

WYA Declaration on Foreign Aid and Coercion

We are young people of diverse ethnic, religious, cultural, political and economic backgrounds gathered at the 20th International Solidarity Forum in Pamplona, Spain. Originating from all regions of the globe, we represent both developing and developed countries. We recognize the intrinsic and inalienable human dignity of every person from conception until natural death. This obliges us to work together on building societies and institutions where every individual can flourish and freely develop his or her authentic potential. We particularly commit ourselves in solidarity to all who experience the despair and hardships of armed conflict, natural disasters, disease, social unrest and poverty. We advocate for true solidarity, which is an active commitment to the good of the other, expressed between persons.

There are various ways to demonstrate solidarity, and every act of true charity and generosity should be encouraged. When it comes to foreign aid, we must note its distinct forms and effects. Foreign aid has been defined as the transfer of capital, goods, or services from a country or international organization for the benefit of the recipient country. It has contributed demonstrable success in targeted disaster relief and humanitarian efforts; however, foreign aid in itself is fraught with problems. Evidence shows that it often develops into a self-serving aid apparatus enabling corruption and wealth misappropriation in the hands of government officials or select contractors.

It has been shown that donor countries and international organizations tend to use foreign aid as a means to overstep the boundaries of human freedom, cultural identity, and national sovereignty to achieve their own purposes. Foreign aid given or withheld is frequently accompanied by implicit or explicit conditions which force recipients to choose between losing key development support or compromising national principles. Thus foreign aid can be used as a tool of coercing recipient nations into adopting policies and legislation that are contrary to national laws as well as the principles of human dignity. This is a form of ideological colonization that includes acts such as forcing countries to implement population control policies or so-called reproductive rights.

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We affirm that all foreign aid policies should respect the principle of subsidiarity and support people in making decisions that concern them and empower them towards building a sustainable society. It is manifest that some countries that have accepted substantial development aid funds, such as through the Belt and Road Initiative, currently the largest development aid program in the world, have been faced with a lack of transparency and are in danger of losing critical infrastructure and resources as a result. Development aid should never be used as a mechanism to lead the recipient nation into growing debt or be conditioned by allying with the donor country's geopolitical interests. However, donors of international aid should establish simple and transparent monitoring and overview mechanisms to ensure that these resources are not wasted through corruption or misappropriation.

We call on donor countries to clarify and transparently communicate the expectations attached to any form of foreign aid, free from coercion or manipulation of a people's vulnerabilities. Bearing in mind that foreign aid can be given for the mutual benefit of the donor and recipient, we urge receiving countries to prudently judge which form of aid is most beneficial to its citizens and consider the long-term implications of aid for its people. The respect for everyone's inherent dignity implies universal responsibility to build just societies in which human freedom is protected and every person is encouraged to authentically develop his or her full potential. Therefore authentic donor support of recipient countries must be in compliance with their laws, history, and culture.