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President of the European Commission**



**ADDRESS TO THE OPENING SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH LEVEL EVENT ON
MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

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**United Nations, New York
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Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Each of us today must explain, without too much soaring rhetoric, what we will do to bring about the success of the Millennium Development Goals. Otherwise, we, the international community, must get ready to explain how and why we failed to meet these ambitious but feasible targets. That is why this is the most important MDG event since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, and I want to thank Secretary-General Ban for arranging it. I also want to thank Gordon Brown for his strong and tireless leadership on MDGs and development issues over the past year in particular.

Actually, we know what we have to do. It's not rocket science. We have some very complex challenges in front of us, such as climate change, which will have a particularly strong impact on many developing countries.

But to achieve the MDGs, the key first step is to deliver more aid, and more effective aid. To put the last few difficult weeks into some sort of MDG perspective, as Bob Zoellick said to me earlier this week, we have to ensure not just financial rescue, but human rescue.

To that end, we in the European Union have set out our commitments in the EU Agenda for Action, adopted unanimously by EU Heads of State and Government in June. We must - and we will - follow through and deliver on the Agenda for Action. EU Member States have also confirmed their commitments to increase aid flows in line with our target, which is to reach, collectively as the European Union, 0,56 % GNP by 2010 and 0,7% GNP by 2015.

By doubling development assistance, the EU can increase its annual support to education by €4 billion and to health by €8 billion.

Big numbers, but what do they mean in practice? I'll tell you. They mean getting 25 million more children into primary school; they mean 20% fewer children under five who are under weight; and 4 million more children's lives saved a year.

So point one: we need more aid, and we will continue to bang this drum during the Doha Conference on financing for development later this year.

But we also need more *effective* aid, in line with the recommendations of Secretary-General Ban's Steering Group for MDGs in Africa.

As agreed in Accra, this means:

- predictability of aid: for example, more direct budget support.
- It means better division of labour amongst donors to be more effective in responding to partners.
- and it means better alignment to national priorities and rules, meaning more output and less bureaucracy. In 2007, we, the donors, asked Tanzania to produce 2,400 reports. That's not accountability. That's Kafkaesque madness.

But as we pursue the MDGs, we have to address new crises along the way. And believe me, food price increases are a major crisis. There are 75 million more people facing malnutrition this year than in 2005 because of higher food prices – a total of nearly 1 billion people, according to FAO data – and this figure will rise. These people can't wait until 2015. They need help now.

That is why the European Commission has proposed to create a new 'Food Facility' for the developing countries. Apart from the 800 million euros we have already allocated in short-term measures, the Facility means an extra 1 billion €

to increase agricultural production in developing countries. This will get poor farmers the fertilizers and seeds they need to grow the additional crops the people need. I hope the Council and Parliament of the European Union agree this soon, as we need to make an impact on the 2009 harvest.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen. We have short-term goals, and medium-term goals. We have to deliver the MDGs. And along the way, we have to overcome new crises, such as food prices. We cannot afford to fail either test.

These are not just important political projects, to show that we can make a difference with development policy. It's rather more than that. For many of the poorest people on the planet, it's a matter of life and death.

Thank you for your attention.