



**STATEMENT BY**

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**H.E. MR. JAN ELIASSON**

**AT**

**THE INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS OF THE  
PLENARY ON DEVELOPMENT FOLLOW-UP AND  
ECOSOC REFORM**

**UNITED NATIONS**

**NEW YORK**

**1 DECEMBER 2005**

Excellencies, distinguished speakers

I am pleased to be able to join you today for this important session on follow-up to our commitments on development. On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to extend a particular welcome to our guest speakers today – not least to Lakshmi Puri and Richard Manning who are being beamed to us from Europe, where I know the hour is already late.

I am sorry that my consultations in Geneva last week prevented me from attending the inaugural meeting of your informal consultations. However, my Chef de Cabinet and Mr Sabey have informed me that you had a very constructive session, ably chaired by Ambassador Verbeke and Ambassador Diarra, at which there was broad agreement on the way the discussions should proceed.

Today's session touches on two matters to which I am strongly attached. First, on the fundamental challenge to our generation: the eradication of poverty and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Second, on the need for us in this institution to ensure the decisions we take are followed up and implemented.

In a few hours' time, I'll be speaking at the World AIDS Day 2005 Commemoration in St John's Cathedral. I hope to see many of you there. The theme of this year's World AIDS Campaign is 'Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise'. When I speak tonight, I will be reflecting on the fact that progress in tackling the pandemic has not been nearly fast enough. For example, in the three hours we

will be assembled here this afternoon, over 1,500 people will be newly infected with HIV, and most of them will be under the age of 24.

I'll also note that the world's response now is much better than it was a few years ago, but still not good enough. And I'll note that many of the commitments needed to turn the tide of HIV and AIDS have already been made – the challenge now is to implement them, to 'Keep the Promise'.

I mention this because I think there's a similar picture across the broad range of development challenges. As we enter the final month of 2005, we can look back on a year where many welcome new commitments were made. But – as I have said before – if, by this point in 2006, the international community has not tangibly accelerated implementation, the prospects of achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 might already have been lost.

We simply cannot allow that to happen, first and foremost because of the abhorrent and unacceptable human price that would have to be paid for not meeting the MDGs, in terms of lives lost and blighted by hunger, poverty and disease, children going without education, and damage to our precious environment. But we also cannot allow it to happen because it would throw into doubt the credibility of our multilateral institutions. If the international community cannot deliver what its leaders have promised in an area where the need is so compelling, and where we know what needs to be done and how to do it, what hope can there be that the multilateral system can tackle the other pressing issues of our time?

This is why I believe the work of these informal consultations is so fundamentally important. It is critical that we quickly establish the role the various parts of the United Nations must play – as part of the broader global effort – to ensure our development commitments are followed up.

It is of course important that our deliberations are based on a good understanding of the development follow-up work that is already underway, both within and outside the United Nations system. For that reason, I applaud the Co-Chairs' initiative to hold this meeting today, and look forward to some stimulating presentations and what will, I am sure, be a lively question and answer session. Thank you.