

## General comments

### *A remarkable turnabout*

My personal “take” on the Paris Ministerial Conference is inseparable from the UN Copenhagen plus 5 Conference, Geneva 2000, in which I was an NGO member of the Canadian delegation. The idea of a Tobin Tax or a Currency Transactions Tax was very much “in the air”, in terms of financing the social development objectives of Copenhagen and the global struggle to eradicate poverty. In the French and European press the pressure from ATTAC and other groups led to visibility for the issue, pressure from Canadian NGOs, Social Watch and others at the Conference was insistent, and one of the few impacts was getting the Canadian, Norwegian and a few others to press for inclusion of reference to these innovative mechanisms in the final act of the Conference. Some UN officials were encouraging. In the end all that was permitted (because of US objections in large part) was that the final act had no reference to the issue, but both Canada and Norway made comments at the time of final approval indicating that they “understood” the wording to mean that the UN might undertake a study! The UN went ahead with a study, and other studies, including that undertaken by the Landau panel were initiated in the years following Geneva 2000.

The Financing for Development process permitted the issues to be raised by state and NGO representatives over the intervening years, but the most visible breakthrough occurred at the FFD roundtables in preparation for the Millennium + 5 General Assembly, in June, 2005, when French Economy Minister, Thierry Breton introduced the airlines levy and British Development Minister Hillary Benn fed the growing interest in innovative initiatives with further plumping for the IFF, etc.

The change in atmosphere regarding the rhetoric, and now some concrete initiatives regarding innovative financing is remarkable, and a tribute to those governments who took political initiative, in particular the sponsors of Action Against Hunger and Poverty – Lula, Chirac, Lagos and Zapatero, then Schroeder and others.

**It can be argued that despite opposition in many quarters and lack of initiative in a number of governments that should be capable of something more innovative, there is an opportunity for developing the debate and pressing for initiative particularly for advocates of the CTT that simply did not exist even a year ago!**

### *The health links*

The fact that both the UK and the Franco-Chilean-Norwegian et al. initiative have couched their rationale in the context of the Millennium Declaration and specifically with reference to financing health, immunization and specifically HIV/AIDS may have a good deal to teach those who seek to advance other initiatives.

(\*) John W. Foster, Principal Researcher with The North-South Institute, represented the Canadian Council for International Cooperation at the Ministerial Conference and preparatory NGO event.

<sup>1</sup> *Joint French-Brazilian-Chilean Concept paper on an International Drug Purchase Facility – IDPF.* Conference paper, February 28, 2006

### *Danger zones*

There is continued interest in the issue of remittances. Although often couched as interest in facilitating and reducing the cost of transmittal, there is much more at stake. This is an area for research, and also one in which the NGO community has not developed (to my knowledge) either clear positions or consensus. A Nicaraguan official spokesperson at the Ministerial warned against any interference in these often intra-familial transfers, but the official interest in many quarters continues to grow.

### *Synergy*

Both Ministerial and NGO events in Paris brought together a mix of “development”, “finance/tax”, and AIDS NGOs. Although interests, familiarity with each others key pre-occupations and institutional reference points and vocabularies vary, we represented a multiple of the usual energies and potentialities. The presence and participation of Ministers of Development, along with Finance and Foreign Ministers at the Ministerial Conference was also a bit unusual and stimulating. **Is there potential for a collaboration between the sorts of groups and individuals represented in the CCIC, Halifax Initiative, GTAG and ICAD, for example to build an initiative for advocacy and perhaps even a campaign, on innovative financing for universal sustained access to prevention, care and treatment for HIV/AIDS (malaria and TB)?**

### *A clear and necessary priority:*

**It seems clear that a renewed and extended campaign for a CTT or similar initiative, taxing the huge but largely untouched financial markets is urgently required. European NGOS, including the UK’s Stamp Out Poverty are thus far giving much more attention to these possibilities than Canadian NGOs. There are a number of opportunities in 2006 to establish or deepen links between our own organizations and those abroad in aid of a more highly articulated campaign. The interest of Japanese NGOs is to be welcomed. The process of preparation of a world review conference on the Monterrey Financing for Development Conference, in 2008 or 2009 provides one useful avenue for engaging governments, building an international discussion, and pressing for action.**

### *Regret/critique*

**Canada was represented by an officer from the Embassy. Canadian officials seem to like innovative mechanisms in general, just no specific. The time has come to either join an initiative or to come up with one of our own.**