

# **Terms of Reference for United Nations MDG Gap Task Force**

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## **1. Background**

Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration by 189 member states in 2000, the Millennium Development Goals have become the shared goals for developed and developing countries establishing a set of time-bound and measurable targets. They are now broadly understood as a lynchpin to global security and an indicator of the international system's ability to set and follow through on practical targets for global partnership. At the 2005 World Summit, United Nations member states articulated the global partnership in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through a series of specific commitments including on debt relief, trade, and the volume and quality of official development assistance (ODA).

The United Nations (UN) family of agencies carries a special obligation to support, coordinate and integrate global and national efforts toward the achievement of the MDGs. A central role of the UN system involves tracking implementation of commitments made. There are a number of UN inter-agency processes tasked with the monitoring and reporting of MDGs at the global and national levels. There are existing platforms for inter-agency coordination regarding MDGs 1-7, but the monitoring of the global partnership contained in MDG-8 has resulted in significant fragmentation of information making it difficult to efficiently monitor global and country-level compliance with the international commitments to support the achievement of the MDGs as well as dedicated initiatives, such as the G8's commitment to ensure universal access to AIDS treatment by 2010. Nonetheless, available evidence clearly shows that there is a substantial gap between commitments made and their implementation. Hence the decision of the Secretary-General to create a United Nations MDG Gap Task Force, following the discussion of the Policy Committee on 1 May 2007 (Decision No. 2007/22). The MDG Gap Task Force will systematically track existing international development commitments and their fulfilment at the international and country level. In this way, the Task Force can highlight key implementation and resource gaps and help propose ways in which they can be addressed. Therefore the work of the Task Force is intended to complement the ongoing work led by, among others, the UN Statistics Division on monitoring MDG outcomes, as well as the MDG Monitor, which makes country-level information available to the general public.

## **2. Objectives**

The main purpose of the MDG Gap Task Force is to aggregate available information on the fulfilment of international commitments made by donors and development partners on aid, debt, trade and other key dimensions of the global partnership for development, as also resolved in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. To the extent possible, the task force will track the fulfilment of commitments in recipient countries and consolidate available information tracking country-level follow-through on dedicated initiatives. In this way the task force will provide senior UN management with strategic information on MDG implementation.

The task force will submit semi-annual progress reports to the Secretary-General (SG) of the United Nations and the aim of which is to identify the gaps and obstacles in fulfilling the international commitments to support countries in achieving the MDGs with special attention given to the least developed countries. The results of this work will be particularly useful to inform the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council (and, in particular, the Council's Annual Ministerial Review process and the Development Cooperation Forum), the Financing for Development process and the MDG Africa Steering Group. Recommendations following from progress reports may be used to strengthen dialogue with other international agencies/bodies as deemed relevant by the SG in order to help facilitate the resolution of gaps in MDG-8 related commitments for recipient countries. There may also be opportunities to raise public awareness of progress towards the MDGs through broader dissemination of the findings of the Task Force as considered appropriate by the SG.

Specifically, the main objectives of the task force include:

- a) To inform the SG on implementation gaps relating to the global partnership for development;
- b) To assess follow-through on these commitments and identify key implementation gaps; and
- c) To propose ways in which the UN system can more effectively support the implementation of existing commitments.

In carrying out its work, the MDG Gap Task Force will complement the work done by other UN processes, avoiding overlap and duplication of mechanisms already in place by the UN to monitor and support progress towards the MDGs. It will not create new coordination mechanisms but will instead build on, among other things, the existing UNDG working groups on aid effectiveness and the Millennium Declaration/MDGs and the inter-agency and expert group, led by the UNSD, on monitoring MDG indicators. Its work will also draw on information gathered by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for the Global Monitoring Report, information gathered by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD, by UN-DESA (for the World Economic Situation and Prospects and the Financing for Development process), by UNCTAD, the Regional Commissions of the United Nations and other agencies in relation to their work on monitoring trade, debt and aid. In turn, the task force can make suggestions for how these monitoring processes can be strengthened and integrated.

### **3. Activities**

Based on the objectives identified, the task force will undertake the following activities:

- a) To help collate across the UN family of agencies and other international development institutions available global and country-level information on progress towards meeting the global commitments around the MDG-8;
- b) To analyze and document the follow-through by all stakeholders on their commitments made in relation to the global partnership for development in general and, in particular, with respect to the key target indicators specified under MDG-8; and
- c) To report periodically to the SG and on progress to meet international commitments and their fulfilment at the national level, including recommendations on how to address implementation gaps and how to disseminate this information across the UN system.

### **4. Membership**

The MDG Gap Task Force will be led jointly by UN-DESA and UNDP working closely with the other members of the UN family of agencies, including Regional Commissions. All UN agencies involved in programming to support countries in achieving the MDGs will be consulted through available mechanisms, such as the UNDG Working Groups on Aid Effectiveness and the Millennium Declaration/MDGs, and invited to participate in the meetings of the Task Force in relation to their regional and thematic mandate and will have full access to the reports and information prepared and processed by the Task Force.

### **5. Management Arrangements**

The Task Force will convene meetings on a regular basis. The MDG Gap Task Force will be chaired by, respectively, UN-DESA and UNDP representatives on an annually rotating basis. UN-DESA and UNDP will make the necessary staff time available to carry out the work of the Task Force. The Task Force should convene its first meeting before 15 August 2007 to draft a work plan and timelines for reporting.