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MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND BEYOND 2015

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Poorest countries need more access to aid, trade, debt relief, medicines and technologies, says new UN report

Persistent gaps between promises made and delivered by developed countries hold back greater progress on the Millennium Development Goals

NEW YORK, 18 SEPTEMBER — Targets for the Millennium Development Goals related to the global partnership to improve people's lives and end poverty show mixed results on providing the poorest developing countries with greater access to aid, trade, debt relief, essential medicines and technologies, according to a new report launched today by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The lives of millions of people worldwide have improved due to concerted efforts – at the global, regional, national and local levels – to achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Recent statistics show that with many MDG targets already met – including reducing poverty, increasing access to clean drinking water, improving the lives of slum dwellers, and achieving gender parity in primary school – many more targets are within reach by the end of 2015. However, much unfinished business remains.

“Now more than ever, leaders and citizens across the globe must boldly step forward to join in essential collective actions to eradicate poverty, raise living standards and sustain the environment,” Mr. Ban said. “I call on all Governments and international institutions to continue strengthening the global partnership for development so that we can usher in a more sustainable future.”

The MDG Gap Task Force Report 2014, entitled, “The State of the Global Partnership for Development,” tracks delivery on commitments listed under Millennium Development Goal 8—the global partnership for development. Goal 8 was created as a call to developed countries to extend specific types of support to developing countries to help them achieve the other seven MDGs, which include targets on reducing poverty, hunger and child and maternal mortality, and increasing access to education, and environmental sustainability.

Mr. Ban said the report “focuses on the gap between commitments made and cooperation delivered, with the ultimate goal of helping the international community bridge the difference.”

The report finds that many targets for Goal 8 are close to being achieved, while progress on others continues to be slow. Duty-free and quota-free access to developed country markets was extended for exports from the 49 least developed countries, but agricultural subsidies in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries remain entrenched. Debt relief for the world's poorest countries has increased, but small States continue to face longstanding debt sustainability challenges. Private investment has spurred the greater availability and falling cost of telecommunications across the developing world, but the gains need to be accelerated to reduce gaps with the rest of the world. In addition, the report says too many people continue to lack access to affordable essential medicines.

Aid hits record high, but many countries see a decline in assistance

After two years of declines, official development assistance hit a record high of \$135 billion in 2013, but fell \$180 billion short of commitments made and reaffirmed by UN Member States. This rebound was largely attributed to increases in multilateral and humanitarian aid. Several countries either increased aid in 2013 or met the UN target of allocating 0.7 per cent of gross national income to aid. The countries surpassing 0.7 per cent GNI were: Denmark; Luxembourg;



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Norway; Sweden and the United Kingdom. In 2013, Austria, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Poland, Slovenia and the United States increased their aid budgets, but fell short of the 0.7 per cent target.

According to the report, aid continues to be heavily concentrated with the top 20 recipients receiving more than half of all aid. Despite a 12.3 per cent increase in aid to the 49 least developed countries in 2013, bilateral aid to sub-Saharan Africa fell four per cent between 2012 and 2013 to \$26.2 billion.

Market access improves, but G20 promises and actions differ

The report notes that several changes in trade policy which may help to improve market access for developing countries, including the rapid expansion of global value chains as intermediate inputs are increasingly sourced from producers around the world, which have opened export opportunities for several developing countries and pressured others to integrate their exports into existing chains of production.

Developed countries keep lowering tariffs, and allowing the proportion of duty free imports from developing countries to rise. However, the report says developed countries must do more to address the negative impacts of non-tariff measures on the abilities of developing countries to participate in the global economy. The report says that while Group of Twenty (G20) members reaffirmed their commitment to refrain from protectionist measures, they created new trade restrictions in 2013, which could undermine confidence in the G20's commitment to an open and liberal trading system.

As the 2015 deadline for achieving the MDGs approaches, the Task Force calls for a final push towards improving market access for developing countries, and continuing efforts to eliminate all agricultural export subsidies, trade-distorting domestic support and protectionist policies that inhibit access to the global economy.

Debt sustainability improves but risks of increasing debt rise

The fiscal balances of developing countries as a group continue to improve. External debt of developing countries as a whole measured only 22.6 per cent of their combined gross domestic product (GDP) in 2013, which was a decline of more than 10 percentage points since 2003. However, short-term debt levels and debt servicing-to-export ratios keep rising, and indicate that some countries are once again at risk of debt distress.

As of June 2014, 35 out of 39 highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) reached the completion point of their HIPC process, where they received debt relief. Still, several of these countries are again approaching moderate or high levels of debt, which will require more relief for the world's poorest countries. Also some countries were excluded from debt relief, and debt levels in many small States are very high and give particular cause for concern.

Access for poor to essential medicines limited by high prices and lack of availability

The report finds that prices for essential medicines in developing countries are still too high, but there has been some progress in access to medicines to treat HIV/AIDS, as well as an increase in local production of other essential medicines.

Access to essential medicines in developing countries remains insufficient. To improve access to medicines, treatments must be sufficiently available and affordable to patients. In 2013, essential medicines were available in only 55 per cent of facilities in the public sector and 66 per cent in the private sector of these countries. Prices of generic medicines remain high for patients in low- and lower-middle income countries, and average three times higher than international reference prices.



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Use of technologies grows rapidly

Access for developing countries to advanced technologies continues to grow at a fast pace, particularly in mobile phone and Internet usage. By the end of 2014, the number of mobile-cellular subscriptions in the developing world will account for 78 per cent of the world's total. Similarly, growth in Internet usage in developing countries continues to outpace developed countries, yet most of the more than four billion people without Internet access live in developing countries.

Gaps in access to advanced technologies persist between developed and developing countries. While mobile-broadband penetration in 2014 is expected to reach 84 per cent of the total population in developed countries, it is estimated to barely exceed 21 per cent in developing countries. In many developing countries, broadband prices remain unaffordable for most people, even as prices continue to drop.

Post-2015 needs renewed commitment to global partnership

With the MDGs concluding at the end of 2015, world leaders have called for an ambitious, long-term agenda to improve people's lives and protect the planet for future generations. For a successful post-2015 development agenda, the Task Force calls for a renewed political commitment to development cooperation to formulate a coherent set of substantive policies for global development.

About the MDG Gap Task Force

The MDG Gap Task Force, co-chaired by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the UN Development Programme, was created by the Secretary-General in May 2007 to improve monitoring of the global commitments contained in MDG 8, the Global Partnership for Development. The Task Force integrates more than 30 UN and other international agencies, and its main purpose is to systematically track existing international commitments and to identify gaps and obstacles in their fulfillment at the international, regional and country level in the areas of official development assistance, market access (trade), debt sustainability, access to essential medicines and new technologies.

For more information, see
www.un.org/millenniumgoals

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