

**Remarks by
MR. SHA ZUKANG
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE 2009 REPORT OF THE MDG GAP TASK FORCE
New York, 16 September 2009**

Delivered by Mr. Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

The Deputy Secretary-General has outlined the main findings of the Report and emphasized their significance in the present economic situation.

As DESA has analyzed, in our mid-year update of the *World Economic Situation and Prospects*, the global policy response has been unprecedented, in terms of monetary, fiscal and financial measures to stabilize financial markets and revive global growth. Yet, much greater efforts are still needed, through better policy coordination and larger financial transfers to developing countries, better aligned with long-run sustainable development goals.

DESA also coordinates the monitoring of progress towards all the MDGs, with the latest *Millennium Development Goals Report* launched by the Secretary-General this past July in Geneva.

I would like to stress the importance of monitoring progress on MDG8, not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively. This allows the international community to gauge our progress in strengthening the global partnership for development.

I would like to expand on what the Deputy Secretary-General has mentioned, identify some of the gaps that need to be filled, and highlight some policy recommendations from this year's Report of the MDG Gap Task Force.

In 2008, total net aid from OECD/DAC countries amounted to only 0.3 per cent of their combined gross national income, not even half the UN target of 0.7 per cent. Enormous efforts will be needed to fill this gap. New commitments made at the G8 Summit in L'Aquila in response to the ongoing food crisis demonstrated that the international community can rise to challenges in a concerted way, giving hope that more resources can be mobilized.

Active trade policies are needed in the face of protectionist trends and the alarming 20 percent fall in global trade from April 2008 to April 2009. Even if trade recovers a little in the coming months, the losses for most developing countries have been severe. At the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong in December 2005, governments agreed to give duty-free, quota-free access to 97 per cent of exports from the poorest countries, but to date, there has been no progress. I urge the international community to resist protectionist urges, which will only

serve to exacerbate the global downturn, and to immediately provide 100 per cent market access to the LDCs to enhance their economic recovery.

By the first quarter of 2009, 35 of the 40 eligible countries had qualified for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Many have already received substantial relief when external finance was plentiful. The global financial crisis has made prospects for highly indebted countries more uncertain, with many developing economies likely to take on more debt to stem the economic downturn. The international community should accelerate and broaden debt relief initiatives to prevent debt distress spreading.

People in developing countries are paying 3 to 6 times more than what they should be paying for essential medicines, mostly due to the unavailability of generic alternatives. The international community must urgently ensure affordable access to generic medicines in developing countries.

Similarly, people in developing countries pay 10 times more for internet services than those living in developed countries. The private sector should work together with public telecommunication companies and regulators to greatly accelerate and improve internet access and affordability in developing countries.

Finally, to address the looming challenge of climate change, massive public investments are urgently needed in renewable energy infrastructure and public transportation, and for much greater research, development and affordable adoption of new technologies for both climate change mitigation and adaptation, and to advance sustainable development more generally.

The Task Force has begun work on our 2010 report in which we will analyze the most important of all gaps – the “needs gap” – to assess how well support by the international community responds to the real needs of developing countries. The Task Force thus aims to make a significant contribution to the 2010 Summit’s review of progress towards the MDGs in order to improve prospects for reaching the goals by 2015.