

ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review

Statement by Ambassador Carsten Staur, Permanent Representative of Denmark

- I would like first of all to align myself with the EU statement, and shall therefore limit myself to a few supplementary remarks - basically only three points
- The Danish Government very much welcomes this first Annual Ministerial Review and the SG's very timely report taking stock of the progress so far towards the MDGs. Both during the AMR and during the Development Cooperation Forum tomorrow we have the opportunity to reflect on how far we have come, and what lessons we draw from our experiences so far.
- This year - halfway towards 2015 - we find ourselves at a significant milestone, where we all have to face the basic question: Whether the cup is half full or half empty?
- On the positive side we can conclude that there is progress. The theme for our debate this year focuses primarily on eradicating poverty and hunger (MDG1). The good news is that all major regions are on the track to reducing the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015 to below the 1990 rate. With one notable exception: Sub-Saharan Africa, where we know it will be difficult to achieve the MDGs and where special efforts therefore have to be made in the years to come. On the negative side overall progress is too slow. So the message is clear: We must step up our efforts, as developing countries and as donor countries - and we cannot afford to leave anyone behind. The upcoming Financing for Development Conference in 2008 will be important in this respect.
- My second point is that one important stepping stone towards the eradication of poverty, and the fulfilment of the interlinked MDGs, is the achievement of gender equality and empowering of women. Also here, there has been incremental progress as the SG's report illustrates. But we still have a long way to go. Investment in women has proven to be a wise and sound strategy. Empowerment of women politically, socially and economically benefits not only the individual woman, but her family, her children, her community and her society at large.
- According to World Bank estimates, unequal education and employment opportunities for women in sub-Saharan Africa have slowed down per capita growth by 0.8 percentage points between 1960 and 1992. This is significant. A further 0.8 percentage points per year would have doubled economic growth over the period.
- So these figures speak for themselves. Not only on the appalling costs of gender inequalities, but also on the potential of women to become real drivers of change and development. We have no choice. It is sound economics. To achieve the MDGs we simply must promote women's economic empowerment.
- Gender equality and the economic empowerment of women are ends in their own right - but they are also important means, by which to achieve poverty reduction and promote

economic growth. But developments have taken a wrong turn, not least in the area of reproductive health. Let me recall some alarming facts:

that

- 1) Sexual and reproductive diseases, including HIV/AIDS, accounts for over 60% of the total female diseases in Africa.

that

- 2) In Africa, 1 woman out of 16 risks dying due to complications related to pregnancy or childbirth - in Denmark, it is 1 woman out of more than seven thousand.
- So, we need to ensure that the commitments by heads of government at the ICPD conference in 1994 - commitments that were reaffirmed in 2005 UN World Summit – that these commitments are translated into action.
- The first step was the UN Secretary General's introduction of a new target under MDG 5 on Maternal Health in 2006. This new target is to achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015. Denmark strongly welcomes this important and timely step.
- My third and final point is to stress the importance of climate change. The SG's report refers to the reports issued by the International Panel on Climate change, which conclude that global warming is occurring faster than we thought, and that human activity is primarily responsible. The IPPC-reports furthermore make it quite clear that climate change affects the poorest countries the most. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to reiterate the points made also by the EU: That a sound strategy to ensure environmental sustainability needs to be part of a poverty-focused development strategy - and that climate change as such will be a major challenge for all of us in our endeavours to develop a suitable post-Kyoto regime by 2009. This, therefore, will be one of the major challenges for the international community over the next 2 ½ years. It is important that the High Level Event on 24 September provides sufficient guidance from the highest levels to create a sound basis for the COP13 meeting in Bali in December, so that out of this meeting will emerge guidelines and work plans that will allow us to conclude negotiations by 2009. We have high hopes that we will succeed in this endeavour.
- To finish off where I began: Whether the cup is half full or half empty?
- There is no doubt that in order to achieve the MDGs, we need to do more and do it faster. There is solid ground to build on - the cup is already half full - but it will take a common and determined effort in a number of areas, including climate change, to make sure that, come 2015, it will not only be full, but spilling over.