

Background note on roundtable 8:

Dialogue on national strategies to achieve the MDGs

Organizers: UNDP

ECOSOC 2005 High Level Segment

29 June, 2005

Using the ten key recommendations of the UN Millennium Project as a framework, the panelists were asked to present their views on two issues:

- Which concrete decisions needed to be taken prior to the September summit to empower countries to pursue goal-oriented development strategies?
- Which decisions needed to be reached at the summit to effectively support countries in the implementation of all internationally agreed development goals?

Pre-Summit decisions:

In general, participants welcomed the Millennium Project's recommendations as positive and implementable. The Project appropriately highlights the need to overcome poverty traps and vulnerabilities by investing in people (health and education), infrastructure, and the physical environment. In addition to broad support for the overarching argument on the need for greater resources and aid for development, several speakers stressed that key challenges to achieving the MDGs also included reduction of trade barriers, increase in development aid, debt relief, and reduction of corruption. Specific proposals made for action prior to the September Summit were:

- A decision should be made before September to enable the UN to play a greater role on trade issues.
- World leaders should address trade imbalances by removing barriers to free trade, including unlimited access of products of LDCs, trade preferences, and withdrawal of production subsidies, and commodities. Africa needs to remain a priority.
- "Quick-win" initiatives should be launched,
- Some concern was expressed that the achievement of MDGs in middle-income countries should not be taken for granted. **Strategies should be developed before September to address pockets of poverty in these countries.**
- One or two SIDS should be included among "fast track" countries.
- Innovative financing is needed to complement ODA commitments. **The summit needs to adopt new sources of financing**, including for example a \$1 international tax on plane tickets. Innovative sources of financing for

development and appropriate mechanisms to channel resources need to be further explored.

- ODA absorption capacities are greater than generally believed. **At the June Meeting, concrete actions should be taken to honor commitments of 0.7% ODA made at Monterrey including the adoption of a timeline for achieving the 0.7 target by 2015.**
- Aid needs to be better coordinated: A mosquito net would not work unless you had a house and a bed. Donors should set simpler and more coordinated requirements for aid with the Summit reaffirming commitments to implement recent OECD agreements.
- There is a need for a stronger engagement of civil society organizations. **The June hearings should enable CSOs to provide meaningful inputs to the September summit.**

Summit outcomes and post-Summit actions:

- Developing countries need to deepen their commitment to pro-poor policy reforms – many countries have made significant progress, for example through PRSP planning (with some even reaching decision point on debt forgiveness).
- Developing countries need to develop greater capacities to utilize international money markets to build domestic resources.
- Debt servicing needs to be fair, adapted to country needs and preserve international lending mechanisms.
- Mobilizing domestic resources are crucial and need to include fiscal and budgetary provisions
- Regional initiatives, such as investment for infrastructure in South America, should be supported. These experiences, if successful, could be replicated, for example through South-South initiatives. **Commitments should be made at the September Summit in line with Recommendation 6.**
- **The UN should be given a central role in follow-up to the decisions made at the September Summit.** ECOSOC should be entrusted with the follow-up, but needs to be strengthened to fulfill this role. Moreover, the UN's operational agencies need to operate more effectively and in a more coordinated manner with more stable financing.
- **The Summit needs to adopt a strong commitment to national ownership of development strategies** – actions need to be coordinated with sector specific strategies and need to support long-term development. National strategies also need to be more ambitious, reflect local conditions and go beyond the MDG targets if appropriate.
- The September summit should pay special attention to the needs of the least developed countries. Least developed countries, however, also need to work toward good governance and address corruption in a firm and transparent manner.