

BACKGROUND NOTE

Roundtable 4: Emerging Issues

Progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals is threatened by a number of emerging issues, including climate change, the global financial and economic crisis, food security and armed conflict. Mitigating the adverse effects of these challenges presents an opportunity to design and deploy more coherent, inclusive, sustainable and equitable approaches to development.

1. How should climate change mitigation and adaptation be incorporated into broader efforts to enhance sustainable development?

Climate change poses an obstacle to the achievement of all the MDGs. Extreme weather events caused by climate change will particularly impact land productivity and water availability, undermining rural livelihoods, with a disproportionate impact on women and vulnerable populations. Climate change can also destroy fragile homesteads in coastal and mountainous areas, and it threatens the very existence of Small Island Developing States.

Mitigation and adaptation will require domestic policy change and resource allocation, together with major increases in international support. Actions include:

- Raising investment levels and channelling resources towards renewable energy and in developing resilience to climate impacts, as well as strengthening institutional capacities and delivering appropriate technological solutions to respond to climate change.
- Switching to low greenhouse gas emitting, high-growth is both necessary and feasible. Provide economic incentives to accelerate a transition to cleaner technologies, especially for low-income countries. Encourage and support approaches such as large-scale use of solar power or the restoration of heavily degraded or unused land.
- Partnerships for greater global and regional integration need to be broadened and strengthened.

The risk of natural disasters is increasing globally and is highly concentrated in middle- and low-income countries. Scientific evidence suggests that climate change is one driver of this trend. Accelerating progress towards the MDGs also depends in part on reducing the risk of natural disasters and increasing resilience to natural hazards in different development sectors.

Ensuring sufficient infrastructure investments in areas on which the poor depend for their livelihoods offers a way to achieve three objectives at once: providing financing for growth and full and productive employment, decreasing the cost of climate change adaptation, and increasing resilience to natural disasters.

2. How should the international financial system and international economic governance be reformed to better support sustainable and equitable development?

The global financial and economic crisis has undermined hard-won gains towards the MDGs and exacerbated shortfalls in progress. Although the response to the crisis has thus far prevented a deeper recession, the recovery remains fragile and uneven. A long-term solution will require a better coordinated and more comprehensive response that addresses the impact of the crisis on developing countries. Further consideration is needed on:

- Reform of the international financial system for improved regulatory oversight, higher buffer capital requirements for financial institutions, measures to deal with financial institutions deemed “too big to fail”, and reduced volatility in financial markets.

- New measures for debt relief and restructuring to assist countries facing severe financial distress resulting from the crisis.
- Reform of the global financial and economic architecture to better enable it to prevent and respond to emergencies, and to promote more sustainable and equitable development, driven by employment-intensive pro-poor growth.

3. What are the most effective measures to enhance food security?

- A sustainable increase in agricultural output to address hunger and improve rural livelihoods.
- A significant scaling-up of investment to improve the capacities of small farmers, in particular women farmers, to expand the use of efficient water management technologies, to restore soil nutrients, increase access to stress-resistant plant varieties and improve market opportunities for small farmers.
- Social programmes that translate increased food availability into improved nutrition by ensuring that the most vulnerable and those most in need of nutritious food have access to it, including very young children.
- Cost-effective innovations need to be scaled-up, such as complementary and supplementary nutritious food items to address the specific needs of young children and the ill, including people living with HIV, and more diversified production of local nutritious foodstuffs.

4. How should the international community address new emerging issues that are intimately linked with the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, such as security and armed violence?

Some of the most formidable challenges to progress towards the MDGs confront countries affected by armed violence, conflict (inter-State, civil and criminal) and the resulting breakdown of the rule of law, justice and security.

Address the causes of conflict:

- Identify the root causes of conflict and armed violence: including the underlying drivers, risk factors and tensions.
- Advance people-centred solutions: engage all stakeholders, empowering women and including underrepresented communities. Meaningful participation, non-discrimination and accountability can better address the root causes of poverty and conflict.
- Strengthen institutions that monitor and mitigate conflicts, crime and violence.

In post-conflict situations:

- Post-conflict and development strategies must be nationally owned.
- Strategies are needed that promote the rule of law, justice and security and human rights. Adhering to the fundamental norms and values of the Millennium Declaration, including human rights, gender equality and governance accelerates progress towards the achievement of all the MDGs
- Nurture democratic institutions and ensure institutions and policies are grounded in national and international human rights frameworks to strengthen engagement and accountability of all stakeholders.
- Ensure equal access to resources and opportunities, generate early economic recovery and rebuild capacities, while implementing policies that reduce the necessity of armed violence