

TALKING POINTS FOR THE PANELS

The Governance Dimension of the MDGs in Africa

May 21st 2008

Please note that these talking points/sub-questions should be considered as a reference. Other contemporary issues that are considered of relevance may also be incorporated in the different panels.

Panel 1: Governance at the Regional and Sub-Regional Levels

- What are the current limitations of governance at the regional and sub-regional levels? What could be the initial suggestions for overcoming them?
- Can regional governance be helpful when the state, as is often the case in Africa, is weak? Or can regional organizations be strong when the state level is weak?
- How to go beyond the formalist dimension of governance in Africa? Also, what would be required in order for institutions to play a dynamic role?
- Governance and formal and informal African economics.
- How to make the relationship between African national governments and international actors (international organizations, international private sectors and non-African governments) more effective for African societies?

Panel 2: Challenges of Increased Aid to Africa

- How much additional aid can Africa effectively absorb and spend?
- What can be done to mitigate the macroeconomic, institutional and political challenges of increased aid?
- How can African countries develop the institutional and human resource capacities to handle increased aid and strengthen public expenditure management?
- Strategies for reducing aid-dependency and effective “exit strategies”.
- How can multilateral development agencies best support African efforts?
- Progress made in improving donor coordination and harmonization.
- Can aid promote governance, or is good governance a requirement to make full use of aid, or should both reinforce each other?
- What are the success stories of aid, development and governance in Africa? What can we learn from them?
- Increased aid in the context of new emerging donors?

Panel 3: Capacities and the Governance of the African State

- A quick overview of the history of the African State, and the trends of the capacities.

- Neocolonialism and capacities of the African State.
- From the norms of the African states to their realization; what is needed to bridge ideal and reality?
- What would it take to make strategic sectors of African societies (in particular, education and training) an expression of and a contribution to stronger capacities of the African States?
- How can international actors contribute to strengthening the capacities of the African states?
- What are the conditions under which constitutions can contribute to good governance in Africa?
- The impact of new donors, particularly China.

Panel 4: Public Finance, Accountability and Governance

- The limitations of public finance in Africa states.
- Success stories regarding taxation in African states.
- Can we have financial accountability without political accountability?: from the improvement of financial regimes to the improvement of political regimes.
- Revisiting the issue of accountability based on outside pressure: how to improve public administration in Africa states?
- How to have the national and international sectors, public and private sector, work better together to improve the accountability in Africa states?
- The impact of current high commodity and food prices, notably on fiscal stability.

Concluding panel: The Way Forward

- Assessing the chances for African governance to be improved.
- Which steps should be taken to improve African governance?
- What could be the contribution of African and international universities and think tanks to improve governance in Africa?
- What should be the contribution of UNU, Cornell and their partners, based on comparative advantages, to improve governance in Africa?
- The impact of new donors, particularly China.