

NEWS RELEASE

Verdict: Canada must lead other G-8 countries off of the bench

- *G8 gives a nod to promises for the world's poorest, shelves them for another year*
- *World leaders fall behind on existing promises on development, health and hunger*
- *Summit fails to address global food price crisis even as it pushes millions into poverty*

DEAUVILLE, France. (May 27, 2011) – As the G-8 Leaders wrapped up their annual summit today, World Vision Canada pushes Canada to do more than lead by example. The following are comments from Caroline Riseboro, vice president of Public Affairs for World Vision Canada:

On Canada's role:

“Canada's had a big year emerging as a global leader on child and maternal health, pushing for accountability and being the first to deliver on food security promises. But it's not simply about checking the boxes on a to-do list. Child health: check. Maternal health: check. Food security: check. Co-chair WHO Accountability Commission: check. Now comes the hard part—get other G8 nations to commit and deliver. There's no point in being the star quarterback while the rest of your team is on the bench.”

On Muskoka Initiative and Accountability:

“Canada is clearly first out of the gate on accountability and on getting money out the door for the Muskoka Initiative on child and maternal health. Canada's leadership has paved the way for the G8 to improve the transparency of their reporting, but they still have a long way to go. What is needed is clear baselines and targets measured in lives saved.”

“What the G8 needs to do to save the lives of mothers and children is all outlined in the final report of the WHO Accountability Commission that Prime Minister Harper co-chaired. World Vision took part in this process and brought more than 60 years of community-level experience and expertise to the table. The final report lays out the critical steps to improve how to monitor, review and remedy the way we track progress in maternal and child health. Simply put, making sure the funds are delivered right down to the community and making sure they result in lives saved.”

“Canada's role as a leader on child and maternal health this is far from finished. As long as more than eight million children are still dying each year before they celebrate their fifth birthday, Canada has to stay on course with this work and push the G8 to catch up.”

“If the G8 is serious about making their information available to partner countries and citizens, they need to report on what funds they are disbursing with clear baselines, who they are working with, what the health outcomes are and what they're going to do in terms of corrective actions if progress is off track. We expect Canada to report back to Canadians and their development partners on all of this regularly. This kind of accountability—directly to the people whose lives are at stake—is exactly what is needed.”

On L'Aquila food security commitments:

“Canada is the only country that has delivered on food security promise. Getting the rest of this G8 funding to the doorsteps of children and families is critical. Time is running out on two fronts: the commitment ends in 2012, so the G8 have a year to disburse the rest of the funds; and time is running out for children and families who are being pushed further into poverty by these untenable global food prices.”

“Canadians are starting to feel the pinch as food prices climb to near record highs. Imagine what this means for poor families in the developing world who already spend 80 per cent of their income on food. Food and oil markets are volatile, and global stocks of key grains are low; all of which puts more poor children at risk of hunger and malnutrition. Families are being forced to either survive on cheaper, less nutritious food or cut out other basic necessities like education and health costs.”

“As a major global food producer and as the G8 country that weathered the financial crisis the best, poor children need Canada to step up again to champion a renewed and expanded L'Aquila. Canada should renew its support for food security at L'Aquila levels, setting a powerful example not only for the G8 but also the G20. By renewing Canada's additional funds for food security, Canada will push its Gleneagles track record from 97 per cent delivered to 100 per cent.”

“All of Canada's best intentions on child and maternal health are at risk of failure if the children and mothers they aim to save with Muskoka funding don't have enough food to live. In 2010, G8 leaders committed to reducing malnutrition with their food security initiative and improving maternal and child health, but this promise has fallen by the wayside in today's report from the G8.”

“In the light of the looming global food crisis, World Vision asks Canada to maintain its strong commitment to ensure adequate emergency food aid and to make sure this remains in the G8 food security discussions and supports this as a key issue at the G20 along with addressing price volatility.”

On child trafficking:

“World Vision is thrilled to see child trafficking acknowledged by the G8 as a risk to boys and girls—but the scope that they are addressing is unbelievably narrow in relation to this crime. They are only looking at the risk for children using the internet, but children are at risk offline in their homes, streets and communities, whether they live in France, Canada or any other country in the world.”

“An estimated 1.2 million children are trafficked every year for labour and sexual exploitation – a low estimate as this crime is grossly underreported. Canada is a known source, transit and destination point for human trafficking. Our national strategy must include tackling the international aspects of this crime to protect all children.”

“It's encouraging to finally see child trafficking on the G8's radar. Time and again at World Vision we hear from Canadians who are horrified to learn the global nature of this crime and how many children are exploited. Trafficking has no borders; Canada is not immune. We see this with news stories popping up about incidents in our own backyard.”

“Prime Minister Harper's election promise to create a national strategy is a good start and must address the Canadian and international side of this. With a comprehensive plan, he can then push the G8 to broaden their view on the issue beyond the internet risks and lead the charge for protecting those children who are vulnerable and who are trafficking victims.”

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