

Religious leaders of all faiths demand tax transparency...

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The [following letter was in the FT this morning](#). I endorse it and what it demands and am pleased by its ecumenical and multi-faith approach:

From the Most Revd and Rt Hon Justin Welby and others.

Sir, April 5 marks the start of the 1,000-day countdown to achieving the Millennium Development Goals by the 2015 deadline. It is an appropriate moment for heads of government of the Group of Eight leading economies to pause and to reflect on progress to date.

Development is working. But challenges remain. The number of people living in extreme poverty has been halved ahead of time and 14,000 fewer children die each day than in 1990. Yet one in eight people still goes to bed hungry every night and more than 2m die of malnutrition each year.

Even as conversations accelerate as to what ought to replace the MDGs, we should not slacken our efforts towards realising existing goals. Meeting the remaining targets, while challenging, is possible — but only if governments do not waiver from the moral and political commitments that they made more than a decade ago.

Thirteen years on from the start of the millennium, the values and principles that drive these goals are as imperative as ever. The financial crisis may be a reason but is not an excuse for hesitation or deferral. The MDGs remind us that, in addition to providing for the wellbeing of our own societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold human dignity and the common good at the global level. Each individual has a value that can never be lost and must never be ignored.

With a focus on tax, trade and transparency, the UK presidency of the G8 this year has the potential to advance the MDG agenda in ways that strike at the underlying causes of poverty, in particular by ensuring the wealth created by developing countries is not lost through unfair tax practices, a lack of transparency or a failure to secure the benefits of trade for developing countries.

As religious leaders from across the G8, we recommend that our heads of government take the following actions when they meet in June. First, fulfil existing commitments to spend 0.7 per cent of national income on aid. Second, launch a G8 convention on tax transparency that commits signatory countries to preventing individuals and companies from hiding wealth so that it is untraceable. Third, press for greater financial transparency from governments of developing countries so that the citizens of these countries can hold their governments to account for the money they spend.

Reaching a purposeful consensus on these areas will not be easy. But, if the political will and moral leadership is forthcoming, this year's G8 could help to create an environment that encourages the conditions for inclusive, equitable and sustainable economic growth — conditions that are desperately needed if we are to realise the MDGs and even greater things beyond.

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