

COPENHAGEN CONSENSUS 2006

A UNITED NATIONS PERSPECTIVE

At a meeting at UNICEF in New York on October 27th and 28th, organized by the Copenhagen Consensus Center, United Nations ambassadors and other senior diplomats discussed priorities for international action on key challenges facing both the developing countries and the world as a whole. A good degree of consensus emerged, both on the principle of setting priorities, given competing demands on limited resources, and concerning the particular urgency of addressing certain challenges, especially in the fields of diseases, sanitation, malnutrition, and education.

The countries represented were Angola, Australia, Belarus, Canada, China, Denmark, Germany, India, Iraq, Mexico, Niger, Pakistan, Poland, Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Somalia, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Uganda, USA, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Bjorn Lomborg of the Copenhagen Consensus Center.

The UN Perspective gathering extended work first begun two years ago. At the first meeting of the Copenhagen Consensus project, in Copenhagen in 2004, a group of internationally renowned economists examined detailed submissions and presentations by expert contributors and discussants across ten challenge areas: climate change, communicable diseases, conflicts and arms proliferation, education, financial instability, governance and corruption, malnutrition and hunger, migration, sanitation and clean water, and subsidies and trade barriers. In each of these areas, specific policy opportunities were proposed and analyzed. The panel concluded by endorsing an ordered list of priorities for action, answering the hypothetical question, if the international community had an additional \$50 billion to devote to new initiatives, how should that money be spent? (For further details of Copenhagen Consensus 2004, see www.copenhagenconsensus.com)

Copenhagen Consensus 2006 – A United Perspective followed a similar procedure, drawing on the earlier exercise. Representatives had available to them the materials from the previous meeting, and over two days heard new presentations from acknowledged economists and UN experts for each of the ten challenge areas. In each case, opportunities for action were again proposed and examined. The representatives separately ordered the multiple opportunities. Those rankings were then combined into a single ranking based on the median of the representatives' individual rankings. That group ranking is shown below:

CHALLENGE	OPPORTUNITY
1 Communicable Diseases	Scaled-up basic health services
2 Sanitation and Water	Community-managed water supply and sanitation
3 Communicable Diseases	Control of HIV/AIDS
4 Communicable Diseases	Control of malaria
5 Malnutrition and Hunger	Improving infant and child nutrition
6 Malnutrition and Hunger	Reducing micro nutrient deficiencies
7 Sanitation and Water	Small-scale water technology for livelihoods
8 Malnutrition and Hunger	Investment in technology in developing country agriculture
9 Education	Reductions in the cost of schooling to increase demand
10 Education	Physical expansion
11 Malnutrition and Hunger	Reducing Low Birth Weight for high risk pregnancies
12 Education	Expand demand for schooling
13 Education	Improve quality
14 Conflicts	Aid post-conflict to reduce the risk of repeat conflict
15 Sanitation and Water	Research to increase water productivity in food production
16 Corruption	Reform of revenue collection
17 Sanitation and Water	Sustainable food and fish production in wetlands
18 Corruption	Technical assistance to develop monitoring and transparency initiatives
19 Conflicts	Aid as conflict prevention
20 Sanitation and Water	Re-using waste water for agriculture
21 Corruption	Procurement reform
22 Conflicts	Military spending post-conflict to reduce the risk of repeat conflict
23 Climate Change	The Kyoto Protocol
24 Migration	Migration for development
25 Corruption	Grassroots monitoring and service delivery
26 Conflicts	Transparency in natural resource rents as conflict prevention
27 Subsidies and Trade Barriers	Optimistic Doha: 50% liberalization
28 Subsidies and Trade Barriers	Pessimistic Doha: 25% liberalization
29 Migration	Guest worker policies
30 Corruption	Reduction in the state-imposed costs of business/government relations
31 Conflicts	Shortening conflicts: Natural resource tracking
32 Migration	Active immigration policies
33 Financial Instability	International solution to the currency
34 Financial Instability	Re-regulate domestic financial markets
35 Financial Instability	Reimpose capital controls
36 Subsidies and Trade Barriers	Full reform: 100% liberalization
37 Climate Change	Optimal carbon tax
38 Climate Change	Value-at-risk carbon tax
39 Financial Instability	Adopt a common currency
40 Climate Change	A carbon tax starting at \$2 and ending at \$20

The representatives agreed to a large extent that high priority should be given to initiatives on communicable diseases, sanitation and water, malnutrition, and education. In some cases, there were different opinions on the choice of particular opportunities within a given challenge area. In communicable diseases, for instance, some representatives ranked scaled-up basic health services as the best opportunity; others ranked specific initiatives as malaria or HIV/AIDS prevention as a better opportunity. In sanitation and water, some representatives attached the highest priority to community managed water supply whereas there were considerably more differences on sustainable food and fish production. In education, some attached the highest priority to physical expansion of education infrastructure; others attached higher priority to improvement of quality. In the area of trade, the highest rank was given to an optimistic outcome of the Doha round.

In the lower reaches of the joint ordering, a marked degree of agreement was apparent. Initiatives in the challenge areas of financial instability, and all but the Kyoto Protocol of climate change were placed toward the bottom of the list by almost all of the representatives. With the Kyoto Protocol, some countries placed it high or very high on the list, but the large majority placed it low or very low.

Further meetings of the Copenhagen Consensus project are planned.

Website: www.copenhagenconsensus.com.

Contact: Project Manager, Mr. Tommy Petersen at tp.ccc@cbs.dk, US: 202 615 8109 or Denmark: +45 3815 2252.