



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ABDALMAHMOOD
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REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE SUDAN TO THE UNITED
NATIONS, CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77, AT THE SOUTH ASIA
REGIONAL MINISTERIAL MEETING ON FINANCING STRATEGIES FOR
HEALTH CARE: “IMPLEMENTING THE INTERNATIONALLY AGREED
GOALS AND COMMITMENTS IN REGARD TO GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH”
Colombo, Sri Lanka, 17 March 2009**

***Panel 4: Progress and Challenges
In Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)***

**Mr. Moderator,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Distinguished Guests,**

1. I am privileged and honored to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at this important South Asia Regional Ministerial Meeting on a theme that is crucial to all developing countries: “Progress and Challenges in achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)”, within the overall theme of the conference on financing strategies for health care. This gathering, in addition to reviewing the progress in the implementation of various commitments, will also help us to identify the gaps, shortcomings and successes and to further develop policy recommendations to advance the implementation process. The venue of the meeting in Colombo is very much opportune considering the great contribution offered by Sri Lanka on all issues pertaining to South-South cooperation and international cooperation.
2. As this august gathering is well aware, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight time-bound goals to be achieved by 2015 that respond to the world's main development challenges. The eight MDGs are drawn from the actions and targets contained in the Millennium Declaration adopted by the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000:

- Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
- Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education.
- Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women.
- Goal 4: Reduce child mortality.
- Goal 5: Improve maternal health.
- Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.
- Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability.
- Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development.

3. As we in the Group of 77 have often stated, implementation of the commitments that have been undertaken under the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals remains the “Achilles’ heel” of the development agenda. Developing countries have displayed tremendous efforts to implement their part of the commitments to devise national development strategies, improve governance and create a macroeconomic climate conducive for growth, trade and investment. Yet, much work remains to be done if the development goals and their corresponding targets of the MDGs are to be met by 2015.

Mr. Moderator,

4. Much of the delay we are experiencing in most developing countries to reach important development goals are the result of insufficient financial resources to tackle emerging as well as longstanding development challenges.
5. Regarding the efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, the results are limited and irregular and the number of human beings living in poverty, which has registered a slight decrease these past years, is again on the rise. While previous expectations showed that the level of extreme poverty would fall substantially by 2015 in some developing countries, the present situation demonstrates that extreme poverty is increasing due to the global financial and food crises especially among the least developed countries and in sub-Saharan Africa. It is forecasted that the MDGs could be pushed back by many years by the global financial crisis.
6. According to the World Bank-IMF Global Monitoring Report of the MDGs for 2008, Sub-Saharan Africa lags on all MDGs including the internationally agreed targets of halving extreme poverty by 2015. If we are to succeed in eradicating poverty and hunger in Africa, then urgent and concerted action by the international community is needed.
7. Similarly, despite some progress registered in primary education, further efforts are needed to achieve the desired target of quality primary education for all children especially for girls and children in developing countries. Additional investment is much needed to help girls from poor rural areas enroll and stay in school.
8. South Asian countries are increasingly being hit by the deteriorating global economy, most importantly the massive decline in international trade. Export revenues in many South Asian countries fell significantly in the fourth quarter of 2008 compared to a year earlier. At the same time, economic growth decelerated to its slowest pace in six years as both manufacturing and agricultural output declined. With private spending on consumption and investment weakening, output growth has primarily resulted from significantly higher government expenditures.

9. Most countries in South Asia recorded considerable budget deficits in recent years and ratios of public debt to GDP are relatively high. Accordingly, there seems to be limited scope for further fiscal expansion. In 2009, increases in government spending coupled with slowing fiscal revenues will lead to budget deficits of more than 6 per cent of GDP in several South Asian countries.
10. The economic consequences of the global financial crisis threaten past accomplishments and jeopardize progress on the many health challenges which will still have to be tackled in order to achieve the goals by their target date. While all components of a health system are likely to be effected during a crisis, the financial crisis at the same time provides an opportunity to rethink the direction and nature of the system.
11. With many in the private sector staying away from developing emerging markets, developing countries - only one quarter of which have the resources needed to prevent a spike in poverty - face a financing shortfall of up to \$700 billion this year, according to the World Bank.
12. The loss of financial wealth is enormous. According to a recent study published by the Asian Development Bank, the loss of wealth at a worldwide level may amount to an astounding \$50 trillion, or one year's worth of GDP. Financial asset losses in developing Asia totaled \$9.6 trillion, or just over one year's worth of developing Asia's gross domestic product. Such losses will have an enormous impact on domestic expenditure. South Asia in particular will be affected by the impact of the financial and economic crisis also in two major areas like tourism and expatriate remittances.
13. In fact, many of the poorest developing countries are becoming increasingly dependent on development aid as their exports and fiscal revenues dwindle due to the global financial crisis, and donors are already behind by nearly \$40 billion on their commitment made in 2005 to double aid to Africa by 2010.
14. Regarding the implementation of health-related MDGs including infant mortality, infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, progress to reduce substantially and eradicate these diseases continues to be slowest, especially in the least developed countries. Addressing successfully the health goals depends on financial resources to build strong healthcare systems, including strong basic science and research capacity as well as infrastructures. Furthermore, almost a quarter of the developing world's population lives without any form of sanitation facilities, thus increasing the risk of diarrheal diseases, cholera, worm infestations, hepatitis and related diseases.
15. While it is estimated that some 1.6 billion people have gained access to safe drinking water since 1990, the recent Ministerial Forum on Water of the Group of 77, held in Muscat on 23-25 February 2009, emphasized that progress in reaching

the goal to halve the number of people without access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation has been slow and uneven.

16. For environmental sustainability it is crucial to address the climate effects issue taking into account the realization of the three pillars of sustainable development, namely economic growth, social development and environmental protection on the basis of the agreed Rio Principles, especially the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities between the developed and the developing countries.
17. There is also a commitment to collaborate on financial and technical cooperation, but Official Development Assistance levels have continually decreased since 2005 despite absorptive capacities of developing countries. There is in fact a growing net outflow of resources from developing to the developed countries which amounted to several hundred billion dollars in 2008.
18. The effort of the international community to reform the global trading system so that it can function as an effective engine of growth and provide financing for development has stalled. The impasse in the negotiations of the Doha Round is a matter of serious concern. The Group has reaffirmed the need to strictly adhere to the development mandate of the Doha Ministerial Declaration, the decision of the General Council of the World Trade Organization of 1 August 2004 and the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration, which place development at the heart of the multilateral trading system.
19. Furthermore, the current global crises relating to food, energy and the failures of economic and financial systems will impact severely on the poorest and most disadvantaged groups in developing countries. There is a vital need for financial resources and transfer of technology in order to build institutional capacity, provide training, strengthen health information systems, enhance community participation and strengthen local ownership as well as scaling up strategies in health sectors.
20. Despite commitments to collaborate on increasing the coherence and sustainability of international systems, the development efforts from the Bretton Woods Institutions and other financial institutions remain confused and incoherent. The reform of the global governance structure and the coherence required for the policies of various international bodies to complement and facilitate the policy reforms by the developing countries has not occurred. Similarly, the reform demanded in the international financial architecture to increase the voice and participation of developing countries has not taken place.
21. Most importantly, there is a crucial lack of progress in the undertakings by our development partners to fulfill MDG 8, the global partnership for development as set out in the MDGs. Global partnership for development addresses the enabling

environment goal required to facilitate the implementation of the other internationally agreed development goals.

22. The Group of 77 and China has consistently called for effective monitoring of the implementation of MDG 8. Notably there are some indicators to measure progress achieved with regard to the first seven MDGs but specific benchmarks and targets are not available to measure the implementation of MDG 8 which represents the global partnerships of developed countries.
23. As the first step, we believe that the United Nations and other concerned organizations should help in preparing a comprehensive matrix of the commitments that have been undertaken under MDG 8 and the other internationally agreed development goals. Thereafter, specific benchmarks could be indicated and developed to improve our assessment of the MDGs' implementation.
24. In this context, we call on developed partners and international institutions to allocate additional financial resources for development in order to create a more supportive international environment as expressed in MDG 8. Understanding the mutual share of responsibilities of developed and developing countries in achieving the internationally agreed development goals will trigger the release of the necessary ingredients that will accelerate their achievement.

Mr. Moderator,

25. I would like to close by wishing this Panel every success in its deliberations and we do look forward to a very successful session which will produce outcomes needed to accelerate the implementation of the MDGs and the international agreed development goals most effectively.

Thank you.