

## HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY - A COLLOQUIUM

11-13 JANUARY 2010, GENEVA

### GOALS AND IMPACTS

#### GOALS

1. The present situation requires, as Joseph Stiglitz pointed out, an ‘unprecedented response’. We believe that there is **value in the dialogue itself**. It is rarely that economists, policy-makers, human rights and development practitioners talk ‘to’ rather than ‘at’ each other. It would be simplistic to assume that the human rights community would have any impact on global economic arrangements without engaging with some of the difficult challenges and questions that economists and policy-makers throw at them. We believe that the Colloquium is an important step in promoting **mutual learning and cross-fertilisation** between the different actors.
2. The strategic level of participation in the Colloquium, we believe, will **open key institutional actors and experts to new ideas and ways of thinking**. We are confident that the combined convening abilities of Realizing Rights – the Ethical Globalization Initiative (Realizing Rights/Mary Robinson) and the International Council on Human Rights Policy (ICHRP), and the unique nature of the space/agenda will secure participation of very distinguished and important experts from international institutions, governments, international governmental organisations (IGOs), the media and academia.
3. The nature of participants combined with the richness of discussions will have a positive impact on influencing current discussions and **facilitate diffusion of new ways of thinking about human rights in the context of the economy**. This would be especially valuable for institutions engaged in working on different dimensions of the global economic structure such as the World Bank, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), etc. as well as other civil society organisations.
4. The Colloquium is not just a single event but part of a process. It is proposed to build on the outcome of the discussions to **develop recommendations on possible policy directions as well as generate further research agendas** not just for ICHRP and Realizing Rights but also other actors. We believe that the Colloquium will help generate shared frames of reference which can become the basis for mutual dialogue between different communities of knowledge and practice.

#### EXPECTED IMPACTS AND RESULTS OF THE COLLOQUIUM

5. In the short-term, we believe the event will be an important opportunity to **generate practical commitments from participants to cooperate across disciplines** on some of the key policy issues identified during the discussion. We hope the meeting will help in **shaping a shared inter-disciplinary language** between experts in the fields of development, economics and human rights/social justice. This will be important not only for development of further research and policy development but also in terms of advocacy by Mary Robinson and other opinion leaders

seeking to influence government policy on specific issues – for example in determining development aid priorities and strategies or in formulating economic policies, which produce decent employment opportunities, among others. It should be said as well that there will be **significant value in the dialogue itself**. Economists, policy-makers and human rights actors rarely have an opportunity to talk in depth to one another in a facilitated environment.

6. Over the longer-term, we believe the meeting could contribute significantly to **creating a platform for dialogue and collaboration**, for our own but also other organisations which will take part in the meeting: inter-governmental organisations – such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNDP, the World Bank and OHCHR – as well as civil society organisations such as Amnesty International, and academic institutions working in these fields. What we are seeking to achieve ultimately is the emergence of **new forms of inter-disciplinary collaboration and policy development** involving human rights experts which can contribute to an enriched understanding of state governance functions, a more expansive vision of the economy and the roles of public and private actors, and a stronger understanding of what economic conditions are needed to ensure the realisation of the broad spectrum of human rights.
7. It is important to stress that the intention is not to teach economists to be human rights thinkers or to train human rights actors to become economists. It is more a matter of **creating a new/fresh understanding of what forms of relationships between private economic actors, the state, and the citizen enable economic resources (prosperity) to be generated in a form that allows or encourages achievement of human rights**; what role the state plays in generating those conditions; and what values (ethical, social) play an essential contribution. This is a new agenda for human rights actors who have always thought about the responsibility of the state to deliver human rights to society, rather than society's responsibility/interest to resource the state so that it can fulfil its responsibilities.
8. The year 2010 will also hold critical discussions on the future of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The achievement of MDGs and states' obligations towards them are crucially connected to macroeconomic policy choices. For the MDGs to have any meaningful future they have to be integrated within and not outside of macroeconomic policies. We believe that the Colloquium will be an **important stepping stone in facilitating a meaningful dialogue on economic policy and global policy agendas like the MDGs** between policy-makers, economists and the human rights/development community.
9. One of the key issues at the heart of the Colloquium is to engage with and **promote the idea of shared responsibility**. This is central to the realisation of meaningful global agendas on climate justice, poverty, debt and trade. The economic crisis only highlighted the long existing problems of exclusion, deprivation and impoverishment, and their connections with global movements in economic policy. As much as national accountability is vital, it is important to strengthen frameworks of shared responsibility to deal with issues of mass poverty and climate justice. The Colloquium will contribute to **strengthening existing initiatives and processes in this regard** such as the Swiss Human Rights Agenda.
10. To sum up, we are seeking to **provide a structured space to generate much needed shared frames of reference to more effectively address issues of poverty, inequality and development**. We believe the meeting in January can make a significant contribution to helping reposition the way economists, development experts and human rights actors talk to one another about common economic and social challenges facing countries around the world.