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# Response to the Millenium Message of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan

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**THIS IS JUST WHAT WE NEED TO HEAR AGAIN FROM** the UN. Sobering, passionate, clear, optimistic—you can describe it any which way you want. But most important of all, by opening his Millennium Message with “We the Peoples” the Secretary General sets the central idea and tone for what else follows. The UN is “we the peoples”, and it is for “us the peoples” of this world.

It is very timely. The UN, perhaps the only global institution that can rightfully represent global civil society, badly needs to reestablish its leadership over global concerns. It cannot carry on if it continues to be mistrusted and instrumentalized by the rich and powerful and lack the means to meet the expectations of the poor and less powerful.

PRRM supports everything said. We, however, would like to see more emphasis on the following areas:

**Global Anti-Poverty Compact.** With the means available, it stands to question why absolute poverty cannot be eradicated in one parent-lifetime.

The Millennium Message has to be more forceful than it already is on the means to redress inequality. We suggest stronger emphasis on a set of interlocking measures to complement and reinforce the *Global Anti-Poverty Compact*.

**A New Fair Trade Compact.** Unfair trade is a killer. With fairer trading system the poor and less powerful will have the means to self-development and would be less dependent on ODA. Without fair trade inclusive globalization is impossible.

**Control on speculative capital.** We have seen what havoc speculative capital can bring to our economies and there are already proposals to address it, eg. Tobin tax. Must this be another area for a compact?

**Debt Conversion.** Debt write-offs should not be conditional, as in tied to performance of HIPIC governments. Also, they should include other deserving countries on condition that debt is converted into a national anti-poverty fund and dedicated solely to poverty eradication.

The entire ODA should be converted into a **Poverty Eradication Fund**. The 20-20 formula is not enough even if fully complied with. Such dedication of all ODA will indicate how serious donors and recipients are in licking absolute poverty the soonest.

**Fund for Peace.** One such facility should be created out of peace dividends and set up both at national and global level.

**EIA for TNCs.** An environmental impact assessment applied to the policies and operations of transnational corporations should go hand in hand with the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

And finally, why not a **UN-Peoples Partnership**? The Millennium Message talks of UN-private corporate partnership which is welcome. A partnership between the UN and peoples organizations on a higher level than what exists and not bound by member-state regulations is equally appropriate. It can fill in the missing element in the evolving system of global governance.

The Millennium Message deserves the support of every man, woman and child everywhere.





## About the author

Isagani R. Serrano is Senior Vice President and Board Member of the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM). He's written for CIVICUS the following: *Civil Society in the Asia-Pacific*, 1994; *Humanity In Trouble But Hopeful* in CITIZENS, 1995; *Profile: Philippines* for CIVIC INDEX, 1997; *Coming Apart, Coming Together* in Civil Society at the Turn of the Millennium, 1999; *A Global Citizens' Commitment*, 1999. A community organizer, educator, writer, guitarist, 'farmer', and political prisoner for seven years during martial law in the Philippines. Trained in education and literature, community organization and development management. Holds a Master of Science in Environment & Development Education (MSc in EE/DE) from the South Bank University-London.

