

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS ON LAUNCH OF THE REPORT
OF THE MDG GAP TASK FORCE
New York, 4 September 2008**

Good morning. I am grateful for this opportunity to brief you on a subject which will be a top priority this fall. **I have with me Ad Melkert from UNDP and Rob Vos from DESA, UNDP, the two entities co-chairing the Task Force which produced the report we are launching today.**

We are currently preparing for a gathering of world leaders on 25 September to step up efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals. We have now passed the midpoint in the race to reach the Goals, and concerted action has never been more important.

I have called for a comprehensive account of progress on the global partnership for development, as embodied in Goal 8 of the MDGs. The result is the first report of the MDG Gap Task Force -- *Delivering on the Global Partnership for Achieving the MDGs*. It is the product of a unique and collective effort by more than 20 UN entities as well as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

This report sounds a strong alarm. The main message is that while there has been progress on several counts, delivery on commitments made by Member States has been deficient, and has fallen behind schedule. We are already in the second half of our contest against poverty. We are running out of time.

On Official Development Assistance, the Report highlights a large delivery gap in meeting commitments. Last year, there was a shortfall of 10 billion dollars. Total net aid from OECD/DAC countries amounted to only 0.28 per cent of their combined Gross National Income, as opposed to the UN target of 0.7 per cent. If we are to meet the 2010 target set at the G-8 Summit in 2005, ODA will have to increase by 18 billion dollars a year. Of that, 7.3 billion dollars would have to go to Africa.

On trade, the failure to conclude a development round constitutes the largest implementation gap. Even though aid for trade has increased in real terms, it has fallen as a percentage of ODA. The world's poorest countries are still marginalized, and many have been hit hard by high food and energy prices. The report stresses that we need to move faster in reducing domestic and export subsidies on agriculture in developed countries, and in addressing other barriers to developing country exports and agricultural productivity growth.

On debt, there has been some progress. Fewer countries today are hampered in their development by massive debt. Debt relief has been or will be provided to 33 out of 41 eligible countries, cancelling more than 90 per cent of their external debt. However, debt reduction needs to be extended to countries beyond the Heavily Indebted Poor Country and the Multilateral Debt Relief initiatives. And mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure sustainability and fair debt workouts in the future.

In health, access to essential medicines has improved -- including those to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. But it is still far from adequate, and wide variations in pricing mean that essential medicines -- including antibiotics and painkillers -- are often unavailable to the poor. The report recommends eliminating national taxes and duties on essential medicines, as well as the adopting generic substitution policies for essential medicines.

We also need to step up efforts in transferring new technologies for development, including for agriculture, infrastructure, and access to energy. The report highlights the need to transfer technology to address climate change, so as to protect the most vulnerable.

As these gaps show us, a shift in both quantity and quality is needed to fulfil the promise of halving extreme poverty, achieving universal primary education and gender parity, and improving the health and living conditions of millions of people. The international community has a responsibility to live up to its commitments.

We have only seven years until the deadline. The High-level Event on 25 September will provide an opportunity to start bridging the gaps. We aim to make it a turning point -- a forum for world leaders to review progress and commit to concrete efforts, resources and mechanisms. By asking world leaders to announce their specific plans and proposals, the High-level Event should prepare the ground for a decisive conference on financing for development in Doha in November.

As Chair of the Task Force that produced this year's report, Mr. Melkert will now add his observations. Then he and Mr. Vos would be pleased to answer your questions.

Thank you very much.