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STATEMENT BY

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**Prime Minister
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands**

High-Level Plenary Meeting on the MDGs

NEW YORK, 22 September 2010

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today we are looking back at the ten years since the Millennium Development Goals were agreed. But we are also looking forward. We still have five years to go. Five years to make a difference for all those people for whom poverty, hunger and shortages are still everyday realities.

Looking back, we have good reason to be satisfied with what we have achieved in some areas in the past ten years. Poverty, child mortality and malaria have all been reduced. More girls are attending school. And more people have access to clean drinking water – a subject to which the Netherlands, and in particular our crown prince, are deeply committed.

At the same time, there is cause for concern. Because our aims are ambitious, but we are moving too slowly. That applies in particular to the MDGs on reducing maternal mortality and achieving equality between men and women. Progress is lagging far behind, and we cannot allow that to happen. So we will have to do better. And we can do better, if we are prepared to think and work outside the box.

Too often, the Millennium Development Goals are still seen as the sole responsibility of NGOs, governments and multilateral organisations. This is unwise, because the commitment of the private sector is crucial to achieving them. Its knowledge and expertise in fields such as science, logistics and innovation enable us to push forward boundaries in development. Above all, however, the private sector is both a source of and a stimulus to employment, sustainable development and economic growth.

Research shows that economic growth accounts for 80 per cent of poverty reduction in the world. When per capita income increases, the poorest 20 per cent of the population also benefit. And the higher the growth is and the longer it lasts, the faster poverty rates drop. The same free market principles also operate at grassroots level. We will speak about that later today, when I host a side-event on inclusive finance in the presence of Her Royal Highness Princess Máxima, the Secretary-General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development.

So we know that within certain parameters, the mechanisms of the free market are essential for development. But we also know that investing in developing countries is still regarded by many as a risky business. So to get economic growth in gear, the private sector needs a helping hand.

That is why the Dutch government is strongly in favour of public-private partnerships. We recently drafted a bilateral donors' statement in support of private sector partnerships for development. Rather than viewing the private sector merely as a cash dispenser, this statement recognises that it is an equal partner in development. We are in this together with the governments of Austria, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the US. The International Finance Corporation and UNDP are also involved.

The governments of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba strongly support this policy of working with the private sector to achieve the MDGs. The upcoming Netherlands Antilles MDG Report

will not only emphasise this but also strengthen existing partnerships.

In a recent letter to co-facilitators, written jointly with the CEOs of several Dutch multinationals, the Dutch government emphasised the importance of innovative partnerships. I quote: *'The Netherlands believes that greater collaboration between government and business could be instrumental, as it would combine the knowledge and experience of the public sector with the creative solutions and technical expertise of the private sector.'* I am proud that so many Dutch companies are here at this week's summit to prove that our approach really works.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To achieve the MDGs, innovative thinking is needed in every field. This applies in particular to MDG3 and MDG5. Every year, over 350,000 women are still dying during pregnancy or childbirth, and in many cases women are still being denied equal rights. Shortly before my departure for New York, I was presented with a petition signed by thousands of Dutch mothers who find it unacceptable that during this summit more than 4,400 women will die during pregnancy or childbirth.

Like these mothers, the Dutch government believes – and I believe – that equal rights and opportunities for women bring the achievement of most other MDGs closer. Burkina Faso is a good example. By addressing harmful practices and discrimination against women, by expanding and improving family planning services, by committing itself to removing obstacles to health care, this country was able to reduce the number of needless deaths substantially.

Human rights play a crucial role on the road to 2015. By ensuring equality and non-discrimination, we give the poorest and most vulnerable groups access to basic services. Accountability, the right to participation and freedom of information will enable our efforts to meet the real needs of the population. And making things accessible and affordable ensures that the MDGs are more than a short-term success.

The key, ladies and gentlemen, is that we combine our strengths and efforts. As members of the UN, as donors and developing countries, and especially as governments and businesses.

Thank you.