



**Remarks by H.E. Oscar Cardinal Rodriguez, President, Caritas Internationalis**

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The Millennium Development Goals are a wonderful tool.

They're a catalyst for action, a benchmark to measure governments' words against their deeds, and a reminder of the suffering of millions of people who live in extreme poverty.

Of course, for the majority of us, we don't need the MDGs to know what poverty is. In Honduras, where I come from, we experience its limitations daily.

We do need the MDGs though to galvanise governments into urgent action by living up to past promises on development.

For many of us, the M in MDGs should stand for minimum. We want to see our governments go further, especially on environmental sustainability. This is because climate change is undoing much of the progress made in developing countries.

Ten years ago this October, Hurricane Mitch devastated Central America destroying 50 years of progress in Honduras alone.

Mitch was at the time the fourth most intense storm in the Atlantic in recorded history. But the storm to end all storms was more like a beginning. Mitch has already dropped to seventh place in a few scant years.

Scientists tell us that such extreme weather will become more common and we are seeing their commentary played out in deadly fashion today in India and Haiti.

Although climate change is a global problem that effects us all, the poor suffer disproportionately more than the rich. The paradox is that they bear least responsibility for the pollution causing global warming.

Industrialized countries must back up their MDG commitments by cutting greenhouse gas emissions by at least 25-40 percent by 2020 and at least by 80 percent by 2050 on 1990 levels to avoid catastrophe.

Poor people in developing countries also need increased financial support on top of existing pledges to cope with the consequences of climate change.

The damage we've done to our planet and the damage it's now doing to us should be a warning sign that the pursuit of greed without consequences is not just wrong, it's unsustainable.

I've seen that greed first hand in my own country where international mining companies extract from the land its riches leaving it poisoned and the people who live there worse off.

We're witnessing a world being created where the greediness of a few is leaving the majority on the margin of history.

Failing to achieve the Millennium Development Goals is not just about a lack of finance, or improvements in the way aid is spent, or deeper debt relief, or a more just trading system.

What we are suffering from is an acute poverty of imagination.

We need to be able to imagine ourselves not in a "Third World" and a "First World" but in one world in which our duties to the poor are shared.

We need to imagine a world in which the needless deaths of nearly 10 million children a year are an abomination that cannot be tolerated.

We need to imagine it and you, heads of state, need to make it reality working in partnership with civil society and faith based organisations that are at the grassroots level. Reaching the Millennium Development Goals is a good way for us to start.

There has been a failure of politics and a failure of leadership. We call on all leaders here today and in the future to make courageous decisions for the sake of the common good, for all humanity.