



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

12 July 2010

Excellency

I have the honour to draw your attention to the informal interactive hearings which were held on 14 and 15 June 2010 with non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector to provide an input to the preparatory process for the High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 64/184.

According to the same resolution, the General Assembly requested that a summary of the hearings be issued as an Assembly document prior to the High-Level Plenary Meeting. To assist Member States in their ongoing preparations for the High-Level Plenary Meeting, I have decided to issue an advance unedited version in English of the summary, which is now available on the website of the President of the General Assembly: www.un.org/ga/president/64/. The summary will shortly be available as a General Assembly document in all the official languages.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ali' followed by a stylized flourish.

Ali Abdussalam Treki

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the
United Nations
New York

**Informal interactive hearings of the General Assembly with
representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society
organizations and the private sector**

**ADVANCE UNEDITED SUMMARY
12 July 2010**

INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly held informal interactive hearings with representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector on 14 and 15 June 2010 in New York, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/184 of 21 December 2009. The Hearings were organized by the President of the 64th session of the General Assembly as an input to the preparatory process of the General Assembly High-level Plenary Meeting (HLPM) on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be held from 20 to 22 September 2010 in New York.
2. The themes for the Hearings were based on the report of the Secretary-General of 12 February 2010, “Keeping the promise: a forward-looking review to promote an agreed action agenda to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015” (A/64/665).¹ Four interactive sessions were held under the themes of: “Building a better tomorrow: local actions, national strategies and global structures;” “Equal and inclusive partnerships: Accountability in the fight against poverty;” “Sustaining development and withstanding crises;” “From voice to policy: 1660 days left.”
3. 46 speakers and 519 observers, representing 335 non-governmental, civil society and private sector organizations, participated in the meeting, together with Member States and observers. Well over half of the participants were women.
4. This summary of the Hearings provides Member States with a resource in their consultations on the Outcome Document to be adopted at the HLPM. The summary offers some guiding principles and proposals by civil society and the private sector for the way forward to 2015, including through participatory accountability frameworks. It then summarizes a range of specific proposals under Goals 1 to 8, as part of a global “MDG Breakthrough Plan”, as called for by many civil society organisations.

¹ A global on-line consultation based on the Secretary-General's comprehensive report, to which over 160 international, national and local civil society organizations contributed, is available on: <www.un-ngls.org/mdgconsultation>. Written statements from the Hearings are available on: <<http://www.un-ngls.org/mdg2010>>

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND PROPOSALS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

5. Participants emphasized that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have provided a common and unifying framework for development and a useful mobilization tool.
6. Many speakers reaffirmed the message of the Secretary-General in his report for the HLPM that the MDGs rest upon the Millennium Declaration and are an expression of human rights. Among those rights, participants emphasized both civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights, and the right to development. Over half the world's population is composed of women, yet realizing gender equality remains one of the most difficult goals to achieve, which has implications for all the MDGs.
7. For many speakers, the onset of the multiple global food, economic and climate crises only reinforced concerns expressed by civil society for many years that the prevailing development model of recent decades is unsustainable. Many participants echoed the Secretary-General's call for strengthened national ownership of policies to pursue more inclusive, equitable and environmentally sustainable development paths. This implied greater policy space to mobilize domestic resources and align forward-looking macroeconomic and sectoral policies with development goals – currently often still restricted by inappropriate external conditionalities, trade rules and the constraints imposed by international financial markets. This pointed to the need for major reforms in international economic and development cooperation.
8. While developed countries have fallen short of fulfilling their commitments, uneven domestic distribution of resources in developing countries also undermines the MDGs. It was noted that in recent years, many developing countries experienced high levels of economic growth, but poverty reduction and job creation lagged behind – so-called “jobless growth.”
9. Throughout the hearings panellists offered examples of the many best practices that could be scaled up and replicated in order to reach the goals by 2015. For example, it was noted that the government of Malawi in 2004 brought back agricultural subsidies to small farmers. Between 2005 and 2007, this resulted in a two-fold productivity increasing, turning food deficit of 43% into a food surplus of 57%. The proportion of people living on less than US\$1 a day has fallen from 52% to 40%. In Brazil, the “Fome Zero” (Zero Hunger) programme includes cash transfers, food banks, community kitchens and school meals, and has

reached over 44 million Brazilians suffering from hunger. This helped reduce child malnutrition by 73%. In India, the National Rural Employment Guarantee (NREG) scheme provides a legal guarantee of 100 days of employment a year for at least one member of rural households paid at the statutory minimum wage, reaching some 40 million households living below the poverty line. These types of examples reinforce the view that the MDGs are achievable if the necessary political will is there.

10. Many participants welcomed the Secretary-General's insistence on a holistic approach to the MDGs. A "sectoral" approach to the MDGs could lead to outcomes where young people benefit from adequate health and education services only to face an economic system that does not provide enough productive jobs. The MDGs have a number of targets designed to redress some of the most glaring gender inequalities, where there has been greater progress on access to education for girls than on reducing maternal mortality. There were calls for more investments to improve the position of the most off-track MDGs and regions, which should be backed up by additional resources to avoid cutting back on continued progress on other MDGs. In the same vein, preserving biodiversity and environmental resources (under Goal 7) provide key building blocks for poverty reduction under Goal 1. A broader holistic approach meant fully addressing the cross-cutting obstacles that undermine the realization of all MDGs – whether in relation to difficulties in mobilizing additional resources, unsustainable and inequitable development paths, or unaccountable governance structures at national and international levels.
11. The mutual responsibility of developed and developing countries to meet the MDGs by 2015 depends on strengthening the frameworks for accountability. Through these frameworks, Member States, individually and collectively, must be accountable to their citizens and support their further empowerment in advancing development. Accountability mechanisms should have strong civil society participation and be rooted in national and international human rights mechanisms. Localized targets and indicators to monitor progress in terms of differential impact of policies on socially excluded and marginalized groups were also seen as essential. A gender and social exclusion based audit of the MDGs – undertaken in full cooperation with civil society - was seen as an essential immediate step to be taken in the new 2010-2015 accountability framework, to which the HLPM should agree in September.
12. The principal recommendations coming from the Hearings in this regard were:

- a. Increase and strengthen the role of existing national and international human rights accountability mechanisms, including by providing such institutions with legal authority to monitor and hear complaints on human rights violations. Governments should report on their MDG performance to such bodies and comply with their decisions.
- b. States should ratify Optional Protocols to human rights treaties, especially the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- c. Systematically integrate reporting on national and international implementation of the MDGs in national reports to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council and to international human rights treaty bodies.
- d. Guarantee the full and effective participation of civil society organizations, including women's organizations, indigenous peoples and grassroots organizations of the poor in the design, planning, implementation and monitoring of all MDG-related programmes and policies. This further implies guaranteeing the rights to freedom of expression, information, assembly and association.
- e. Ensure that all development operations and policies affecting the territories of indigenous peoples and other ethnic minorities are subject to their free, prior and informed consent.
- f. Implement at the local level "development pacts" that involve public commitments by local authorities to deliver on development objectives defined by local communities; transparent mechanisms for local civil society organizations to hold authorities accountable on how funds are spent, whether policy commitments are implemented; and to combat corruption.
- g. Governments should strengthen their commitment to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment as cross-cutting priorities for reaching all goals by 2015. Women's organizations and grassroots women must have formal mechanisms of meaningful and systematic participation in the new UN gender entity at global, regional and national levels.
- h. Strengthen mechanisms for monitoring and mutual accountability between donors and recipient countries and greater coherence of development policies – within a participatory framework that

ensures more balanced country representation. The UN's Development Cooperation Forum should be the main mechanism to track progress and mutual accountability between all development actors, with strengthened participation of other key stakeholders.

- i. It was frequently noted that progress on poverty reduction also requires strong participatory frameworks anchored on human rights principles, and greater transparency as well as fighting corruption and capital flight (which by some accounts could represent as much as US\$1 trillion per year for developing countries as a whole, or ten times the amount of ODA).
- j. Consider establishing a Global Economic Coordination Council to ensure accountability and coherence of global economic governance with development goals, including the MDGs (see Goal 8).

MDG 1 – ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER

13. Many participants emphasized the need for decisive progress on MDG 1, not only to reduce poverty and hunger, but also to advance all the other Goals. It was reiterated that even before the global economic and food crises caused major regressions under MDG 1, the absolute number of people in poverty increased in many parts of the world between 1990 and 2005. Therefore, many insisted on the need to embed future poverty reduction strategies within alternative development strategies, placing central importance on the generation of more productive employment with higher wages, major investments to support small farmers' capacities to produce staple foods for the local market and mechanisms to protect their livelihoods from cheap imports, price drops and natural disasters.

14. The main recommendations for Millennium Development Goal 1 are:

- a. Ensure that developing countries have the policy space to determine and implement their nationally-owned, democratically-determined development priorities.
- b. Developing countries should put in place national MDG 1 "rescue plans," with costed, time-bound strategies for achieving the MDG target to halve hunger, while donors must commit to funding "financing gaps" as part of their commitments to MDG 1.

- c. To support the legal empowerment of the poor, governments should integrate human rights objectives in macroeconomic policies.
- d. Promote rapid implementation of the Global Jobs Pact to stimulate economic recovery and socioeconomic transformation, notably to redress “jobless growth”, establish a social protection floor in every country and upgrade the capacities and rights of actors in the informal economy, including women. Sectoral policies should support small and micro-enterprises in the informal economy, where the vast majority of workers making less than US\$1.25 a day are earning a living.
- e. Stimulus packages in response to the on-going crisis must be maintained but refocused on providing employment-intensive investments in social infrastructure and quality public services. In the face of calls to phase out stimulus measures for fiscal consolidation, these investments should be made permanent with efforts to regain fiscal space including through international cooperation.
- f. Promote banking services, micro-insurance and other financial services that can reach low-income and remote communities, small and micro-enterprises. Facilitate loan guarantees to micro-credit institutions and other measures to decentralize access to finance such as mobile phone banking and more broadly, branchless banking using postal and other retail outlets.
- g. Develop enabling and proportionate regulatory and supervisory frameworks conducive to financial inclusion, taking into account the peculiarities of reaching out to underserved communities. Ensure an appropriate level of consumer protection, as a core element to build long-term relationships, based on trust and confidence.
- h. Governments and donors should invest in women smallholder farmers as a key to halving hunger as it results in twice as much growth as investment in any other sector. Governments should remove judicial and other obstacles that female entrepreneurs and women business leaders are confronted with, notably in terms of access to land and credit. In addition, aid to agriculture should focus on staple crops, the promotion of local production for local use and the preservation of biodiversity and traditional knowledge.
- i. Global spending on food security should be increased by at least US\$40 billion per year to tackle urgent hunger needs.

- j. Dialogue between small farmers, scientists, agribusinesses, non-governmental organizations, think tanks and government services should be promoted to explore sustainable agricultural practices that improve productivity, build on indigenous knowledge, while preserving and restoring soils and the natural environment.
- k. Support stronger organization of small farmers to develop more equitable relations in their partnerships with the other actors in the supply chain to raise their income. Promote the use of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to deliver knowledge and information to farmers.
- l. A universal social protection floor should be established to include elements such as an employment guarantee, cash transfers, cash and food packages, public works employment schemes, free school meals, unemployment benefits and other social grants. Care must be taken in the design of these schemes to avoid a gendered division of work as the instrument and channel for delivering services.
- m. Special measures should be taken to ensure that people living in extreme poverty, including women and children, and other vulnerable and excluded groups, such as indigenous peoples and the disabled do not get bypassed by social protection. The universal social protection floor should be explicitly framed within basic human rights.

MDG 2 – ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

- 15. It was noted that strong gains have been made toward the realization of Goal 2. School user fees have been dropped in many countries, allowing some of the world's poorest children to access school. Forty million more children have been able to access school in the last eight years. The world has the know-how and resources to ensure everyone has an education. Yet progress is still far too slow: at current rates the education goals will not be met in the next 100 years, let alone by 2015.
- 16. The main recommendations for Millennium Development Goal 2 were:
 - a. Sickness and malnutrition, poor planning and poor infrastructure are among the barriers to access education that can often become insurmountable for many children and young people. Achievement on all other Goals directly impacts the achievement of education targets.

- b. While investment in primary education is essential, it is also important to invest in the expansion of post-primary education, especially for adolescent girls. The transition to secondary school must become as natural and inevitable as entry into primary school. In order to build on gains in education in the past decade, governments and other stakeholders should consider making this a key development priority.
- c. Achievement of the MDG targets will only be possible if adolescents are able to successfully transition from school to decent work. Strengthen opportunities for adolescents so they can make a successful transition into remunerative work. Girls especially should see their future economic possibilities within both the books they read, and the career guidance they receive so that they are encouraged to learn skills that are more relevant to labour market opportunities.

MDG 3 – PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN

17. It was repeatedly emphasized that advancing gender equality is not simply a function of MDG 3, but an underlying aspect of all of the Goals. Women comprise two thirds of the people living in extreme poverty and any attempt to alleviate poverty must examine the gender discrimination underlying Goal 1. Violence against women is also an impediment to women's participation in development and their ability to exercise their human rights.

18. The main recommendations for Millennium Development Goal 3 were:

- a. Immediately scale up meaningful participation of women in decision-making – at all levels. In particular efforts to encourage and make it possible for women to become elected officials should be further accelerated.
- b. Gender-based violence should be addressed in the MDGs, as recommended by the Secretary-General's In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence Against Women in 2006. It should be established as a target in the MDG agenda.
- c. Progress on women's empowerment could be better monitored and be more efficient through the development of more systematic data collection disaggregated by age and gender.
- d. Taking into account existing mandates, the Outcome Document should support the rapid establishment of the consolidated gender

equality entity. This new UN body can serve as a catalyst for accelerating action at country level to meet the MDGs.

MDG 4, 5, 6: IMPROVING GLOBAL HEALTH FOR ALL

19. Throughout the sessions, participants highlighted the strong interlinkages between the three health MDGs (4, 5, 6) and the other Goals. While acknowledging that significant progress had been made on some health-related targets, they noted that many obstacles remained to achieving the health MDGs by 2015. In particular, they pointed to the alarming results in the area of maternal health and also to the risk of major regressions in other areas, notably HIV/AIDS and child mortality. If further progress is to be made on the health MDGs, more attention should be paid to the needs and perspectives of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

20. The main recommendations in regard to the three health-related MDGs were:

- a. Participants pointed to the shortage and inequitable distribution of health workers within countries as one of the greatest obstacles to achievement. To address this problem, governments should assess their health system; strengthen their health workforce; train workers; and ensure a fair distribution of human and material resources. National health plans need to be fully funded. Predictable and sustainable financing mechanisms should be put in place.
- b. Additional international development assistance is needed to scale up national health systems. Further technical and scientific support and capacity-building assistance should be provided.
- c. Barriers to access health services are still numerous, in particular for marginalized groups. Barriers include: user fees, informal fees, inadequate and unaffordable transportation, poor communications and distance from health facilities.
- d. Health systems need to be accountable to communities, including the most disadvantaged and marginalized. Governments should develop accountability mechanisms to report on and monitor health services; to release detailed data about government and donor aid for health and related performance indicators; and to strengthen the relationship between health workers and communities.
- e. The research and development of innovative medicines and vaccines needs to be further developed and supported. Greater

efforts need to be made to find the right balance between the use of intellectual property rights for innovation and access to affordable essential drugs. At the same time the recognition and respect for the traditional medicines and practices of indigenous peoples should be improved.

- f. Sexual and reproductive health services must be accessible, affordable and culturally sensitive. Comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services should include contraception, maternity care, safe abortion services, prevention, diagnosis, counselling and treatment. Comprehensive sexuality education for children and young people, both in and out of school should be encouraged.
- g. HIV/AIDS is not only a health issue. Universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support is a prerequisite for achieving all MDGs. The target of universal access should be extended to 2015. Policies should support the achievement of universal access for the most vulnerable groups, including women and girls, young people, injection drug users, sex workers, men who have sex with men, migrants and others. People living with HIV/AIDS should not be criminalized. Governments should support specific measures to support women and young people, who remain disproportionately, affected by HIV. Community mobilization and direct engagement of people affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic should be promoted amongst all stakeholders.
- h. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has played an important role through its inclusive approach to development. The commitment to “full funding” for the Global Fund should be renewed.

MDG 7 – ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- 21. It was broadly recognized that the Millennium Development Goals will not be achieved without greater advancements in Goal 7. In particular it was noted that progress on improving sustainable access to improved water and sanitation is lacking: two million child deaths could be prevented every year with the realization of these most basic rights, 443 million lost school days could be recovered and needless economic waste that drains up to 5% of some countries’ gross domestic product could be avoided.
- 22. Climate change is an important variable in the process of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Climate change impacts are already

negatively affecting lives and livelihoods, in particular rural women, indigenous peoples and small farmers.

23. The main recommendations for Millennium Development Goal 7 were:

- a. Strengthen support for national plans to achieve water and sanitation for all, and make sure resources are allocated in a transparent manner, and that services get to the poor and marginalized. Water, sanitation and hygiene policies should be integrated with other sectors, such as health and education.
- b. Large-scale investment in green infrastructure, as a response to the climate crisis and to further promote more sustainable development pathways, should be prioritized. Introducing renewable energies, green construction and transportation could enhance energy efficiency. In turn, this could also stimulate green and decent employment creation across a range of sectors.
- c. Governments should scale up mitigation, adaptation, financing and technology in response to climate change. To achieve this, it is imperative that developed countries set binding targets to reduce emissions by 40% by 2020. They must also pay their “fair share” of the cost of tackling the effects of climate change in developing countries. Poor farmers’ vulnerability to climate change should be reduced by investment in sustainable agriculture, local irrigation schemes and better use of local biodiversity.
- d. Ecologically destructive activities must cease and early warning systems for natural disasters should be in place.
- e. It is also important to ensure the full and effective participation of people, particularly indigenous groups, in the mechanisms of regulation, respecting the principal of free, prior and informed consent.

MDG 8 – DEVELOP A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

24. Many participants called for a major breakthrough in the global partnership for development. Governments must honour this partnership and scale up the mobilization of resources to finance all the MDGs and provide the policy and fiscal space needed to prevent further MDG regressions caused by systemic shocks, and reorient development strategies towards more equitable and sustainable paths.

25. The main recommendations for Millennium Development Goal 8 were:

- a. Donor countries should commit to interim targets between 2010 and 2015.
- b. To strengthen national ownership, budget support should increasingly be used as the main modality for aid delivery to countries committed to poverty reduction and good domestic accountability systems.
- c. All Member States should commit to significant reductions in military expenditure, the savings of which should be earmarked as resources to meet the MDGs.
- d. Emergency support for counter-cyclical crisis response and mitigation should be in the form of grants not loans, especially for Least-Developed Countries (LDCs), to avert a new debt crisis and further MDG regressions.
- e. Debt cancellation (not diverted from ODA) to the poorest countries should be part of the crisis response. All odious and illegitimate debt should be audited and cancelled. A fair and transparent debt workout mechanism should be established to ensure enforceable and equitable arbitration of sovereign debt restructuring under UN auspices.
- f. Implement a Financial Transactions Tax to recoup the losses to tax payers caused by financial rescue plans, help stabilize financial markets and generate the hundreds of billions of dollars needed each year to support developing countries to transition to more equitable and sustainable development paths capable of meeting all MDGs. The allocation of these funds should be managed within a UN framework.
- g. In order to combat capital flight, tax competition, corporate tax evasion and transfer pricing and to enable developing countries to mobilize domestic resources, adopt a multilateral agreement on automatic exchange of information, country-by-country reporting by transnational corporations, starting with the establishment of a United Nations Intergovernmental Commission on Tax Matters.
- h. Establish a new global reserve system based on a supranational global reserve currency, as well as regional currencies. In addition continuing to explore the potential of Special Drawing Rights (SDR) for development, including through reforms in the areas of allocation, interest charges, composition of the basket, transferability and use.

- i. Support regional initiatives that decentralize finance and empower people of the global South to exercise control over their own development paths, notably through alternative regional development banks and monetary funds and currency cooperation.
- j. Regulate and reform the credit rating agency industry into proper independent supervision institution(s), based on more transparency about ratings and strict regulation - including on conflict of interest.
- k. Recognize the right of developing countries to use capital management techniques not only for crisis prevention but to direct investments to meet the MDGs and other development goals.
- l. Agree to cooperate internationally to re-regulate financial markets to rein in financial speculation in general, and speculation in food and commodity markets in particular.
- m. Review the current Doha trade agenda and all existing multilateral, regional and bilateral trade agreements, as well as those under negotiation, with a view to removing elements that could lead to further MDG regressions caused by inappropriate trade liberalization. Endorse the call by LDCs for an “early harvest” of unilateral trade measures in favour of LDCs.
- n. Support the adoption of food and livelihoods safeguard mechanisms in all trade agreements – without *quid pro quo* concessions by developing countries, as an essential means to stabilize progress.
- o. Support the right of developing countries to fully use the flexibilities within the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIP) to source affordable medicines.
- p. Fully support the proposal for a Global Economic Council of the UN General Assembly, as an inclusive forum for deliberations and decision-making on global economic and financial questions and policy coherence with development objectives; and call on the General Assembly Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to follow up on the issues contained in the Outcome of the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development to bring this proposal back on the table for serious consideration.