

25 September 2008

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,
at the closing of the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals**

Heads of State and Government,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Friends all,

We have concluded a day dedicated to the dispossessed of our world. Today, we are sending them a signal that we as individuals, nations and as 'nations united' are determined and committed to affording life with dignity to all peoples everywhere.

I want to thank, in a special way, my dear friend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for ensuring that our Organization rise to this great challenge. I look forward to working with him, not only on the larger development agenda, but also on a more focused approach to strengthening global health.

Today political leaders, civil society, philanthropists and many others have all come together in the spirit of solidarity and fraternity -- to renew our promises to one another and, especially, to the world's needy. You have shown great resolve. You have demonstrated in spirit and action that solidarity is the greatest force for change to meet the needs of the poor, the sick, the hungry.

I am acutely aware of the magnitude of the challenges at hand. These have been made more acute by the financial turmoil as well as recent higher food and energy prices. The multiple crises facing us threaten to reverse the hard-earned gains we have made.

The many initiatives announced this week will inject new energy, resources and hope into our efforts. However, these good efforts, as important as they are, are not enough. Even if each and every one fulfills the pledges we have made, we will still fall short.

That is why I urge all of us here today to continue in earnest the efforts to ensure that the Doha Review Conference on Financing for Development significantly enhances the global partnership for development. Ultimately, all countries are responsible for their own development. But everyone must have fair opportunities to do so.

I call on all Member States to be represented in Doha at the highest possible level. We are facing a global economic crisis and we must move ourselves into sustained emergency mode to meet the challenges facing us.

The currently unfolding financial crisis will have adverse consequences for development. It compels us, then, to redouble our efforts to correct our deeply flawed economic system, including those institutions and processes we ourselves have created or tolerated. To do so, we must ask and find answers to difficult questions.

Many here today may be too young to remember, but forty years ago, a young black leader urged contemporaries in his society to join in a people's campaign to end poverty. As we examine the state our world today and plight of its poor, his message has resonance for the world at large. We too are called upon to raise certain questions about the whole society. Now, as in the late 1960's, we are still called upon to give aid to those in need, those who find themselves in misery and agony... But one day, we must ask the question of whether an edifice which produces 'haves' and 'have nots' must not be restructured and refurbished.

Friends,

That is where we are now. The only way we can alleviate the suffering of the world's poor is by creating a sound and just international economic system. We must shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society; a global society where science and technology, international law, human rights and ethics are used as political instruments to advance the common good, to bring into community all our brothers and sisters, including the most vulnerable and to make us, together, whole.

This is the purpose of these United Nations. It must be our purpose. We must remain steadfast and earnest in our efforts, and strengthen our resolve to continue our efforts, now, through to Doha, and beyond.

For these reasons, I fully support the proposal by the Secretary-General to hold an MDG Summit in 2010. It will be an opportunity to galvanize the needed efforts and actions in the final five years before our 2015 deadline. I will shortly launch a consultation process to develop a resolution on the objectives and modalities of the 2010 summit so that that the General Assembly can act on this as soon as possible.

As President, I am deeply committed to ensuring that the General Assembly continues its efforts to strengthen the development role of the United Nations. This organization must continue to strive to find common ground, take joint decisions and build partnerships to meet challenges that can only be overcome through concerted, global action. I count on your full cooperation.

Health is an area in which we are still lagging far behind. This requires prompt action. Our meeting today has seen significant attention to -- and funding initiatives for -- the health sector. This is good news. Yet, major challenges remain. Major inadequacies in primary health care systems need to be addressed, especially to enhance maternal and child survival. We also need to focus much more on neglected tropical diseases, which still cause millions of avoidable deaths every year.

Recognizing this need, the Secretary-General and I have made global health a priority. And this is why we will jointly launch an initiative on strengthening global health.

The Secretary-General and I will convene an informal thematic debate before the end of 2008, or in early 2009, on “Strengthening Global Health: The Health MDGs and Beyond.” We will initiate efforts aimed at advancing progress in the global health arena. The process will be advanced through a high-level debate in June 2009. Periodic reports on implementation of the recommendations will follow to ensure accountability.

This initiative will complement the work the Economic and Social Council is undertaking on global public health in 2009. I will work very closely with the President of ECOSOC to ensure that the Annual Ministerial Review next year leads to meaningful outcomes.

With the momentum generated, I am confident that we will finally make the breakthroughs in health so urgently needed. We must deliver the gift of health to truly deliver on our promise to humanity.

Friends,

We have made great strides today. We must act with renewed energy and conviction. And we must go forward in partnership, for what we can achieve together is far greater than what any country or organization can accomplish alone. This is the very essence of the United Nations and global solidarity.

I thank you.