank officials in Washington DC and discuss policies.

- **STRATEGY SHOP 1: The role of the IMF in LICs:** The facilitation team took notes from the discussion which have resulted in a preliminary draft of a civil society response to what the role of the IMF should -or should not- be in low income countries (LICs). This response includes 17 points stating how the IMF should change if it is to play a role in LICs. The objective is to present a coordinated Eurodad position on the role of the IMF in LICs at the Spring Meetings in April 2004.
- **STRATEGY SHOP 2: Debt sustainability:** The upcoming World Bank and IMF propositions regarding HIPC are to be followed closely. In terms of campaigning, participants highlighted the value of campaigning on country cases for both HIPC and non-HIPC countries. Iraq's 'negotiation' with the Paris Club may be used as an 'ice-breaker' which would clearly show the need to set new insolvency procedures to deal fairly with debt overhangs. In follow-up to the shop it was agreed that EURODAD will monitor the publication of the forthcoming joint World Bank / IMF paper on debt sustainability and prepare an analysis of the document for members.
- **STRATEGY SHOP 3: IFI watching and NGO information sharing:** The main challenges of NGO information sharing as recognised by the Central and Eastern European Bankwatch are: information overload / targeting information to the right people; reliability of information / how to validate; cultural differences which deter some people from being as active as others in the provision of written comments; language problems; centralisation / decentralisation. Another thing that people learned in this workshop was the need to be brief when communicating – or get their fingers burned. Literally, as they were only allowed to speak for as long as they could hold a lit match!
- **STRATEGY SHOP 4: The privatisation of essential services:** CSOs need to have a good understanding of the claims about the benefits of privatization in order to do advocacy work on public services more effectively. The main benefits of private provision can only be realized through effective government regulation. A feasibility study of regulatory capacity was considered to have strong potential to focus decision-makers on critical issues; however it was also recognised that there were risks.
- **STRATEGY SHOP 5: Gender and PRSP's (Nicaragua & Honduras):** Gender mainstreaming may decrease rather than increase real engagement with gender issues. Recognising the importance of gender issues is a first step, but it alone is not sufficient to bring about change. The notion of participation as the 'new tyranny' needs to be addressed. Those groups that actively choose to remain outside the process should be recognised as possible key actors in that process. The voices of women who remain outside the PRSP process need to be listened to. It is very important to monitor and evaluate process as well as the outcomes, both intended and unintended, this needs to be facilitated with both technical and financial support.

4. THE CEE CSO CONTEXT

As explained in section 1.4, the reason that we decided to hold our conference in Prague this year was to facilitate and encourage greater participation of emerging CEE CSOs working on development issues. To this end, there was an introductory session on Sunday 30th November (which was free for CEE participants), the aim of which was to bring such CSO representatives up to speed on the issues on the Eurodad agenda. The session was opened by Dr. Tomas Tozicka (Jubilee Prague 2000) who provided a brief overview of, and insights in to the evolution of CEE development oriented civil society from his experiences campaigning for debt cancellation in the Czech Republic. This was followed by questions for Tomas and an informal discussion of the issues. Finally, the Eurodad staff provided a crash/refresher course on Eurodad's main work areas and some of the frameworks that would be discussed over the following two days of the conference: current contentious IFI issues, debt relief and financing for development (HIPC, FTAP etc.), poverty eradication and creditor policies (PRSP, PRGF etc.).³⁴

4.1 Presentation by Tomas Tozicka

Tomas explained that Jubilee Prague 2000 was the first organisation within the Czech Republic that had managed to bring public attention to the debt issue. At first he recalled that there was very little organisational support for the planned demonstrations -at the IMF meetings in Prague September 2000- from the established civil society community consisting of mainly church based NGOs, this was due to fear of violence and rioting. However, after some intense negotiations enough support was generated to enable the demonstration to go ahead under the banner of one defining message: 'debt cancellation!'

Tomas stated:

"We wanted to educate Czech people and all Eastern Europeans that although we have had many problems for the past fifty or forty years, there are people in the world who are poorer and worse-off than us!"

He went on to explain that after cancellation and sale of much of the debt owed to the Czech Republic by HIPC countries, the big question that the Czech Republic has been trying to tackle was what should now happen with the rest of this debt? Tomas and Jubilee Prague 2000 were obviously advocating for cancellation.

Tomas continued his presentation by recalling how unsatisfied they (Jubilee Prague 2000) were with the results of the meetings in Prague, where nothing was really decided. This led to a lot of soul searching, which resulted in a new approach to mobilise popular support in the Czech Republic. They decided to try to connect the issues with more practical things and events that would attract public support and hopefully entice the public and CSOs to engage more concretely with the issues. This approach worked to a certain extent and many mini-events took place, however the lack of institutional support was a big problem. Tomas explained that Jubilee Prague 2000 was considered a political movement by many, and that this label scared-off many CSOs, especially the Church based ones. He said that these well-established CSOs had been part of, or had maintained close ties with the state for so long, that they were terrified of any campaigns

³⁴ The crash/refresher course presentations were loosely based around the 'Background reading material' document put together by the Eurodad staff and distributed to participants to this introductory session prior to the conference. This document can be found in [APPENDIX I](#). And contains a very useful **glossary of acronyms**.

that may be considered as anti-establishment in nature. Unfortunately, Diakonia closed the Jubilee Prague 2000 office in 2002, and Tomas then left the organisation to work for Ecumenical Academy (Eurodad's local host partners in organising this annual conference).

Tomas concluded by highlighting his plans and aspirations for the future. Strategically he is looking externally to the EU to provide legitimacy and assistance, as opposed to internal support from Czech organisations. He wants to forge stronger links with EU CSOs, networks and platforms, and even institutions, in the hope that this will give him greater weight in his efforts to strengthen development cooperation in the Czech Republic. The next project that he and Ecumenical Academy have in the pipeline is to organise a conference between Eastern European and Southern CSOs to discuss their shared concerns, goals, and how they can form East-South coalitions and partnerships.

4.2 Questions and discussion

- **Participant question: How is the media covering your work and the work of other CSOs in CEE countries?**

Tomas explained that the short and simple answer is that *they aren't really covering it!* He said that there was a need for much greater support both at home and internationally in order to ensure that the state doesn't absorb the issue. The Czech CSO debt cancellation movement do not want to deal with the debt problem in the same way as the state explained Tomas, rather they want to work within an EU framework.

- **Where do Czech CSOs get their finance? Is it from public or state support?**

Tomas recalled how two years ago a national platform was established for NGOs in the Czech republic (15 currently). Most of the participating NGOs focus on humanitarian aid, however they are now slowly moving towards work on development cooperation. This platform is funded by three big donors: the state, EU, and the US, with only a very small amount coming from public campaigns, and a little bit more from the churches. There are currently no big foundations in the Czech republic that are focussed on development cooperation, and Tomas believes that it is important this type of funding is developed (along with public campaigning) in order to make the work more autonomous.

- **What are your links with officials?**

The Czech republic has no development ministry explained Tomas. There is a development agency that consults with NGOs, however CSOs have little influence in development policy. The reason for this is that the ministries of trade and industry, which generally have their own agenda, mainly decide development policy. Tomas explained that the finance ministry knows the issues, and cares, but it is hard for them to exact influence due to the political pressure from other parties (ministries) with other political interests.

- **Upon joining the EU, is it likely that quantity of development aid given by CEE countries will increase?**

In short; *no*, explained Tomas. Most of the accession countries have different priorities and the EU development ministry is weak. It is only the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary that support development cooperation; the other countries priorities lie with helping former Soviet areas, not Southern countries. Tomas explained that the few countries that are enthusiastic about development cooperation will need much support if reaching the target of aid of 0.7% of GDP is ever to be realised. He said that on the whole, CEE countries are a lot more conservative than those in the West with no history of 60's liberation and few contacts with the South. However, he said, the Czech Republic was different in that it has maintained contacts with Africa for years.

- **How is the Czech republic represented in the IFIs and other institutions?**

We are members of the WB, IMF, OECD, and the WTO, but not the Paris Club creditors said Tomas. He also explained that traditionally they play the traditional Czech role in these institutions, that is; *'We take nobody's side!'*, and therefore have little influence that matters, or at least it is not used in such a way to make it matter.

Finally, a comment came from one of the Czech participants (see appendix for contact details):

Robert Stojanov: *"I would just like to say that in the Czech Republic we have many enthusiastic and informed people working their way through the education system! I teach the first development studies University course in the Czech Republic,³⁵ and in a few years we will have many good young professionals dedicated to the cause, we will have the expertise. However, the problems are institutional; we give far too little development aid, about 0.001% of GDP, but we give large amounts of funding to copper mining projects in Africa –why not give this money to water projects!?! The previous guy in charge of development was awful, the current one is a little better but there is still some way to go.*

³⁵ Palacky University: /Faculty of Science / Department of Geography

5. FINAL CONCLUSIONS and FOLLOW-UP

In section 1.3 it was explained that the aim of the conference was: to stimulate debate and innovative thinking in order to critically analyse the current situation and consider solutions to the problems and alternatives to the current frameworks, looking for evidence and solutions outside of the confines of the current discourse (the 'new development agenda'). This comprehensive report clearly shows that this aim has been met.

Although at this stage 'we' may not have clearly defined 'solutions to the problems and alternatives to the current frameworks' that could be implemented tomorrow, the Eurodad secretariat believes that the 2003 conference was invaluable in its role as a think-tank of sorts, and that the discussions and debates that ensued have sown the seeds for the development of certain alternatives/improvements in the future (e.g. advocacy promoting the innovative 'timer switch' with regards to programme performance dependent aid disbursement will hopefully move forward due to the discussions at the conference).

Finally, with regards to follow-up actions we can return to the other main aim of the conference: the conference was to provide a forum for Eurodad members and others (who may not have much contact with each other in their day-to-day work) to come together and share knowledge, experiences and ideas, in the hope of creating a more cohesive and coordinated European Civil Society and advocacy work around the network's key issues. Again, we believe that this aim has been more than fulfilled, and will result in many follow-up collaborative campaigns and shared advocacy between Eurodad members. Over the coming months the Eurodad secretariat itself will be coordinating two such collaborative projects (as a result of two of the strategy shops) in the areas of 'the role of the IMF in LIC's', and debt sustainability -and the IFI's.³⁶

To conclude this report it can be repeated that although during this conference 'we' may not have produced many definitive answers or solutions to the problems that are waiting to be tackled, hopefully the discussions, debates and outcomes recalled on the preceding pages will catalyse yet more original critical thinking and action, that will result in more progress, and less 'doublespeak'.

³⁶ For more information on these follow-up actions see sections: 3.2.1 -IMF-LICs, 3.2.2 -debt. For more information please contact Soren Kirk Jensen (soren@eurodad.org) with regards to the former, and Francis Lemoine (flemoine@eurodad.org) re. the latter.

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