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DRAFT INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

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PREPARATORY MEETING

2012 DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FORUM

Bamako, 5 May 2011, 9:30 a.m.

*“Gearing development cooperation towards the MDGs:
effectiveness and results”*

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to join His Excellency Minister Soumeylou Boubeye Maiga, and the President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe, in welcoming you to this symposium.

The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Sha Zukang, was not able to join us for this meeting and has asked me to convey his warm wishes of success.

I would like to thank the Governments of Mali and Switzerland for making this high-level Symposium possible.

At the time when the Republic of Mali is celebrating its 50th anniversary, its unwavering efforts to meet the MDGs are impressive. Mali has also established an exemplary partnership with development cooperation partners, which allows harmonizing and aligning external support with its national priorities.

The debate over the benefits and limitations of aid has reached new levels of intensity. The President of ECOSOC quoted Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Like her, many of us believe that aid reduces poverty, if it is allocated, delivered and managed effectively. This has been demonstrated by the progress achieved towards MDGs in many poor countries.

Developing countries are under extreme pressure to respond to multiple development challenges. At the same time, they have to respond to the varied demands of growing numbers of development cooperation partners. Too often, aid is not delivered in the most rapid and flexible way. This is particularly true in countries in post-conflict situations and with special development needs. Nor is the proper use of aid funds always guaranteed.

The experience in Mali and many other developing countries has shown that the impact of aid hinges in many respects on whether developing country truly own and lead development cooperation. With the Monterrey Consensus and the Paris Declaration, country ownership and leadership has become a core principle of development cooperation.

Whether it is respected however depends on whether donors trust the recipient country's ability to utilize aid efficiently. This is a *sine qua non condition* for aid to be delivered through country systems. This requires however support to strengthen government capacity to manage and coordinate aid.

It is against this backdrop that efforts to demonstrate development results of aid have gained traction. Donors want to know that their aid makes a difference. Developing countries want to be sure it is bringing benefits to their people.

Later this year, at the High-level forum on aid effectiveness in Busan in the Republic of Korea, many recipient countries will show progress in achieving aid effectiveness goals. The challenge of Busan will be to demonstrate that aid reform has translated into faster progress towards the MDGs, and helped reduce poverty and inequality.

Our debate over the coming two days will focus on this issue - how aid can best contribute to country-led sustainable development, and how this should be monitored and evaluated.

The symposium will address the following key challenges:

First, while the MDGs have become the overarching framework to guide development cooperation, donors and programme countries use many different methods to define and assess results. Some approaches focus on how aid is delivered. Others strive to link development cooperation to broader development outcomes. There is thus no agreement on the kind of results which maximize development and the related M&E approaches.

Second, the ability of developing countries to lead in defining and measuring results is often hindered by their limited capacity. International assistance is rarely fully aligned with their national priorities and targets. And Donors bypass their national monitoring and evaluation processes. But there are certainly successful experiences in defining, monitoring and evaluating development results. They should be documented.

Third, some donors allocate aid based on their own assessments of country performance and of demonstrated development outcomes. This undermines national ownership and sustainability of development results. New impetus should be given to efforts to reform conditionalities.

Fourth, aid to LDCs is on average of lower quality than aid to other developing countries. It is less predictable, less aligned with national strategies, fragmented and often channelled through donor systems. A more rigorous review of quantity and quality of aid to LDCs, at both national and global level, is important to encourage progress. *Conference room paper 1* puts forward elements to guide such a review at global level. Discussions here in Bamako will prepare the ground for a special event to be held next week at the UN Conference on least developed countries in Istanbul.

Fifth, at the MDG Summit, world leaders said that mutual accountability is key to achieving the MDGs. Yet, surveys and studies conducted for the DCF have shown that there has been little progress in ensuring accountability on aid commitments at national or global level. They however identified what are the critical “building blocks” of a robust mutual accountability system. For example, the existence of a national aid policy document with clear priorities is critical. Together with a number of Member States, the UN, UNDP and the OECD-DAC have launched an effort to help developing countries in strengthening the accountability of their donors. The main challenge is ensuring that such efforts actually changes the behaviour of individual donors and enhance results and impact on the lives of the poor.

During the coming two days, we would like to hear your views on these key areas of concern.

The symposium will combine plenary meetings and small group discussions, so that we can hear from all of you, and have a lively and frank debate. Tomorrow, we have set time aside for consultations within the various groups (developing countries, DAC donors and non-governmental actors) so that they have the opportunity to develop common positions on the theme of the symposium. I would like to urge all of you to fully engage in the discussions. Please keep your interventions informal and to the point. The tradition in DCF meetings is that no one reads written statements – apart from the opening session – nor steers away from controversy.

I wish you a successful meeting.

Thank you.
