



PUB 18

Together for Justice: Our Collective Action for Decolonisation and Linguistic Diversity in International Cooperation

COVER NOTE

This statement is presented by delegates from Latin America and the Caribbean to the ACT Alliance Assembly 2024.

Throughout this document, we use the terms "Global North" and "Global South" to refer, respectively, to wealthy, predominantly white countries that colonised poorer countries inhabited by people of African descent, Indigenous origin, mestizo, etc. This geographical term is imperfect (for example, Australia is located in the Global South), but it is generally accepted in our sector.

TOPIC

This statement emphasises the need to decolonise cooperation relations between the Global North and the Global South, combat structural racism, promote cultural and linguistic diversity, and reinforce the principles of inclusivity, diversity, and local leadership within ACT Alliance.

STATEMENT

Together for Justice: Our Collective Action for Decolonisation and Linguistic Diversity in International Cooperation

Cooperation between the Global North and Global South has historically been marked by deeply entrenched power imbalances rooted in colonial heritage. These inequalities have perpetuated a system that often minimises or ignores the capacities, cultures, and local and community knowledge.

Decolonisation of International Cooperation

Decolonising international cooperation is not an option but an urgent necessity. In a world facing increasing crises and conflicts exacerbated by the remnants of colonialism, it is essential that states, donors, organisations, and individuals involved in cooperation actively engage in this process. This should not be limited to the political and economic spheres but must also include a comprehensive reform of international cooperation. This effort requires a robust plan and the commitment of those in power to eradicate any form of neocolonialism and achieve a paradigm shift where power, participation, and decision-making are truly equitable. International cooperation can no longer perpetuate unequal relationships between colonisers and colonised.

In this regard, ACT Alliance is deeply committed to combating systemic racism, which, alongside structural cultural and linguistic exclusion, continues to reinforce unjust dynamics in the international development and humanitarian community. These dynamics only exacerbate social and economic inequalities between the peoples of the Global South and their counterparts in the Global North.

The Localisation Agenda: Towards Decolonised Cooperation

The Localisation Agenda is a fundamental step towards the decolonisation of international cooperation, promoting the autonomy and leadership of local actors in the Global South. By prioritising decision-making and resource management by communities directly affected, we aim to reduce dependence on foreign intervention and balance the power relations that have historically perpetuated the inequalities arising from colonialism.

All actors involved in international cooperation must fully commit to this agenda. In this sense, it is imperative to strengthen local organisations, including Churches and Faith-Based Organisations, empowering them to design and lead their own solutions based on a profound understanding of their contexts and needs.

Linguistic Diversity: Right to Inclusion - Without Barriers

Language is a fundamental pillar of identity. At ACT Alliance, we value and promote linguistic diversity, recognising that each language expresses idiosyncrasies and unique ways of understanding and living in the world. It is imperative to prevent exclusion due to the predominance of English in international spaces. We believe it is essential to foster the inclusion of multiple working languages, such as the official languages in ACT - English, French, and

Spanish - within international cooperation spaces, and to set an example of this practice within ACT Alliance itself.

We reaffirm that genuine inclusion cannot be built if access to processes and decisions is limited by language barriers. Recognising linguistic diversity is not only a matter of equity but also a sign of respect for the rich heritage of the communities with which we work.

Commitments & Recommendations

At ACT Alliance, we reaffirm our commitment to act with integrity and coherence in promoting fair and inclusive cooperation. Therefore, we commit to:

- **Promote non-colonial cooperation policies and practices, both within ACT Alliance and internationally.** This involves restructuring power relations, ensuring equitable participation between the Global North and Global South, and guaranteeing that local communities and peoples are the protagonists and leaders of their own development processes.
- **Combat structural racism in all its manifestations, within our organisations and in our international actions.** We will promote concrete policies and measures to eliminate racial barriers, ensuring the full inclusion, representation, and leadership of Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and other historically marginalised communities.
- **Promote linguistic diversity in all international cooperation spaces, ensuring the right to work in ACT Alliance's three official languages (Spanish, English, and French).** This will ensure that decision-making processes are truly inclusive and accessible to all members of ACT Alliance.
- **Review our internal policies to ensure that participation requirements in the global structures of ACT do not exclude anyone for language reasons.** We commit to creating spaces where everyone can contribute and perform functions on an equal footing, meaning all regions and countries that speak French and Spanish.

A majority of the assembly has declared itself in agreement with the opinions expressed in this statement. While many ACT members agree with the public statement, there are members who have expressed differing perspectives on the content or tone. Their decision reflects the diverse viewpoints within our alliance, and we respect their choice to abstain or vote against. As always, we value the collective dialogue and encourage continued discussions on the matter at hand, recognizing the strength of our unity in diversity.