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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees HI;
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(Check against delivery)

"Voices against Poverty"

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Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: Progress made, challenges and opportunities.

New York, 29 June 2005

Excellencies,
Mr. President.
Secretary-General.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although green and fertile, Palorinya in northern Uganda is a desolate place. Last week, I met hundreds of refugees there—mainly women and children—who had fled their homes in Southern Sudan with their meager belongings. The families sought safety, food, shelter, and water, and waited patiently in temporary shelters. Fortunately, they could enjoy the hospitality of the local community, despite its poverty.

The refugees spoke despairingly of why they had to flee their homes and what this meant for their families and livelihoods.

I did not ask them, but I doubt they knew about the Millennium Development Goals or the outcome of international conferences.

Much progress has been made towards the MDGs in several regions of the world, including in Uganda, but in our quest for solutions to the problems, are we listening to the voices of the people like those I met in Palorinya? How is it that such a large group of refugees and other displaced persons seems to fall through the cracks?

Clearly, I am not in a position to speak on behalf of the poor. I can, however, convey the messages of fear, desperation, and, most importantly, of hope I heard from those who are voiceless to the international community.

Millions and millions of people are excluded from society, who are fleeing their homes, who are discriminated against, who are stateless. They are the victims of human rights

violations, war and conflict. Rather than benefiting from the protection of states they are denied that protection - if not effectively persecuted by them.

These people often do not enjoy their most basic rights and the benefits of all our combined efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals. As we all know, 'access' is a crucial dimension of the MDGs. After all, the best designed programme is ineffective if people do not have access to it.

From this perspective, I am struck by three issues in particular.

First. National MDG strategies seldom refer to displaced persons.

A recent review of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and UN Development Assistance Frameworks, for example, found that displaced persons are often depicted as *a strain*, an *impediment*, *a threat*. All negative terms. Of the PRSPs, only 10 per cent reflect the needs of refugees, one third include returnees in the country of origin, and less than half mention people suffering from internal displacement.

To ensure access for the most vulnerable we must make sure that the voices of all groups of people are taken into account and recognize that they *have* the skills and potential to attain the MDGs in order to enjoy human security.

Second. As many of the poorest people live in countries in conflict or just emerging from it, I am concerned by how little attention has been given to the relationship between conflict and the MDGs. "That is why the Secretary-General clearly stresses the indivisibility between security, development and human rights.

I could not agree more with Jeffrey Sachs when he writes in the *Millennium Project* report that "*Without effective strategies to forestall conflict, a significant number of national MDG-based strategies will likely be thrown off course... .*

Third. There is a huge gap between relief and development. Humanitarian agencies have made insufficient efforts to engage in and contribute to the discussions and policy formulation on the MDGs. We have also been inattentive to the voices of the people. Providing lifesaving humanitarian assistance will not be sustainable without an effective development strategy

From the perspective of my Office, whether it is the eradication of extreme poverty, achieving universal primary education, or promoting gender equality and environmental sustainability, each of the MDGs is just as important to humanitarian as to development actors.

In conflict and post-conflict situations, in particular, humanitarian assistance must help lay the basis for longer-term development to attain the MDGs, as MDG strategies and programmes must include a conflict prevention lens. Only through such an approach can

we reduce the odds - 50 percent -of a country sliding back into violence in the five years following the end of a conflict.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Freedom, democracy, the respect for human rights and good governance are essential tools for success in such countries. But for these values to flourish, globalization must give them a chance. We need a different, more humane globalization, able to create opportunities for all and a better global governance system. That is the guidance we can all find in the Secretary-General's report In *Larger Freedom*.

Facing the courage and resilience of the voiceless people. I must say if we cannot deliver on our promises then our institutions and lofty ideals are empty.

Thank you.