

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT ON THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

I. Background¹

Since all member states of the United Nations adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, they have become a global framework for development. They are now broadly understood as a lynchpin to global security and an indicator of the international system's ability to set and follow-through on practical targets for global partnership. All governments, UN organizations, the International Financial Institutions, and major civil society groups have signed on to the Goals, which need to be achieved in every country.

The 8 Millennium Development Goals:

1. **Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**
2. **Achieve universal primary education**
3. **Promote gender equality and empower women**
4. **Reduce child mortality**
5. **Improve maternal health**
6. **Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases**
7. **Ensure environmental sustainability**
8. **Develop a global partnership for development**

The Secretary General reports annually on progress towards achieving the MDGs and also identifies areas where greater follow through is required to deliver existing commitments made by member states. While there has been significant progress in a number of countries many others are not on track to meet some or all of the MDGs by 2015. The position is most severe in Sub-Saharan Africa where many countries are off track. Overall, the poverty target (MDG 1) may well be met due to strong progress in China and India. However, on current trends some countries in Sub-Saharan Africa may not meet the poverty target until 2147; achieve universal access to primary education (MDG 2) until 2129; and, reduce under 5 mortality by two-thirds (MDG 4) until 2165. Several non-African LDCs face similar challenges.

Middle-income countries also experience high rates of inequality. On current trends there are many instances where entire regions or social groups will not achieve the Goals. Even in countries that have made tremendous progress in reducing poverty over the past decade, including much of Asia, challenges persist in areas such as health and environmental sustainability. Some challenges are pervasive across many regions. They include rapid deforestation, increasing water scarcity, rising HIV prevalence, and youth unemployment. There is a clear moral imperative to act in the face of unacceptable poverty and achieve the MDGs by 2015, when globally the knowledge, tools, and technologies are available to do so. Existing

¹ The Development Section of the 2006 Report of the Secretary General on the Work of the Organization (GA A/61/1) provides a more comprehensive background on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

commitments by member states, particularly pledges to achieve the long-standing target to provide 0.7 percent (oda/GNI) need to be delivered. In addition, pursuing sound economic policies and governance, including, the promotion of gender equality, increased investments in essential infrastructure, social services, environmental management, and improving access to international markets will accelerate progress towards the MDGs.

Six years after the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, crucial international policy processes are not aligned with the MDGs. For example, the design of countries' development strategies, donor consultations, Article IV consultations by the IMF, and the operational activities of the United Nations are not systematically aligned with the need to achieve the MDGs in every country.

However, there are significant opportunities to generate positive momentum. World leaders have agreed on a shared operational framework for achieving the MDGs. At the 2005 World Summit they resolved to: "Adopt, by 2006, and implement comprehensive national development strategies to achieve the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals" (para. 22a).

The United Nations has played an essential role maintaining pressure on donors to follow-through on official development assistance commitments made at Monterrey Consensus and during 2005, by the Group of Eight and the European Union. And, following on from the 2005 World Summit, in March 2006, the Secretary-General established the High-Level Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence. The Panel's Report launched on 9th November, contains a package of recommendations to enhance operational effectiveness and interagency cooperation to ensure that the work of UN organizations is systematically align with the MDGs both in-county and at headquarters.

II. Role of the United Nations and other key actors

The agencies, funds, and programmes of the United Nations have four specific roles to support the achievement of the MDGs;

1. Providing technical support for the preparation and implementation of MDG-based national development strategies including sector strategies.
2. Implementing projects and national programs on behalf of governments.
3. Leading the advocacy for the Millennium Development Goals
4. Monitoring progress towards the MDGs.

Governments have the overall responsibility for preparing and implementing strategies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Countries that are off track to meeting the Goals often seek technical and financial support from a large number of actors including:

- *International Financial Institutions (IFIs)*: The World Bank, IMF, and the Regional Development Banks provide financial and technical support for projects and national programs. They review and approve macroeconomic frameworks and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). The IFI's support for MDG-based national

development strategies is necessary for their implementation and they play a pivotal role in the relationship between government and other development partners.

- *Bilateral donors and other development partners*: Bilateral donors provide the bulk of official development assistance in low-income countries, either by supporting individual projects or direct budget support. They often follow the technical guidance and advice of the IFIs in matters relating to the support for a country's PRSP and macroeconomic framework.
- *UN Country Teams*: As the local presence of the United Nations in each developing country UN Country Teams are the central node in providing day-to-day support for the preparation and implementation of MDG-based development strategies. Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator they work with national and local governments with support from their respective headquarters.
- *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*: As the "scorekeeper" on the MDGs and home to the Resident Coordinator system, UNDP leads the United Nations operational support for the Millennium Development Goals through its MDG Support initiative. Moreover, UNDP supports the preparation of national MDG Reports and is home to the Millennium Campaign, which leads the global advocacy for the Goals.
- *Department for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (UN-DESA)*: UN-DESA coordinates the monitoring of MDG progress across the UN system; prepares the global MDG progress report each year and associated statistical packages; facilitates intergovernmental policy processes; and provides technical advice to the UN system and member states.

In addition, civil society organizations and private businesses play an essential role by accelerating progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in many countries.

Civil Society: building voice and accountability

Over the past decade the expansion of democratic governance, telecommunications, and economic integration has led to a dramatic expansion in the size, scope, and capacity of civil society around the globe. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have become significant players in global development assistance. Even by the late 1990's CSOs were annually contributing US\$11-12 billion from their own resources for development.

CSOs' have now become important channels for delivering social services and implementing development programs, especially in regions where government presence is weak, such as post-conflict situations, or where civil society experience and expertise complements government action. Over 4,500 organizations are currently accredited to the United Nations. They provide support to the UN, both operationally and in terms of outreach, encouraging global support for UN activities among their diverse constituents.

CSOs' influence on shaping global public policy has also emerged over the past two decades. This dynamism is exemplified by successful advocacy campaigns around such issues as banning of land mines, debt cancellation, increases in aid, and environmental protection. Examples of the

vibrancy of global civil society include the 2003 World Social Forum, which attracted over 100,000 participants, or the globally influential 2005 Make Poverty History campaign.

Private Sector: Pro-poor growth

The links between the private sector and poverty reduction are manifold. In developing countries the typical private sector entity is not a large multinational company, but a rural smallholding, a market stall or co-operative factory. In SSA, 90% of people from are in the private sector.

Sustained poverty reduction requires the development of small and medium-sized enterprises through domestic and foreign investment and the movement of businesses from the informal to the formal economy. Private sector investment generates jobs and higher wage income; it boosts national savings; enhances the national tax base, permitting higher public spending on basic services such as education and health, and it strengthens civil society and popular participation in national development. Vietnam, for example, saw annual per capita growth rates of 6% contribute to poverty reduction of 8% a year over the 1990s. China's 10% growth rates are estimated to have lifted 400 million people out of poverty over the last 20 years

III. The road ahead: global partnerships for development

The United Nations has been a focal point for generating support for new initiatives to accelerate progress towards achieving the MDGs. For example, UNITAID, an international drug purchasing facility to provide medicine and treatment against HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis for those who otherwise could not afford them; the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, TB, and Malaria; the African Green Revolution; the Measles-Malaria Campaign led by the Center for Disease Control, Red Cross Red Crescent, UNICEF, and WHO; and the Millennium Villages initiative launched by the UN Millennium Project with support from UNDP.

Recently, the International Telecommunications Union launched Connect the World, a global multi-stakeholder initiative to encourage new projects and partnerships to bridge the digital divide. Connect the World will bring together the public and private sectors, UN agencies and civil society. It has 22 founding partners, including leading corporate players such as Alcatel, Huawei, Intel, Microsoft, KDDI, Telefónica, Infosys and WorldSpace, whose CEOs have all embraced the goals of the initiative.

Other innovative examples of practical efforts to achieve the MDGs include, the International Finance Facility for Immunization, an innovative funding mechanism that will significantly increase the flow of aid for immunization programs and health systems through the GAVI Alliance; the UK's initiative in support of primary education for all; and, the leading role Italy has played to develop Advanced Market Commitments with pharmaceutical companies to stimulate research and development of new life saving drugs.

As we draw closer to the half-way point momentum is building to ensure the MDGs are achieved by 2015. Bold steps will be required to implementing existing commitments, and develop new partnerships. Failure to achieve the Goals would seriously undermine the credibility of the international system. To achieve further momentum the following bold initiatives could be launched:

1. **Convening business and civil society leaders in support of the Goals:** many business leaders, celebrities, civil society leaders would like to lend their support to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, but lack a forum to do so. These leaders can reach out to people who are not deeply familiar with the Millennium Development Goals and can also provide vital moral and financial support. During 2007 the Secretary-General could create a forum for engaging and mobilizing these leaders in support of the United Nations and the MDGs.
2. **Strengthening partnership with the International Financial Institutions:** a stronger partnership between the United Nations and the IFIs to jointly support the preparation and implementation of MDG-based strategies. Such a partnership is urgently needed since world leaders set 2006 as the deadline for initiating MDG-based national development strategies. Unless a renewed effort is made in early 2007 to support these strategies the international momentum in support of this vital implementation framework is likely to weaken.
3. **Mobilizing the scientific community in support of the MDGs:** establish networks of scientists from different fields to mobilize the best scientific advice to the United Nations on how the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved. Such advice would add authority to the voice of the United Nations in support of the Millennium Development Goals. It would also be vital for preparing and the vetting practical MDG initiatives launched by the SG.
4. **Kick-starting concerted UN support for MDG-based strategies:** the UN agencies, funds, and programmes could launch a concerted effort to mobilize technical expertise in headquarters to support a first set of UN Country Teams in advising governments on the preparation of MDG-based national development strategies. This initiative would demonstrate the technical support that the UN system can provide for MDG-based national development strategies.