



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

José Manuel Durão Barroso

President of the European Commission

Speech by President Barroso at the opening of the Special Event on Millennium Development Goals

*Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past 20 years the world has made great progress in fighting poverty. This is in no small measure thanks to the Millennium Development Goals. They are a powerful incentive for real, tangible and collective action.

In his report "A life of dignity for all," Secretary General Ban Ki-moon rightly stressed: The MDGs pay off. Fewer people now go to bed hungry, fewer children are dying from preventable diseases. Better access to clean drinking water has improved health.

This was only possible because we have all worked together. We should all be proud of what has been accomplished.

I am proud of the contribution the European Union makes to the MDGs: Over the last ten years, we helped 70 million more households to have access to drinking water. 7.5 million births were attended by skilled health personnel. Our support has ensured that nearly 14 million more boys and girls benefit from primary education.

I have witnessed this progress first hand in many partner countries I visited over the last years, from Tanzania to Benin, from Ivory Coast to Mozambique.

But while we acknowledge these positive developments, we have no right to be complacent. Too many people remain trapped in poverty; too many women and babies struggle to survive childbirth; and basic food security remains a luxury for millions. So clearly, much more needs to be done.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My political vision is that of a world where every man, woman and child lives in dignity and prosperity; where preventable infant and maternal mortality are confined to history; where poor access to water, to education and health services, and the abuse of fundamental human rights are things of the past;

but also a world where we unite to address our shared global challenges, such as climate change and advance together on a more sustainable growth path.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe the global community must act on two fronts:

First, we must finish what we started. –We must keep pursuing all MDGs right to the end.

I already announced at the last high level event on MDGs that the EU would dedicate a billion euros to helping those countries and MDGs most off track.

This "special MDG billion" is already bearing fruit in supporting those most in need around the world.

But we have no intention of resting there. The EU and its members are committed to staying the world's most generous donor. In our next 7 year budget from 2014 to 2020, we have again agreed on important development funds.

Let me turn to our second front of action – what comes after 2015?

Eradicating extreme poverty within one generation is possible. We must avoid the indifference towards persistent poverty. That also requires addressing the global sustainability challenge, building on the commitments made in Rio.

Let me sketch five vital stepping stones to attain that objective:

First, empowerment. Only with decent education, basic healthcare, nutritious food, clean water and access to energy and infrastructure can we all thrive. Only with this "basic toolbox of decency" can people truly take their development in their own hands. By 2030 these tools must be a reality for all people.

Second, inclusive and sustainable growth. Sustainable economic growth is a key ingredient in reducing poverty. People need a fair stake in the global economy.

Third, and related to this, environmental sustainability. The unsustainable use of resources puts at risk the basic conditions for a decent life, and the fabric of our economies.

Fourth, equity and good governance. Human rights, good governance and the rule of law are key for true human development.

And fifth, peace and stability. The tragic reality is that fragile and conflict-affected countries are furthest away from meeting the MDGs. We need to tackle the root causes of poverty and unsustainable development, and not only deal with the symptoms.

All this shows that there is a fundamental link between global sustainability and poverty eradication. I firmly believe that the fight against poverty and the fight for sustainability are two sides of the same coin.

We need an integrated approach where economic, social and environmental elements reinforce each other.

We need a genuine partnership including governments from all countries, international organisations, civil society and the private sector. It will also be important to take into account evolving economic circumstances and capabilities.

And to guide this international partnership we will need a single, integrated, universal post-2015 framework.

I therefore welcome the agreed "Outcome Document", also because it contains a roadmap for the process ahead.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have a historic chance. For the first time ever, we have what it takes to eliminate poverty in our lifetimes and to ensure sustainable prosperity within the boundaries of what our planet can provide.

Frankly: It is a shame that at the start of the 21st century, some still consider poverty as a fatality. There is a beautiful African proverb: "A person is only a person through another person". We should heed this message!

Achieving such a world is possible. It is not just an ethical imperative. It is the right and smart thing to do - our globalized world will not work if millions are excluded from it.

The EU will continue working hand in hand with its partners to make this happen, through an ambitious and comprehensive post-2015 framework;

Strong international leadership is required. Because leadership is about making possible what is necessary!

Thank you very much.