



END POVERTY 2015 *Make it happen*

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals, United Nations Headquarters, New York, 25 September 2008

PRESS RELEASE
High-level Event

United Nations convenes world leaders to deliver on ending extreme poverty

*Business, foundation and activist leaders join mobilization
to achieve Millennium Development Goals by 2015*

UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK, 11 September – Heads of State and other top officials will be joined by leaders from the private sector, foundations and civil society organizations at the United Nations on 25 September to commit to further actions to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

Nearly 100 Heads of State or Government are expected to attend the High-level Event convened by United Nations Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon and General Assembly President Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann. It will be the first summit-level gathering on the MDGs since the year 2000, when world leaders committed to the Goals laid out in the Millennium Declaration.

Halfway towards the target date of 2015, the High-level Event is intended to review progress to date, identify gaps and next steps, and translate existing commitments into concrete plans and action on the ground to ensure that all countries can achieve the Goals. The High-level Event takes place during the UN General Assembly's annual debate and follows a high-level meeting on Africa's development needs on 22 September.

"The September High-level Event will mark a turning point in the work to reach the Millennium Development Goals," said Secretary-General Ban, who has made the issue a top priority. "It is my firm hope that we will be able to look back on this day as the moment when the world got back on course to reach the Goals."

Mixed progress and new challenges

According to the UN's *Millennium Development Goals Report 2008*, there has been strong and sustained progress in reducing extreme poverty. Improved estimates of poverty from the World Bank show that the number of poor in the developing world is larger than previously thought, at 1.4 billion people. But the new estimates confirm that between 1990 and 2005, the number of people living in extreme poverty fell by over 400 million, and that the 1990 global poverty rate is likely to fall by the targeted 50 per cent by 2015. But, while most of this decline occurred in East Asia, particularly China, other regions had much smaller decreases in the poverty rate and only modest falls in the number of poor. Sub-Saharan Africa and the former Soviet republics actually saw the number of poor increase between 1990 and 2005.

"We face nothing less than a development emergency," Mr. Ban said. "Halfway to the target date of 2015, it is clear that we are not on track to meet the Goals, especially in Africa. And new global challenges – an economic slowdown, high food and fuel prices, and climate change – threaten to reverse the progress we have made."

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The global economic slowdown will diminish the incomes of the poor, climate change will have a disproportionate impact on the already disadvantaged, and prevailing high food prices are expected to push millions of people deeper into poverty, the report says, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, already the regions with the largest numbers of people living in extreme poverty.

A broadening coalition

A number of business CEOs, philanthropists and other civil society partners – many working in broad coalitions with Government leaders and UN agencies – will be taking part in dozens of partnership events tackling key issues linked to the MDGs, to take place in and around the UN during the week of 21-26 September. Several of the events are expected to result in announcements of significant new initiatives and concrete actions, including on malaria, safe drinking water, maternal health and women's empowerment. *(For a schedule of partnership events and links to more information, see website.)*

“We are witnessing a historic broadening of the coalition to achieve the Goals,” Mr. Ban said. “Collectively, we are shifting into high gear for a seven-year push to end extreme poverty. We can make it happen.”

The High-level Event will start with an opening session featuring statements by the General Assembly President and Secretary-General, several Government leaders, and, representing the private sector and civil society, respectively, Bill Gates (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) and Elaben Bhatt (Self-Employed Women's Association of India).

For the remainder of the day, leaders will participate in three parallel roundtables -- on poverty and hunger; education and health; and environmental sustainability -- with gender equality and the global partnership for development as cross-cutting themes. The Secretary-General will give a closing summary of the main outcomes of the day, also reflecting the results of the key partnership events, as well as a closing press conference. *(For programme details, see website.)*

For interviews, story ideas and other information on the MDGs, please consult the list of inter-agency communications officials to be found in the press kit and on the event website.

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For a live webcast of the High-level Event and press conferences, please see www.un.org/webcast.

For more information on the High-level Event and a complete list of partnership events, please visit: www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2008highlevel.

For more information on the Millennium Development Goals, please see: www.un.org/millenniumgoals.