

As Prepared for Delivery

Remarks for Opening Plenary of the High-Level UN Meetings on the MDGs

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Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to thank you for the opportunity to join you this morning to take stock of the progress towards the MDGs since 2000, and to redouble our collective efforts to achieve the goals by 2015.

The Millennium Development Goals are central to the World Bank Group's mission and our everyday work.

We will work with our 187 members from across the world, with the UN, with civil society, and with the private sector to deliver that Millennium promise: a world that overcomes poverty and hunger; strengthens health and education; creates good-paying jobs; and restores a cleaner environment. A world where all citizens have access to opportunity and hope.

Positive past achievements

We have seen that success is possible. In 1981, 52 percent of people in developing countries lived in extreme poverty; by 2005, that share had been cut by more than half. Efforts by developing countries were paying off right up until the crisis, with poverty falling sharply in East Asia, Latin America, and Eastern and Central Europe.

Progress slowed and reversed by crisis

But success has been uneven, and the triple-blow of the food, fuel, and financial crises since 2008 has slowed down and even reversed progress towards the MDGs in many countries around the world.

The World Bank estimates that 64 million more people are living in extreme poverty in 2010, and some 40 million more people went hungry last year because of the food, fuel, and financial crises.

By 2015, 1.2 million more children under five may die, 350,000 more students may not complete primary school, and about 100 million more people may remain without access to safe water.

These are not just challenges for a summit week. These are challenges every day. Every day when a mother goes without food for the sake of her child; every day

when a girl is pulled out of school for the sake of her brother; every day when a grandmother takes in her grandchild with HIV-AIDS, because she is quite simply the only one left alive in her family.

And these are challenges not just faced by mothers and fathers, grandparents and children in the poorest countries. Seventy percent of the world's poor live in middle income countries.

"Access Agenda"

Over the past ten years, the WBG has invested \$33 billion in health and nutrition in developing countries.

We pledge to mobilize substantial new investments in a wide range of sectors to help countries close the gap and achieve the MDGs.

We are focusing particularly on "The Access Agenda"; helping to ensure access to basic health, quality schooling, clean water, energy, food, and jobs – looking, not just at the numbers, but at the quality of services.

In health, we are increasing the scope of our results-based programs by more than \$600 million until 2015 – so people have benefits in their hands before the money flows. We are focusing on 35 countries, particularly in East Asia, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa that face challenges in achieving the MDGs due to high fertility, poor child and maternal nutrition, and high rates of child and maternal disease.

To help countries achieve the education MDGs, the World Bank commits to increasing its zero-interest investment in basic education by an additional \$750 million. These investments will focus on the countries -- particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa -- that are not on track to reach the education MDGs by 2015.

We are expanding our support to infrastructure - where we have more than quadrupled our lending since 2000; and to agriculture, so central to boosting incomes, employment, and food security in many low-income countries.

We are working with our partners to deliver measurable results across the development agenda. We need to interconnect the various goals. It is not enough to build health clinics if there are no roads for mothers to gain access to them.

It is not enough to train teachers or provide textbooks, if children have to struggle with homework at night in the dark. People do not live their lives in health sectors, or education sectors, or infrastructure sectors, arranged in tidy compartments. People live in families, villages, communities, countries, where all the issues of everyday life merge. We need to connect the dots.

This is what IDA, the World Bank's fund for the poorest, is doing. Over the last 10 years, IDA has increased its no-interest and grant funding in support of developing countries from \$4.4 billion in 2000 to \$14.5 billion this year.