

Draft Press Release

**HIGH-LEVEL PANEL LAYS GROUNDWORK FOR FUNDAMENTAL REVIEW
OF THE UN'S OPERATIONAL WORK AT FIRST MEETING IN NEW YORK,
4-6 APRIL 2006**

The Prime Ministers of Mozambique, Norway and Pakistan joined Secretary-General Kofi Annan and other eminent international figures today in New York to launch an ambitious study to review and improve the UN's international development cooperation activities, complementing other major reform initiatives currently underway at the United Nations. Speaking at the opening of the first meeting of the High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment, Secretary-General Annan emphasized that "As long as over a billion people still live in extreme poverty, and our environment is under pressure and the number of victims of humanitarian disasters is on the rise, the UN has to do more and has to do it better. We have to do everything in our power to realize the MDGs, that were born at the UN, and help countries implement their national priorities. This means the international community should spend the increase in aid to the greatest effect. I feel once again, the UN, with its unique legitimacy and universality, will rise to the occasion".

The Secretary-General announced the formation of the High-level Panel in February 2006. The Panel will examine how to fundamentally restructure the UN system to ensure better coherence and performance in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment. The Panel's expected output is a set of practical recommendations, which will be provided to the UN General Assembly in September.

Speaking at the opening session, Co-Chair Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz remarked that "the only constant in life today is change, and the United Nations must also change if it is to be effective." Co-Chair Prime Minister Louisa Diogo underlined that "our main goal must be a UN that effectively contributes to the efforts of national governments." Co-Chair Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg added that "we are all strong supporters of the UN, but to be a friend of the UN is to offer constructive criticism. If we would not, the United Nations would be much weaker, and we are in favour of a strong UN."

At the first meeting, members of the High-level Panel reviewed the scope and orientation of the Panel's work programme, and discussed strategies for consultation and outreach to key stakeholders. To ensure that the Panel's deliberations are informed by a balanced range of perspectives, a wide-ranging process of consultations will be undertaken through consultation meetings, hearings, country visits, workshops and analytic studies. The Panel's second meeting is scheduled for late May 2006.

Speaking at the meeting, Deputy Secretary-General Malloch Brown stressed that "With the help of our stakeholders, we can achieve greater relevance and help UN member states achieve better results. In the end, it will be about better results at country

level, where the UN's women and men help countries achieve their nationally owned goals."

In addition to the three co-chairs, the Panel is composed of ten eminent international figures including current and former high-level government officials and experts in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment. Panel members include Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown (United Kingdom), Former CEO and Chairman of the Global Environmental Facility Mohamed T. El-Ashry (Egypt), President of the Canadian International Development Agency Robert Greenhill (Canada), Director-General for Development Cooperation Ruth Jacoby (Sweden), former President Ricardo Lagos Escobar (Chile), EU Commissioner Louis Michel (Belgium), former President Benjamin W. Mkapa (Tanzania), Director General of the French Development Agency Jean-Michel Severino (France), Under Secretary for Economic, Business and Agricultural Affairs Josette S. Shiner (United States) and Former State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Keizo Takemi (Japan). Representing the UN system, Kemal Dervis (Turkey) and Lennart Bage (Sweden) will serve as ex-officio members of the Panel.

The panel is expected to complete its work by the summer, to allow for formal presentation of its recommendations to the next session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2006 and possible implementation in 2007. The work of the Panel is supported by a small secretariat based in New York.