

Montevideo, 18 December 2009

**Press release// Social Watch presented the 2009 BCI**

## **Bad news: no progress in the global fight against poverty**

**The countries in a critical situation are grouped in a band along the equator while to the North and South levels are acceptable**

*The countries and regions of the world are becoming increasingly polarised in spite of their international commitments to fight poverty. This is what emerges from the 2009 Basic Capabilities Index (BCI) launched this Wednesday by Social Watch, an international network of citizens' organizations.*

According to Roberto Bissio, coordinator of the Social Watch secretariat, "Most of the countries in the world are very far from reaching the social objectives they are committed to for 2015". "Some 42% of countries have low, very low or critical values", according to Gabriel Errandonea, coordinator of the University of the Republic social sciences research team that processed the indicators and perfected the calculation methodology used by Social Watch.

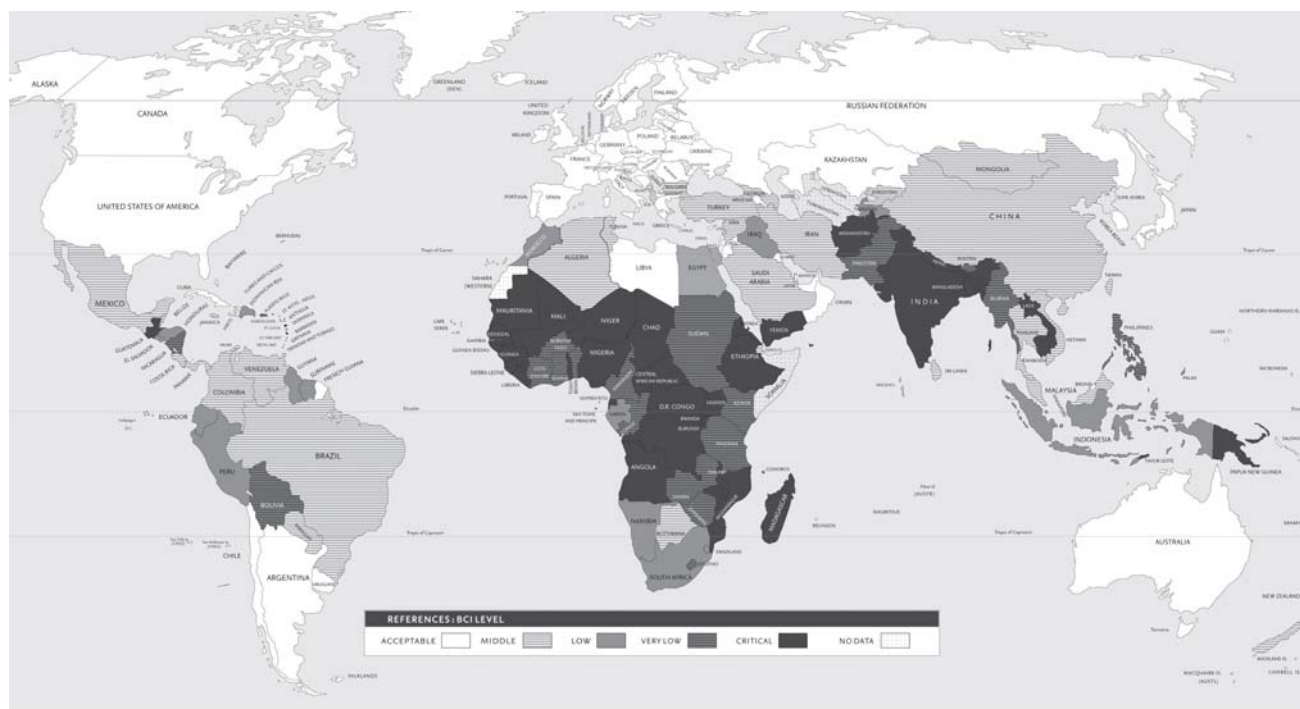
The Basic Capabilities Index is an annual monitoring report on the evolution of basic social development indicators. Three indicators are used to calculate the BCI, the percentage of children who reach the fifth year of primary school, the mortality rate among children under five years old and the percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel. Unlike other international development indices, the BCI does not incorporate monetary income as one of its components: human capabilities are measured directly. .

The fight against poverty, as measured by the BCI, was already slowing down and stagnating before September 2008, when the global economic crisis struck. The social impacts of the crisis are not reflected in the 2009 index because social indicators are processed much more slowly than economic ones. As Bissio remarked, "The 2010 BCI will very probably show deterioration where today we have stagnation."

The 2009 BCI shows that the countries in the most critical situation are in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The ten countries with the lowest BCI ratings are Chad, Afghanistan, East Timor, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Niger, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Nepal and Equatorial Guinea.

At the other extreme there are some sixty countries (including Uruguay) that have reached values of more than 98 points on the scale, whose maximum value is 100. “If a country reaches this BCI value, which we call ‘acceptable’, this means that it is able to provide the minimum essential social care for the entire population. But this is only a starting point for social development, not the finish line”.

The countries with values under 100 have, to a greater or lesser extent, situations of poverty that are an offence against human dignity.



The BCI distinguishes five levels: acceptable, medium, low, very low and critical. The higher levels tend to be occupied by countries in the North and also in the South of the planet (such as the Southern Cone of Latin America and Australia,) while the countries in a band on either side of the equator have the lowest values. In Africa, whose average BCI is very low, this global pattern is repeated: the countries of the Maghreb like Morocco, Algeria, Libya and Egypt, and those in the extreme south of the continent like South Africa, Namibia, Swaziland and Botswana, have the highest values.

As a region, Latin America and the Caribbean has a medium value, and in this region the countries in the lowest positions are Guatemala, Nicaragua, Bolivia, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic. Those with the highest values are Chile, Cuba, the Bahamas and Barbados, followed by Argentina and Uruguay.

In the last five years Argentina has stagnated on the BCI, Venezuela and Costa Rica have regressed and Uruguay, Brazil and Mexico have progressed.

The regions with the lowest BCI ratings are South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Next, with a low average BCI level, come East Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean. The Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia are in the medium category, and Europe and North America have the highest ratings.

If current trends continue, a large part of the world will not reach an acceptable level in terms of satisfying the basic needs of the population by 2015, the deadline for meeting the Millennium development Goals.

To consult or download supplementary material (graphs, statistics, etc.) visit:  
<[www.socialwatch.org/node/11404](http://www.socialwatch.org/node/11404)>