



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

600 NGOs from all over the world call for an inclusive UN conference on the financial crisis

Social Watch releases its 2008 report “Rights is the answer”

BRUSSELS, 7 January 2009 – At the occasion of the presentation of the Social Watch Report 2008 to the European Parliament today, Social Watch, a network of over 600 citizens’ organizations from 70 countries, calls for an inclusive international UN conference to review the international financial architecture.

“It is critical that all countries have a say in the process to change the global financial architecture”, said Roberto Bissio, Social Watch coordinator. “Only an international conference convened by the UN and with full representation of developing countries will have the necessary capability and legitimacy to define a better and more just global financial system.”

The financial crisis has jeopardised the efforts undertaken to fight poverty, disease and climate change in the developing world. And while the financial architecture has been under review recently there cannot come a lasting and viable solution from meetings where only a few countries are represented and the majority of states – the developing world, which is the hardest hit – is excluded.

“The world faces a global emergency created by an unprecedented financial crisis, rising food prices, climate change and growing inequities”, said Mr. Bissio. “The Social Watch Report shows that human rights have been violated as a direct consequence of the same global economic order that has created this chaos. A rights-based approach to development with human rights, gender equality and



decent work at its core must be the main guiding principle to any answer to the crisis.”

The report’s data show that between 1990 and 2005 the rate of progress on all social indicators has slowed down – in such a way that the Millennium Development Goals are impossible to be met – unless donors, among them prominently the EU, end their business-as-usual-attitude. The same neoliberal ideology of promoting deregulation, liberalization and privatization, that has led to the current global crisis has reverted social progress all around the world.

The Social Watch Report 2008 features

- National reports from 58 countries - showing how the macroeconomic framework affects human rights.
- The Basic Capabilities Index 2008 - measuring poverty in 176 countries based on three indicators: children’s health, education and reproductive health. At the current rate of progress, Sub-Saharan Africa (from first placed Botswana to the last Chad) would only reach the satisfaction of basic needs – the starting point for development - by 2353.
- The Gender Equity Index 2008 - measuring gender inequality in 157 countries in three dimensions: education, participation in the economy and empowerment. With Sweden on top and Yemen at the end, the index finds that more than half of the world’s women live in countries that have made no progress in gender equality in recent years.
- Thematic reports on tax evasion, liberalization and the EU development policy.

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Note to the editor:

- Social Watch is an international network of citizens’ organizations from 70 countries struggling to eradicate poverty and its causes, to ensure an



equitable distribution of wealth and the realization of human rights. Social Watch is committed to social, economic and gender justice and emphasizes the right of all people not to be poor.

- The Social Watch Report scrutinizes every year how governments and international organizations implement their commitments on poverty eradication and gender equity.
- More information about Social Watch and the Social Watch Report 2008 “Rights is the answer” can be found on www.socialwatch.org.
- Roberto Bissio coordinates the Social Watch headquarters in Montevideo/Uruguay. He is executive director of the Third World Institute, a member of the Third World Network’s international committee and of the civil society advisory group to the UNDP director.

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