

MEDIA RELEASE

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Aid talks threatened as rich countries refuse to budge

Hopes for a progressive agreement to reform international aid look set to be dashed at this week's aid talks in Accra, Ghana.

Delegates to the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness have been at loggerheads for two days with the United States and Japan refusing to agree to the European Union's push for a more far reaching agreement.

“Developing countries are extremely frustrated by the refusal of a few key wealthy countries to commit to any substantial improvements in the aid they provide” says Flint Duxfield, Director of AID/WATCH, an independent aid monitor.

Ministers from over 100 countries will meet behind closed doors tomorrow as they attempt to finalise the Accra Agenda for Action, which will guide efforts to reform international aid over the next four years.

Speaking from Ghana, Mr. Duxfield warned that the Action Agenda is likely to fall far short of expectations.

“By most standards donor countries have failed to meet the targets they set in 2005 in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Developing countries were hoping that Accra would bring real commitments to remedy these failings but as it currently stands the Accra Agenda for Action looks more like an agenda for inaction”.

A key sticking point in the negotiations has been the push for aid donors to make long term aid commitments.

“Making aid predictable over a three to five year period is crucial for developing countries as it allows them to develop long term development plans. There's no point starting to build a hospital or a school one year if you don't know whether you will have the funds the following year to finish it” he said.

Another contentious issue is the type of conditions donors should be able to place on aid they provide.

“Research clearly shows that tied aid other types of donor-imposed conditions dramatically reduce the effectiveness of aid, but donors seem determined to maintain these conditions to promote their own foreign policy interests” said Mr. Duxfield.

The Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness is the third forum of its kind, following on from similar meetings in Rome in 2003 and Paris in 2005.

AID/WATCH is an independent monitor of aid trade and debt and one of 82 Civil Society Organisations participating in the High level forum on Aid Effectiveness in Ghana this week.

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