

**First United Nations
Decade for the
Eradication of Poverty
(1997-2006)**

*Eradicating poverty is an ethical,
social, political and economic
imperative of humankind*

In December 1995, the General Assembly proclaimed the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006), following the Copenhagen Social Summit.

While It is estimated that an increased \$50 billion annually are needed to reach all of the MDGs, global military expenditure was over \$950 billion in 2003* alone.

*SIPRI Yearbook 2004

One of the major milestones during the Decade has been the commitment of the global community to the international development goal to halve income poverty by 2015, a commitment that was made at the twenty fourth special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in June 2000 and subsequently re-affirmed at

To help people is not a matter of looking at them and telling them what they should do. If only people could stop looking down on the poor, the world would be a better place

—Testimony from Oct. 17 commemoration—

**Millennium Development
Goals to be Achieved
by 2015**

- § Halve extreme poverty and hunger
- § Achieve universal primary education
- § Empower women and promote equality between women and men
- § Reduce under-five mortality by two-thirds
- § Reduce maternal mortality by three-quarters
- § Reverse the spread of diseases, especially HIV/AIDS and malaria
- § Ensure environmental sustainability
- § Create a global partnership for development, with targets for aid, trade and debt relief

We're ashamed of our poverty. We have been forced to be ashamed. But the misery goes away in the evening when I watch my children sleeping. I can see only them, and I weep. This way they never see my tears.

—Voices of the Poor (World Bank)—

We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want.

—Millennium Declaration—



**INTERNATIONAL
DAY FOR THE
ERADICATION
OF POVERTY**

17 OCTOBER



“Three billion people – half the world’s population – live on less than \$2 a day. In a world of great wealth, in a world of scientific and technological wonders, in a world in which people are more aware than ever before of how ‘the other half lives’, that should be unacceptable... Extreme poverty is an affront to human dignity and human rights.”

United Nations Secretary-General
Kofi Annan

An estimated 25,000 people die from the effects of hunger every day. That’s about one person every four seconds.

October 17 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

The General Assembly declared 17 October as *International Day for the Eradication of Poverty*, to be observed beginning in 1993. It invited all States to devote the Day to presenting and promoting, as appropriate in the national context, concrete activities on the eradication of poverty and destitution.

The General Assembly also invited intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to assist States, at their request, in organizing national activities for the observance of International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, paying due attention to the specific problems of the desti-

Background

On October 17, 1987, about 100,000 defenders of human rights gathered together on the Trocadero Plaza in Paris to honor victims of hunger, violence, and ignorance, to express their rejection of extreme poverty, and to call on mankind to unite to ensure the respect of human rights. On this day, the Commemorative Stone was also inaugurated to bear witness to the suffering and struggles of the poorest and to affirm that extreme poverty is a violation of Human Rights. The stone, which has remained at the center of all subsequent commemorations of this day, was the idea of Father Joseph Wresinski, founder of the International Movement ATD Fourth World.



Logo of the ATD
Fourth World

The need to eradicate poverty does not compete with the need to make the world more secure. On the contrary, eradicating poverty should contribute to a safer world...

—Human Development Report, 2003—

Since then, on the 17th of October each year, the poorest and all those who reject extreme poverty and exclusion gather throughout the world to express their solidarity and their commitment to ensure that everyone's dignity and freedom are respected. This is the origin of what used to be called “World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty”.

“Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty.”

Father Joseph Wresinski, founder of
ATD Fourth World.

For further information, visit:

Millennium Development Goals:

- www.un.org/millenniumgoals
- www.undp.org/mdg
- www.developmentgoals.org
- www.unmillenniumproject.org

*Decade and Day for Poverty Eradication
visit:*

- www.un.org/esa/socdev/poverty/poverty
- www.undp.org/idep
- www.oct17.org/

Between 1990 and 2001, the number of people living in extreme poverty fell by 126 million, from 28 to 21.1 per cent of the world’s population. Still, 1.2 billion people live in severe poverty, under a dollar per day, while 2.7 billion live on less than \$2 per day.

—World Bank, 2001—

Poverty is lack of freedom, enslaved by crushing daily burden, by depression and fear of what the future will bring.

—Voices of the Poor (World Bank)—

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