

Annual Ministerial Review: "Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development"

Statement by Ambassador Frank Majoor, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations in New York.

Mr. President,

The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement by Portugal on behalf of the European Union.

Yesterday we had 6 presentations of recipient countries of their progress towards reaching MDG1. This was a very interesting innovation. It provided us with a good opportunity to exchange lessons learned and experiences gained in an informal setting which stimulated an open dialogue. This new feature of ECOSOC shows the potential to revive the Council.

Mr. President,

Sustainable poverty alleviation is the overarching goal of the Netherlands' development cooperation policy. Poverty cannot be addressed without addressing all MDGs. We therefore use a broad definition of poverty, encompassing its economic, social and political dimensions.

Income growth as such is not enough to eradicate extreme poverty. In some parts of the world the number of extreme poor is hardly declining despite impressive economic growth rates. The fruits of economic growth are unevenly distributed and inequality within countries is increasing. Furthermore, more money for MDGs does not automatically mean that the poor will be reached. The poor generally benefit less from assistance and social services than middle- and higher income groups. This is why our new minister for Development Cooperation has made pro poor and inclusive growth and reducing inequalities one of his priorities.

Mr. President,

In the remainder of my statement I will focus on the second part of the theme of this year's Annual Ministerial Review: the global partnership for development.

Responsibility for attaining the MDGs goals is shared by developed and developing countries alike. MDG8 – a global partnership for development- mainly addresses developed countries' responsibility to help developing countries. The Netherlands takes this responsibility very seriously. In 2004 we were one of the first developed countries to report on the progress in implementing MDG8. At that time we promised that we would repeat this exercise at regular intervals. We have kept that promise. Last year we published our second progress report. It is a public document, available to all. So if anybody would like a copy of this report, we would be happy to provide you one.

The Netherlands is a big provider of development assistance. Already for years we are contributing 0.8% of our Gross National Income for Official Development Assistance. More international aid is required for developing countries if we are to meet the MDGs in 2015. It is exactly for this reason that the Netherlands government has been calling on all developed countries to increase their aid allocations and work towards the minimum target of 0.7% of GNI for ODA. However, in calling for more aid, we should also acknowledge the significant and growing contribution the international community is making in supporting peace and security and in providing humanitarian assistance. Stability and the absence of immediate humanitarian suffering are essential preconditions for any long term development effort to be effective.

Mr. President,

It is not just the quantity but also the quality of aid that is important. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness provides the framework for our efforts to increase aid effectiveness. The Netherlands is committed to align its assistance with the policies of the recipient countries, and also, to the extent possible, with their structures. We see this as the most effective way to provide aid. Since by doing so, transaction costs are minimized and national ownership is maximized. Also in our own policies we try to be coherent and take the concerns of the developing countries into account. Alignment and policy coherence are both considered important conditions for achieving the MDGs.

Mr. President,

Global partnership for development goes beyond the commitment from the governments of developing and developed countries to meet the MDGs. Governments cannot meet these goals alone. Civil society organizations, the private sector, trade unions, individual citizens, parliaments in the north and south must make a substantial contribution of their own. The Netherlands government will continue to fully involve all these partners in international cooperation. We expect our partner countries and for that matter all other developing countries to do the same.

A global partnership for development is not sustainable without wide support for development cooperation within our societies. Public support for development cooperation in the Netherlands is still very strong. However, there is no room for complacency. Public support cannot be taken for granted. The present government last week concluded a broad based national consultation process on the future direction of our development assistance policy. This fits in a longstanding Dutch tradition of lively public debates about how the budget for development cooperation should be spent and what policies should be pursued. There is increasing attention for the effectiveness of development cooperation. Is our money well spent? Is development cooperation effective? Are results being obtained and how is reporting on results taking place? On which countries and sectors should we focus our assistance? These are questions the Dutch public is demanding convincing answers. The Dutch have become more critical and there is increasing demand and pressure on the government to account for how the Netherlands' development assistance is spent. Our development partners have an important responsibility in this context. Development assistance is provided on a voluntary basis. We need to be assured that our money is well spent, that the right policies and structures are in place, that assistance is reaching and benefiting the poor, and that recipient countries themselves are fully committed to poverty eradication. The importance of good governance as a condition for development cannot be overemphasized. Managing for development results and accountability are increasingly becoming important aspects of a global partnership for development. All aforementioned considerations guide our decisions on how and where to allocate our per definition limited development cooperation resources.

Thank you Mr. President.