

“European governments’ failure to meet aid pledges is nothing short of disgraceful. Europe likes to see itself as a world leader in development assistance, but these figures show that governments are taking a step backward on their commitments” said Olivier Consolo, CONCORD Director. “17 of the 27 European member States have not increased their Official Development Assistance at all in the last year and of these, 11 have actually allowed it to fall. The gap between promises and reality must be closed!”

Over 1600 European NGOs united under the Global Call for Action against Poverty, and CONCORD, the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development, have criticised European governments for their failure to live up to aid promises. According to the OECD, European aid fell from 0.41% to 0.38% of Gross National Income (GNI) in 2007. European governments are getting further from, not closer to, their 2010 commitments of 0.56 % GNI for ODA and have yet to set out how they will meet their aid targets. France, which will take the Presidency of the European Union as from the 1st of July is one major donor which has failed to announce a timetable for how it will meet its commitments of aid.

“It is unacceptable that France, which is a leading donor has failed to set out how it will meet its targets on aid. The French Government must now look forward and reaffirm the commitments it has made, by programming an ambitious rise of its assistance for 2009, on the basis of a multi-annual framework to ensure that its aid is predictable”, explains Anne Héry, representative of Handicap International in Paris and Secretary-general of Coordination SUD.

Since 2005, there has been a serious lack of progress on genuine aid* in sharp contrast with promises made by European governments. Last year’s poor performance is largely due to the timing of debt relief deals, which have been counted as ODA in the past, thereby inflating aid figures and disguising the poor performance of European governments. This lack of progress on aid will impact hard on the developing countries that were counting on this money to reach the Millennium Development Goals.

"A failure on the part of European Union to meet its aid promises directly condemns the poor and marginalized in developing countries to a life of poverty. Already in many poor countries, the verdict is that the Millennium Development Goals will not be met. This is a scenario the world can ill-afford and we demand action" said Marivic Raquiza, GCAP Asia Co-Convenor.

CONCORD and GCAP have today called on European governments to set transparent and binding timetables showing how they will meet their commitments to give more aid.

EU governments should also take a lead at the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra in September, and must set more ambitious targets to make their aid more effective. In particular, European aid must be more predictable, transparent and accountable.

“European donors are often less than transparent about the decisions that they take which affect the lives of real people in poor countries. They need to be more accountable for the effectiveness of their aid” said Hussaini Abdu, African Governance Coordinator with ActionAid.

On 22nd of May this year, CONCORD will launch an in-depth report analysing issues of quality and quantity of aid from EU member states to the developing world.

For further information, please visit Concord's web site: www.concordeurope.org