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**Statement by
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UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
TO INTERACTIVE SESSION ON THE MDGs**

New York, 8 March 2010

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Colleagues,

I would like to start by congratulating the Co-Facilitators of the MDG Summit process, Ambassador Carsten Staur of Denmark and Ambassador Paul Badji of Senegal, for proposing and organizing this “interactive session with the UN system” on the MDGs.

This is an extremely important initiative. It provides an opportunity for bringing together the UN system to examine gaps and obstacles, as well as lessons learned, in our concerted efforts to achieve the MDGs.

Building on the rich discussion of last Thursday, today’s dialogue also affords me and my colleagues from the UN family an important opportunity to hear from Member States your views and expectations on how we, the UN system, can assist Member States.

I am joined here today by colleagues from WFP, UNDP, WHO, UNICEF and World Bank. The work of these organizations addresses specific MDGs and targets. They have had a significant impact on the ground. I look forward to hearing their valuable experiences and efforts in this regard.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Many of you may have seen the blue-covered annual MDG report. That is the principal MDG monitoring report prepared by the UN system.

It presents the annual assessment of progress toward the 8 goals and 21 targets, based on the most updated data on the official MDG indicators.

DESA leads the inter-agency group on MDG indicators, authors and publishes the report. It is the most authoritative, comprehensive monitoring report, based on official data provided by national governments to the international statistical system.

The assessment presented in 2009 warned us that, despite many successes, overall progress has been too slow for most of the targets to be met by 2015.

In a few quick words, the targets most at risk are those of reducing hunger and improving maternal health. We've seen some progress in education, gender equality, child mortality and HIV.

But we are faced with daunting challenges in reaching the most disadvantaged groups and those in the rural areas, and in ensuring environmental sustainability.

With only five years left until the 2015 deadline, we have very little time, given that so many countries are lagging behind in achieving many of the MDG targets.

Despite the enormous challenges, I strongly believe that, with firm commitment, appropriate policies, and adequate resources, the MDG's are attainable.

But none of us can do this alone. We must make the Global Partnership for Development work.. This is about achieving MDG 8.

Achieving MDGs is not an easy undertaking. But it is especially hard for the most vulnerable groups. Least developed countries face much more obstacles in achieving MDG 1 through MDG 7.

MDG 8 was agreed exactly with that challenge in mind.

My colleagues from the UN system will focus on MDG 1 through MDG 7. I would like to elaborate here on MDG 8.

Developing countries need adequate support in their efforts to achieve MDGs 1 to 7. We cannot let them down.

The targets for MDG 8 are in a way the least challenging of all MDGs. I will return to this in a minute.

To track progress on the development partnership, the Secretary-General created the MDG Gap Task Force in 2007, which is co-chaired by UNDP and DESA. The Task Force brings together more than 20 UN agencies, as well as the IMF, the World Bank, WTO and the OECD.

Official development assistance is the most visible element of the development partnership.

Although it rose to record levels (around \$120 billion) in 2008, ODA is falling short by \$35 billion per year on a pledge made by donors in 2005.

\$20 billion of this shortfall is money that we have promised to Africa.

Clearly, developing countries cannot live on aid alone. Improving their access to markets of developed countries is another longstanding commitment of the global partnership for development.

But also here we are falling short.

We still have not been able to complete the Doha Round of trade negotiations and fulfil its original developmental promise. Progress towards reaching targets of providing all LDCs with duty-free market access for their exports, has also been slow.

A fair number of the poorest countries have received substantial amounts of debt relief over the past decade. This has helped create more fiscal space for spending towards the MDGs. Yet more needs to be done.

The food crisis and the global financial and economic crisis have strongly increased their external financing needs and limited their capacity to service still outstanding debts.

Some countries, including Haiti, have higher debt-servicing obligations than the size of their entire public health budget.

The promise of additional debt relief should not be limited to disaster-stricken Haiti; more should be done for all developing nations with debt distress caused by crises not of their making.

MDG 8 also calls for access to affordable essential medicines and new technologies. At a time when the purchasing power of the poor is under threat, the cost of many essential medicines is rising as well.

People in developing countries still pay three to six times more than international reference prices for the cheapest generic medicines.

If we wish to make this partnership work, we must find ways to provide everyone who needs them, with adequate and affordable medicines.

I hope this will be given special attention in the interactive session with the private sector.

The technological divide is still very large. We have seen strong growth in access of developing countries to modern communications technology, but large shares of their populations cannot afford these and have no supporting infrastructure near them.

Making clean-energy technologies accessible to developing countries is not only fair, but also a necessity for them to find economic development paths which will be consistent with global climate change goals.

In short, strengthening the Global Partnership for Development is essential if we want to achieve a fairer and environmentally sustainable global development.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

The MDGs Summit in September, as well as this ongoing preparatory process, should not merely serve as a stock-taking exercise.

It should serve in particular to galvanize the Global Partnership for Development. Failing to meet MDG 8 will make achieving MDGs 1 to 7 so much more difficult. So I hope this discussion will shed new light on what we need to do to keep our promises.

I am sure my colleagues from the UN system will back up this statement with lessons learned from their own experience in supporting the achievement of the MDGs.

We - governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society - have committed ourselves to these objectives. We are to be held accountable if we fail.

It is our joint responsibility.

Thank you.
