Women's Working Group on Financing for Development

Reaction to the Outcome Document of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development: Addis Ababa Action Agenda

July 17, 2015

The Women’s Working Group on Financing for Development (WWG on FfD) expresses its strong disappointment with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted at the conclusion of the Third Financing for Development Conference that took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 13 to 16 July 2015.

For feminists and women’s rights organizations, the Outcome document of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development: Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) fails to remove the global obstacles to development and to shift the balance of power in the international financial architecture in order to address systemic issues and create the conditions to respect, protect and fulfill human rights, in particular women’s rights. It fails also to acknowledge the macro-economic dimension of the unpaid domestic and care work and the need to reduce and redistribute it among the State, private sector, communities, families, men and women.

The AAAA might leave the impression to some that it is strong on gender equality, women’s empowerment and women’s rights. However, while the AAAA, importantly notes in the first paragraph a commitment to respect all human rights, including the right to development, and that member states will ensure gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment, it lacks an integrated, consistent and explicit human rights based approach. The references to gender equality and women also rely on previously agreed language (i.e. Rio+20, Open Working Group (OWG) of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Doha), some of which consolidate regressive formulations (i.e., as found in Paragraph 6), others rely heavily on private sector contributions to achieving gender equality (such as Paragraph 41).

Moreover, some of the references about women’s rights in the outcome document show strong tendencies towards the instrumentalization of women (i.e. Para 21) and to financing gender equality and women’s empowerment as a means to achieve economic growth, to increase productivity and to improve economic performance. This reference is limiting, rather than realizing women’s and girls’ human rights as per the foundation of the UN.

The outcome document has seriously reduced the integrity of the Financing for Development (FfD) agenda. On several points, there has been a serious retrogression from the commitments made in Monterrey (2002) and Doha (2008). The potential of removing global obstacles to development, setting the right priorities, policies and rules for financing the SDGs/Post 2015 Development Agenda and allowing for the full implementation of other internationally agreed development agendas, including those critical for women’s rights such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Cairo Programme of Action is being severely curtailed.

The global partnership between developed and developing countries established in the Monterrey Consensus has been weakened by the developed countries through: i) their promotion of multi-stakeholder partnerships, ii) their lack of commitment to address systemic issues in the United Nations (UN), iii) their inability to fully recognize and respect the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) and iv) their disagreement over the establishment of an FfD Commission.

While the document includes a narrative of “sustainable development”, it still relies on orthodox economic assumptions regarding growth, ‘trickle-down effects’, commodification of nature and people.

1 The WWG on FfD is part of the broader Civil Society FfD community and actively contributes to the common positions. This reaction further elaborates on the joint CSO statement, Third FfD Failing to Finance Development and the CSO Declaration, deepening key issues at stake for women’s rights and gender justice. For more about the WWG on FfD: http://wwgonffd.org/ and wwgonffd@gmail.com. For more information on the wider CSO FfD group please visit: https://csosofffd.wordpress.com The WWG on FFD Co-coordinators are AWID, DAWN and Feminist Task Force.
The WWG on FfD flags the following key issues and demands structural changes in the global economic governance and development architecture in order to move:

1. From ignoring systemic imbalances to creating a rights-based pro-development multilateral economic and financial architecture.
2. From making the business case on women’s empowerment, to respecting, protecting and fulfilling women’s human rights and establishing the structural conditions to realize these rights.
3. From creating an enabling environment to attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), promoting Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and talking “womenomics” towards safeguards, investment frameworks that have binding norms, including for Transnational Corporations, that are consistent with Human Rights.
4. From imbalanced global trade rules to respecting developing countries policy space for productive diversification, decent work for women, and sustainable industrial policy.
5. From taxing women in the informal economy, to progressive taxation and international tax cooperation.
6. From using Official Development Assistance (ODA) and development cooperation, to leveraging private finance and follow donor priorities, towards untied, additional and predictable ODA and development cooperation that contributes to the respect, protection and fulfillment of gender equality, human rights and sustainable development.
7. From “new social compacts”, towards the implementation of comprehensive and universal social protection systems and public services.
8. From reducing the FfD agenda to the Means of Implementation of the Post 2015 Agenda, towards a robust FfD mandate and follow up mechanism that maintains the integrity of FfD commitments in order to remove global obstacles for the implementation of all internationally agreed development agendas.

As feminists and women’s human rights organizations, we reaffirm the centrality of ensuring respect, protection and fulfillment of women’s human rights also in the Financing for Development Agenda. The Forum for Financing for Development, more than ever, will be the space in which we continue to strive for structural commitments to change the current economic and financial rules, system and unequal power relations. We will keep on demanding the level of ambition needed to achieve this task from Member States, so that true actions to subvert structural inequalities are implemented.