



Note to Correspondents

UN General Assembly to Seek Urgent Action on Poverty, Education and Health to Achieve Millennium Development Goals

1-2 April 2008

With progress lagging in the global attempt to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, the United Nations General Assembly will hold a special two-day debate in New York on 1-2 April to accelerate progress and to help tackle the most intractable problems.

The debate, "Recognizing the achievements, addressing the challenges and getting back on track to achieve the MDGs by 2015," will concentrate on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and combating malaria and other diseases.

"The poverty, education and health Goals are the areas where progress is most urgently required and where experience suggests that positive results have a catalytic effect on the other Goals," says United Nations General Assembly President Srgjan Kerim.

President Kerim, who has made the Millennium Development Goals one of his priorities, says the debate comes at a time when "it is already clear that our pace is too slow."

According to UN statistics, the absolute number of poor in sub-Saharan Africa is still rising and projected to stand at 360 million by 2015. Globally, around 72 million primary age children are not enrolled in school. And every year, more than half a million women lose their lives to causes related to childbirth, almost 10 million children die before reaching their fifth birthday, and an estimated 1.7 million people in Africa become infected with HIV.

"We face a race against time," says President Kerim. "We must now demonstrate the political will and turn our promises into action."

The debate, according to Mr. Kerim, will also be an opportunity to set the overall strategic course for a series of development meetings that will take place this year, including a high-level event to be convened jointly by the General Assembly President and the UN Secretary-General on 25 September. "The General Assembly must send a strong message to the rest of the world: a message that is carried to inspire the many conferences and summits on development this year," President Kerim says. "2008 is the year of action."

The General Assembly debate will bring together representatives from academia, business, government, non-governmental organizations and the UN System. "Achieving the MDGs is fundamentally a test of our global partnership on development," says President Kerim, "a partnership that goes beyond cooperation among Member States to include the private sector, civil society and the global public."

A panel discussion on the morning of 1 April will focus on the issues related to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. Two parallel afternoon panels will look at lessons learnt and action needed to achieve the education and health goals. Ted Turner, Chairman of Turner Enterprises and of the UN Foundation, will be the keynote speaker at a luncheon hosted by the General Assembly President. During the debate on 2 April, Member States will discuss the issues of poverty, health and education.

A press briefing with General Assembly President Srgjan Kerim and entrepreneur Ted Turner will be held on 1 April at 12:30 p.m. in room S-226.

The event will be **webcast** live at www.un.org/webcast.

For more information:

www.un.org/ga/president/62/ThematicDebates/mdgthematicdebate

www.un.org/millenniumgoals

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Programme

Tuesday, 1 April 2008

9.00am Opening Session (Trusteeship Council Chamber)

- Statement by H.E. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly
- Statement by H.E. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations

10.00am – 1pm Panel discussion on Poverty and Hunger (Trusteeship Council Chamber)

Moderator: Dr. Kandeh Yumkella, Director-General, UNIDO

Panellists:

- Dr. Paul Collier, St. Anthony's College, Oxford University; author, "The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done about It"
- H.E. Henrietta H. Fore, Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance and USAID Administrator
- Mr. Jayaseelan Naidoo, Chairman, Development Bank of South Africa and Board Chairman, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)
- Dr. Eckhard Deutscher, Chair, OECD/Development Assistance Committee (DAC)
- H.E. Steven O. Willoughby, Chief Executive, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

1.15 – 2.45pm Luncheon hosted by the President of the General Assembly

(Delegates' Dining Room -- by invitation only)

- **Keynote speaker:** Mr. Ted Turner, Chairman of Turner Enterprises and Chairman, UN Foundation

3.00 – 5.30pm Panel discussion on Education (ECOSOC Chamber)

Moderator: H.E. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Foreign Adviser, Bangladesh

Panellists:

- Mr. Nicholas Burnett, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO
- H.E. Geraldine Bitamazire, Education Minister, Uganda
- Mr. Desmond Bermingham, Fast Track Initiative (FTI) Secretariat
- Dr. Ann Cotton, Founder & Executive Director, Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED)
- Dr. Yuto Kitamura, Nagoya University, Japan

3.00 – 5.30pm Panel discussion on Health (Trusteeship Council Chamber)

Moderator: Dr. Anarfi Asamoah-Baah, Deputy Director-General, WHO

Panellists:

- Dr. Thoraya A. Obaid, Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- Dr. Innocent Nyaruhirira, Former Health Minister, Rwanda
- Dr. Jim Yong Kim, Harvard Medical School & Co-Founder, Partners in Health
- Dr. Julian Lob-Levyt, Executive Secretary, GAVI Alliance (formerly The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization)
- Mr. Dean R. Hirsch, President, World Vision International

5.45 – 6.00pm Wrap-up session for panel discussions (Trusteeship Council Chamber)

- Statement by Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, Deputy Secretary-General

Wednesday, 2 April 2008

10am – 1pm Thematic Debate (General Assembly Hall)

3 – 6pm Thematic Debate (General Assembly Hall)

Closing statement from the President of the General Assembly