



RAO CONVENTION 2007

Statement by Mr. Mike Hammond, Head of DFID-Ghana

Ladies and gentlemen, I am speaking on behalf of all the Development Partners (DP), Funders of the G-rap process. This is my second RAO convention and I am pleased to see the meeting beginning to take shape. The issues we now are beginning to discuss are very relevant, as they have to do with what is a fast trend of the world.

The first three years of G-rap have come to an end this year and it has been an interesting three years. The G-rap model was the first of its kind in Ghana. We experimented a lot and we learnt very important lessons. We made mistakes. I hope we have learned from those mistakes. There were very genuine challenges and some very difficult moments but I think we have made some really important gains over that period, particularly the relationship between development partners and CSOs communities. I think as we move into an extension phase of the program next year, and I am happy to confirm that DFID has committed themselves to do the funding of G-rap up till end of 2009. We all need to learn and reflect on the lessons and think about what we will do differently to maximize impact and that for me is the key output of the events of this kind.

I know many of you have had difficulties and frustrations with the G-rap Part One and particularly with procedures and structures. I know when I sat on the Advisory Board for the first time, I was certainly confused by the management structure that seemed to building to delays to the very processes we were trying to ease. And despite the fact that I come from a bureaucratic background, I actually hate bureaucracy. So I was very pleased to see the way in which the project structures had been reviewed and the way in which we are slimming down both the management structures and the way in which we support CSOs. I know many of you have consulted it and your representatives on the G-rap Board, you will be pleased to know, gave me and the other development partners a very hard time. So they represented you well. We intend to have a new structure in place before March 2008 and consultations are still in progress. So if you have any thoughts or comments of the recommendations of the last review, then please let your representatives have them, for my colleagues who are trying to hide desperately from the back row will be delighted to discuss them with you further. We all spoke about the way in which space is opening up for NGOs in Ghana and one of the most pleasing things to me is all about the representativeness in this context and I will encourage you to use it well.

Democracy is a wonderful concept and it is very quick to lose it, it is damn hard to get it back and it is how it is applied that makes it a success. There are at least two sides to every argument and I have never been in a room with any NGO who did not have at least five sides to every argument and there are always conclusions to debates that would not please everybody. If the space you create is not used well and allows free discussions, then you risk putting at danger the very thing that you are trying to achieve so it is the space that is important and how you use it that makes you a strong organization. And I will encourage you to use the space well. I know some of you have been working with the Ministry of MYE on the Trust/NGO bill and you have a colleague who is very close to the heart of both sides of the debate. This legislation should shape the environment in which you work and it is key to civil society development and its effectiveness in this country. The engagement so far has been good. There is now a draft bill but all sides need to maintain a constructive dialogue to



RAO CONVENTION 2007

iron out the differences and produce a bill that everyone is happy with to deliver a supportive and effective framework for the civil society in Ghana. Anything less is a failure. I am also really pleased to see that this is a major agenda item for this convention.

Finally can I say a word about your engagement with us, the development partners? Last year, I challenged some of you to be noisier. I am not saying you actually took up my challenge but one or two of you were a bit noisier. Many of you were present at this year's consultative group meeting and I know some of you are busy preparing for next year's high level forum on their effectiveness in Ghana. These are important opportunities to CSOs to influence the way in which development partners and governments work. We welcome your interest and we encourage you to use them effectively. The door is open, the space is there for dialogue and you can create your own space by bringing DPs and government into your debates. My colleagues in DFID and other embassies spent a great deal of time engaging with you and it is important that dialogue takes place at all levels.

In all these things the most important element is the impact we make. I again encourage you to increase your visibility to demand greater accountability from both ourselves and government and to get to know everyone is right. There is nothing worse than having a five sided argument when the evidence is wrong, so please I encourage you to get the facts and come and annoy us with them. You drive us mad. Talk to anybody from ActionAid, to Budali, who used to work on the ActionAid Network who now works for me. It is the most annoying thing for DPs to have an NGO who has got their facts right to come and annoy you. You have to just justify what you are doing and that is your role in this organization. You need to exploit the strategic use of that evidence to help us hold government and ourselves to a real genuine pro-poor post. You all have different approaches to advocacy but the important things are to build that credible evidence base and advocate on the basis of that fact. Only this way will you be able to achieve what you are seeking: It is the key of preparation, without it, you are lost before you start.

This of course is what G-rap seeks to help you achieve and we, the DPs, are delighted to help facilitate that process. I wish you a good and constructive, but perhaps not too friendly a meeting to get some real issues out on the table and properly discussed.

Thank you very much.