

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**STATEMENT AT THE OPENING OF THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT
OF THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
New York, 10 February 2005**

Our era of globalization has brought tremendous benefits to large parts of the world. In recent decades, hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of extreme poverty and enjoyed dramatic gains in living longer, healthier lives. At the same time, large parts of the world have been connected to the processes of globalization, but seen too little progress. Many feel threatened by how these processes are affecting their communities, endangering their jobs or widening the gap between rich and poor. Other large parts of the world, particularly the poorest countries, are being bypassed by globalization altogether, with hundreds of millions of people still excluded from the benefits of the global community, even while sharing the risks.

Globalization may seem as immutable as a force of nature. But that does not mean it cannot be shaped through choices and actions. If today there are winners, losers and people excluded, that need not be the case tomorrow. Our challenge is to make globalization work for all the world's people.

Ten years ago, United Nations Member States gathered in Copenhagen with just that aim in mind. At the World Summit for Social Development, developed and developing nations alike, including 117 heads of State, adopted 10 commitments to make headway on three core issues: poverty, employment and social exclusion. In 2000, at the special session of the General Assembly in Geneva, Member States reaffirmed the Copenhagen agenda, and their determination to take action to achieve "a society for all".

Copenhagen is a landmark -- not because it began global efforts to promote social development, but because it put these efforts squarely on the international agenda, in a holistic way. Copenhagen stressed that the problems of employment, poverty and social exclusion are intimately related, and must be addressed comprehensively, with the participation of all. Copenhagen raised the global standard for achieving development and social progress. In doing so, it alerted the world's financial institutions to the fact that economic policies must take into account their social implications.

Ten years after Copenhagen, there has been progress -- in reduced global poverty rates, in the spread of democracy and in primary education of boys and girls, to name a few. But poverty rates remain shockingly high; HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria claim nearly 5 million lives a year; and deep chasms persist between haves and have-nots, both within and between countries. Most distressingly, it is the poorest countries that are typically seeing the least progress. Official development assistance has only recently begun to rise after a steady decline, and the global trading system retains deep inequities in market access.

The report of the Millennium Project, issued last month, points out that there are a plethora of good reasons why no one should be content with this state of the world. Whatever the motivation -- human rights, religious values, security, fiscal prudence, ideology -- development can and should be our common goal.

Relying on market forces will not, on its own, achieve major development gains. Economic growth is a cornerstone for poverty reduction, but sustained economic growth will occur only when we put people -- individual human beings -- at the centre of our development policies.

Developing countries must take steps to promote good governance, and they must focus on practical public investments in health, education and other basic services that allow people to participate in market economies, and pursue social policies to lessen inequality and exclusion. In those efforts, there are some “quick wins” that can -- with adequate donor support -- be undertaken immediately. Central among these is the recommendation for developing countries -- backed by adequate donor support -- to eliminate user fees for primary education and basic health services, to ensure access for even the poorest individual. There is no reason for us, working together this year, without delay, not to address such fundamental sources of exclusion.

You meet in the early months of a critical year for the future of global development cooperation. In September, world leaders will gather to measure progress in implementing all aspects of the Millennium Declaration. They will have before them a report of the Secretary-General, which will be issued next month, setting out an agenda of key issues on which Member States will be asked to make decisions.

Of course, the central plank of the Millennium Declaration is the Millennium Development Goals, which were based on the key international development meetings in the 1990s. They are an expression of the broader United Nations development agenda, and of a desire to expand successes in poverty reduction to those most in need. Yet, all too often, bold pronouncements have not been followed with bold action. In the year ahead, as the Millennium Declaration is reviewed, we have an important opportunity to address this “implementation gap”, particularly by strengthening the global partnership for development that is itself one of those Goals. And that would be good news, not just for our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals themselves, but in the equally important efforts to promote full employment and foster social integration.

At this time of review and renewal in international development cooperation, today’s High-Level Plenary Session is an opportunity to stress a broad vision of development, in which efforts to eradicate poverty, promote full employment, and foster social integration are backed up with the reforms and resources necessary to turn development targets into reality.

I therefore wish you a very productive session. Your ideas -- and your assessment -- will help us as we prepare the report of the Secretary-General for the September

meeting. I hope in turn that the decisions taken here will influence the deliberations at the Summit itself. Allow me, finally, to reaffirm to you the commitment of the entire United Nations system to promoting, in the words of the Charter, “social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”.