

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
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REMARKS ON THE MDG REPORT
HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT
OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Geneva, 7 July 2011

Mr. President of the Economic and Social Council
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to be here for the launch of the 2011 Millennium Development Goals Report.

I thank all those who have worked long and hard on this excellent study.

The report paints a mixed picture.

On the one hand, it is clear that the MDGs have made a tremendous difference.

They have raised awareness.

They have shaped the broad vision that remains the overarching framework for development work across the world.

And they have fuelled action – meaningful progress in people’s lives.

Hundreds of millions have been lifted from poverty. More people have access to education, better health care and improved access to clean drinking water.

Despite the global economic downturn and the food and energy crises, we are on track to meet the MDG targets for poverty-reduction.

Increased funding from many sources has translated into more programmes and resources for the neediest.

We expect global poverty to dip below 15 percent by 2015, well ahead of the original 23 per cent target.

At the same time, progress has been uneven.

The poorest of the poor are being left behind. We need to reach out and lift them into our lifeboat.

Now is the time for equity, inclusion, sustainability and women's empowerment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Investing in human capital must be our strategy and our touchstone.

Some of the world's poorest nations have made some of the largest strides towards reaching universal enrolment in primary education.

The goal now is to ensure similar results in secondary and tertiary education... to make sure boys and girls have equal opportunity... and to ensure that the education they receive is quality education.

On health, targeted interventions such as vaccination campaigns have reduced child mortality. Measles-related deaths are down 78 percent since 1990. Malaria is less deadly thanks to the wide distribution of insecticide-treated mosquito nets.

The MDG report also shows strong results on HIV prevention and treatment. I expect to see this momentum continue with the new targets and resources adopted by world leaders at last month's HIV/AIDS Summit in New York.

There is also good news on tuberculosis.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have success stories to point to... to build on... to scale up.

But achieving all the MDGs will require extra effort.

Even where we have seen rapid growth, as in East Asia and other parts of the developing world, progress is not universal, nor are the benefits evenly shared.

Stubbornly high unemployment persists in rich and poor countries alike.

And in many cases, the wealth gap is widening - between the prosperous and the marginalized, between urban and rural.

Solid gains in school enrolment and gender parity hardly signal mission accomplished. The pace of education reform has slowed measurably in terms of both access and quality.

The state of maternal health is also worrying. Limited access to proper care makes pregnancy a needlessly high health risk in many developing countries.

Sanitation, too, leaves much to be desired. More than 2.6 billion people still lack access to flush toilets and other basic forms of safe sanitation.

We must also recognize the real and growing threat to the MDGs posed by non-communicable diseases. This will rightly be the focus of a high-level meeting at the United Nations in September.

Today's report stresses that equal opportunity for all is vital to our efforts.

Getting girls into school is a critical first step. Gender parity in primary and secondary education is still beyond reach in many regions. Moreover, enrolment disparities are notable between girls from wealthy families and girls from poorer families. This disparity is significantly greater for girls than it is for boys.

We face a similar situation with child mortality. There are huge differences in survival rates between children with educated mothers and those with unschooled mothers. We must protect against the domino effect -- in which one early deprivation leads to another... and another... and another.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The agreed deadline of 2015 is fast approaching.

We need a rejuvenated global partnership for development.

We need breakthroughs in trade negotiations and in climate action.

We need to build resilience to shocks – be they conflicts, natural disasters or volatility in food and energy prices.

And we need to make next year's Rio + 20 conference a success. Let us strive to connect the dots among water, energy, food, gender and global health issues – so that solutions to one can become solutions to all.

Let us also look at the post-2015 picture. When the MDGs were first articulated, we knew that achieving them would, in a sense, be only half the job.

We knew that too many men, women and children would go largely untouched by even our best efforts.

That is why we are already working with all our partners to sustain the momentum and to carry on with an ambitious post-2015 development agenda.

The report we launch today is meant to help us meet this shared test of our common humanity. I look forward to your contributions.

Thank you.