



# World Chronicle

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Director of UN Millennium Campaign

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## **“Keeping the Promise to the World’s Poor”**

World leaders agreed a few years ago to a specific plan, for improving the lot of humanity by the year 2015: The Millennium Development Goals.

Can pressure from citizens’ groups make governments deliver on the promises made to the world’s poor? Would an additional US \$ 50 billion in annual aid be enough to break the vicious cycle of poverty, ignorance, and disease? Can better trade policies keep 30,000 children from dying every day?

In this edition of World Chronicle, these are some of the pressing questions addressed to Salil Shetty, Director of the UN’s Millennium Campaign.

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**ANNOUNCER:** From the United Nations in New York, an unedited interview programme on global issues. This is **World Chronicle**. And here is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

**JENKINS:** Hello, I'm Tony Jenkins and this is **World Chronicle**.

It's not often that world leaders agree on anything— but a few years ago they did commit to a specific plan, an agenda for improving the lot of humanity by the year 2015, the so-called “Millennium Development Goals”.

Can governments, businesses, and activists rise to the challenge – and deliver on the promises made to the world's poor?

Our guest today is the Director of the UN's Millennium Campaign, Mr. Salil Shetty

Mr. Shetty welcome. Tell us briefly if you could about the Millennium Development Goal campaign. What does it consist of? Where and how is it carried out? Can a campaign be sustained for more than a decade? It's an awful long period of time. Have you had any early successes or setbacks you can tell us about?

**SHETTY:** Thanks Tony. Thanks for bringing me on the show and before I say something about the campaign I think it's fair that we say a word or two about the Millennium Goals itself. These are a very simple eight set of outcomes, which world leaders agreed [to] at the Millennium Summit, which happened in September 2000. And it was I think the largest gathering of heads of states ever in the history of the UN, and people keep asking me what are these goals about. And the way I respond is that it's really about the basic human needs like water, food, health and education. So that's what the goals are about. Now, of course, it's not unusual for world leaders to sign things and agree to things....

**JENKINS:** They're very good at that, aren't they?

**SHETTY:** Yes, so we've seen many commitments, so the question really is you know, what is going to be done about these goals? Are we likely to get to them? And that is where the campaign comes in. The campaign has been set up very much to, in a sense, take the goals to the people because the goals were agreed to in an intergovernmental process. But for these goals to be achieved at the end of the day each country has to take responsibility and its only people's pressure which is going to make these goals happen, if at all, that's the only way it's going to happen. So, the campaign...

**JENKINS:** People in the countries where the goals are to be met, or people in the wider community?

**SHETTY:** One of the unique things about the Millennium Declaration, within which the goals are located, and the goals themselves, is that for the first time almost there was an explicit recognition of shared responsibility which is why its partly called the Millennium

Compact: that rich countries have to deliver their share of responsibility and developing countries have to do the same thing. So, rich countries are promised that they will do at least the core set of things like; number one, increase development assistance of aid to levels which are required to help achieve the Millennium goals. Also to set a much more level playing field in terms of trade, I mean increase market access, etc. Also, to deal with the whole issue of debt which is a major burden, particularly for Africa but not exclusively. And also to make some of the intellectual property rights regimes more evenly balanced across the globe. So that's what rich countries promised, but developing countries have to do a whole lot themselves to get their own house in order and have the right policies, mobilize domestic resources, be more transparent and accountable to their own citizens. So that is what the Millennium Compact is about.

**JENKINS:** Alright, so there are ton of questions on this. And joining us in the studio, we have Thalif Deen of the Inter Press Service/IPS and Louis Hamann of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporations/CBC, Louis...

**HAMANN:** Mr. Shetty, you said the big question now is really...are these goals going to be met? That's the big question. Do you think they are? I mean the way things are going - we've been into this for what over four years now. Are they going to be met or not?

**SHETTY:** That's the paradox. I mean that's why the campaign is so essential to the process. If we carry on a sort of business as usual basis, we have some countries who are going to meet some of the goals and there are others who are kind of you know, in the middle group they may or may not, it's kind of uncertain, and there are others, the third batch which include a lot of the sub-Saharan African countries and some of the other least developed countries where it's quite an uphill task to meet the goals. And the paradox is that while on the one hand it's difficult to meet all the goals and all the places on a business as usual basis, there is absolutely no reason why all goals can't be met in all countries if we get our act together. And that is really the question of where the campaign comes in – can we in the next two years really get our act together in a focused way and work on a partnership basis, otherwise the chances are low.

**HAMANN:** And how would you rate the job that you've done so far because you admitted it yourself, a big part of this is public pressure on policy makers who actually make these things happen. Yet, if I walk out on the street right now and say Millennium Development Goals, a lot of people will look at me and ask me what I am talking about. So, have you been able to reach in the last four years... have you been able to reach the people on the street as it were?

**SHETTY:** Well I think what's important - and that's one of the main starting points for the campaign - is that we are not coming in as if parachuting from nowhere, you know, I mean the important thing is that many of these things had been going on for a long time and we just need to build on it and there is no doubt that where people's pressure has been applied – things have made a difference. We have some very well recorded cases much sort of talked about like the whole jubilee - that campaign. I mean, if there was not pressure on leaders during the time of the famous G-8 meeting, we might not have had some of the initiatives, which happened in that. To take the case of education in Tanzania for example, the universal primary education which was announced by the government of Tanzania, of course we have a government which is well-disposed but the fact those people's pressure to make primary education free has resulted not only in millions of Tanzanian children going to school today but also in our neighboring countries, like Kenya and Malawi, have also taken similar steps. So, I wouldn't say that any of this is because of the Millennium Campaign or any one group doing things but citizen's pressure is very, very important. You asked have we been able to create, you know, does every person on every street of the world now know about the Millennium Goals? For us it's not the word Millennium Goals which is important, the more important is the substantive issues. I mean, do people realize that health, education and water are basic human rights. Are they putting pressure on their governments to deliver these things? That's very important. I think more and more of that is happening, we played a small part in it.

**DEEN:** You have eight goals and out of the eight, seven goals are basically to be met by developing countries in terms of education, health and there is a deadline, they have to meet the goals by 2015. The eighth goal I'm told deals with development aid, terms of trade, debt relief and technology transfer. But the developing countries say there's no deadline on the part of the rich countries, so the deadline is obviously for the poorer countries and not for the rich countries. Is that correct?

**SHETTY:** It is true that the goals are not perfect; I mean there are many limitations...that is why I always refer to the Millennium Declaration which is a much more comprehensive document. But coming back to the question of are there deadlines, which developed countries have to meet, all of the goals are not specified deadlines clearly on all the sort of sub-goals and targets for developing countries. There have been other processes as you know. For example, if you take aid, the financing for development process the Monterey Conference and other follow-up meetings – for example if you take the European Union, few countries have made specific time bound commitments following their own internal meetings in Barcelona, etc. So there have been other supplementary processes, which are now starting to define these much more clearly. On trade issues there's a whole development ground process

which is making it much more specific, so we shouldn't look at these goals in isolation. But you are right fundamentally, I mean that you can look at it in two ways, you can say that this is not good enough, there are no time-bound targets but at least for the first time we have an articulation of the responsibility of the rich world. So at least it's one step ahead and now it is a matter of how you use these things.

**DEEN:** On the question of declining development aid, is the war on terrorism having a negative impact on declining aid?

**SHETTY:** No, actually, first of all for the first time in 2003 we have seen the curve change its shape for the last decade plus we have been seeing aid levels going down. Now for the first time we have the curve actually starting to move upward.

**DEEN:** This year or last year?

**SHETTY:** In 2003 for the first time things have changed slightly.

**JENKINS:** And that's not been skewed by the amount of aid that is going into Iraq?

**SHETTY:** It is skewed to some extent, it is skewed by exchange rates, multiple factors, but more important than the numbers or of the curve changing direction last year - the more important thing is that almost I think more than half the countries in the European Union have now actually made specific commitments with timelines on when they are going to get to their 0.7% commitment of aid.

**JENKINS:** I seem to remember reading that you said last year sometime that you thought that in order to meet the goals you would need an extra 25,000 to 35,000 million dollars a year more on development assistance in aid – in order to meet the goals. And you're nowhere near that sort of a figure are you?

**SHETTY:** Well, you know there are multiple estimates on that famous Zedillo Commission talked about 50 billion dollars extra, and there are other estimates. I mean, we... I don't even know to get a perfect number on that but we do think that at least an additional 50 to 100 billion dollars is required. Are we close to...

**JENKINS:** 50 to 100 over...?

**SHETTY:** Per year additional as what is...

**JENKINS:** 50 to 100.

**SHETTY:** In billion of dollars, are the estimates. Now if all countries actually meet their 0.7% commitment – we're going to be there, there's no problem. And many of the campaigns which we have been supporting and facilitating in many of the richer countries, you asked about what are the initial successes or setbacks. Now one of the strong campaigns is in Italy - Italy's campaign is focus on 0.7%. In Spain we have a very interesting situation where the campaign has grown in strength and the new government has its own accord actually

announced its own timetable to get to 0.7%. So you know, there are some positive movements nowhere close to where we like it to be, and a lot more effort is required. But we have about 15 countries or so in the rich world where campaigns are now underway and about 25...

**JENKINS:** I should explain I guess to our viewers that when we are talking about 0.7%, we are talking about 0.7% of a country's gross domestic product. That's the goal that the United Nations has set so that every wealthy nation essentially should be setting aside that much of its gross domestic product. There is no...or maybe it's just a couple of Scandinavian countries met that targets apart from that and a few others.

**DEEN:** It is more of a developmental target I think.

**JENKINS:** ...Other than that - nobody else in the world?

**SHETTY:** There are not many others that actually put a definite timeline including some big economies like the UK, which has recently announced it. So, I mean on the aid question, things are looking better than they were at least even a year or two ago, but on debt there is a long way to go, on trade you know the whole Doha negotiations are you know... they're in a very difficult stage – we're keeping our fingers crossed next year. So, it's a mixed picture I would say, but on the whole I would say that the fact that the goals are there and in front of us have helped us to focus our minds because people are saying, "Okay, now we at least have a set of outcomes", and because the difficulty with aid discussions is that rich countries will say, "Okay, we can put an aid but what is the result of that?" So, now we say, "Okay we have an agreed set of results, the outcomes are agreed we can track progress". Seventy-five countries have produced their own annual reports now; there are some progress reports on the Millennium Goals and there is enough...I think over-all the news is mixed but there is certain degree of optimism, a certain degree of coordinated kind of going toward the same goals.

**HAMANN:** So, would you say that maybe the media, I mean maybe we're culpable of this, we're focusing too much on the results and the goal as opposed to the fact that here is an exercise where we're trying to focus the minds of different governments to achieve these goals? In other words, should we be looking at this from the other side as it were?

**SHETTY:** No, I think it's important for us to you know...

**HAMANN:** ...and forget about you know so much the goals and the results and maybe focus on the process at this point?

**SHETTY:** No. To me the two should go together. I mean the good thing about the goals is that they actually offer a set of clear outcomes. So you know, we are not only talking about process. But in order to get to the goals, of course, the process is crucial because it's not just a matter of pumping money. These goals are going to be achieved partly by increased

development assistance but developing countries have to raise a lot more resources domestically and most important even if you have resources, for us the key question is, "What actually gets to the person on the ground"? There's the villager who's living in poverty in a remote village. Is education, water and health reaching that person or not? So the campaigns in Africa and Asia are very important to push for governments to be accountable to their own citizens.

**JENKINS:** Let me just tell our viewers. This is **World Chronicle**, and our guest today is Salil Shetty, who is in charge of galvanizing support for the UN's plan to reduce poverty and improve health, education and the environment. Thalif?

**DEEN:** You mentioned about timelines by certain donors, but the United States and Japan, two of the major donors, they have not set any timelines, have they?

**SHETTY:** True but what we have to say, I mean we have to remember that the US has increased their development assistance levels considerably over the last 2-3 years.

**DEEN:** But nowhere close to 0.7%.

**SHETTY:** No they're not close to 0.7% but...I mean they're inching their way because if they announce...

**JENKINS:** Isn't the large amount of that increase specifically targeted at aids and in Iraq? Does it...is much of it going to your campaign?

**SHETTY:** Over all if you look at the total development assistance in a portfolio, only about half of that is actually focused on the achievement of the Millennium Goals and in the poorest countries. So that's you know, when we talk about aid we just don't talk about volume we talk about quality; if it's not going to the right places for the right things that is not good enough. So that is a limitation in the quality of the aid of many of the countries we're talking about.

**JENKINS:** Another problem along the same lines as I understand it is that so much of the aid is tied isn't it? Would you like to talk to us about that? I mean what are the problems with it being tied?

**SHETTY:** Basically, I mean tying, that's a kind of technical term to say that the country who's giving the aid is also insisting that goods and services have to be purchased from the donor country, which is highly inefficient; because it's been economically, managerially proven to be inefficient.

**JENKINS:** Does that mean a lot of countries have their own sort of Halliburton in Iraq situation?

**SHETTY:** You know it basically creates the possibility of those sorts of things happening. So, untying of aid has been agreed [to] a long time ago and there are many

processes which are pushing for greater on time because at the end of the day what developing countries need is resources which they can apply based on nationally owned processes because these goals are fine at the global level, but unless and until developing countries actually internalize this, nationalize this and say this is something which they want to do - things are not going to change. And again we have some good success stories. You asked about successes; Vietnam is a very good case where they have converted these global goals into Vietnam Development Goals. And then it becomes a nationally owned process. I mean there are many other countries; Albania has done a huge one work on that, Tanzania...Brazil is incorporating a lot of this into their national policies. So we are seeing some positive and good new stories as well.

**HAMANN:** When you say that one of the problems, or maybe not problems with the MDGs, is a problem of perception, in other words the developing countries look at the rich countries and say, "Well it is your responsibility to help us out with these MDGs and the rich countries are looking at the poor countries saying, "Well no, you've got to keep your house in order, so how do you sort of square that circle? How do you get them around the table if you will and say, "Well let's stop sort of fighting over this eternal north-south debate and let's focus on the goals"? Is that a big problem?

**SHETTY:** In a sense, that was the job, which was done for us at the Millennium Summit. Historically it is used to be this finger-pointing and sort of, you know...blame, sharing process, but the good thing about the Millennium Summit and the Millennium Declaration was that there was an agreement that it's not a question of one party or the other doing things. The only way we're going to get to these goals is by us saying that, "we have shared responsibilities, let's define our areas of competence and responsibility", and do this and stop talking about "You've done less, we've done more" – it's not good enough. And the fact of the matter is, as these discussions are going on, 30,000 kids are dying everyday. And there's absolutely no justification of, you know who takes responsibility for this? So, I mean we have to just put that behind us that the declaration's there, the goals are clear; the question is now much more implementation. How do we go about doing this?

**DEEN:** The UN is planning a major conference in September next year, and it's going to be attended probably by more than 150 heads of state. And one of the things that they are going to discuss is to assess the Millennium Development Goals. Since most of these countries may not have met their goals, is there a possibility that the deadline could be pushed beyond 2015?

**SHETTY:** Their meeting next year is reviewing the Millennium Declaration of the goals that are part of the declaration. It's important for us to keep the focus on the declaration



because the declaration lays out the pre-conditions required, you know, things like governance, conflict, gender, etc. Spelled out in more details of declaration, so next year when they review the progress, you are right to say that not all goals would have been achieved in all the countries, but I don't think that there was an expectation that that would magically happen in 2 to 3 years because you can't change the health and educational status, women's status in a country in 3 - 4 years time. The question is: are we moving in the right direction or not? And that's what's going to be I think the stock taking process. And the picture is pretty clear; as I said right at the outset, there are some countries, which are doing very well; there are others which are facing difficulties. So the hope is that next year what is going to happen is re-doubling of effort with a greater degree of coordination and clarity on where we need to put the investments, what type of investments are required? And our view is that for the poor countries to achieve these goals by 2015, and we are very clear that there's no question of pushing these deadlines further because as it is these goals are quite minimalistic, and they're not particularly ambitious. So for us to say, "We can't achieve them by 2015", in our view is unacceptable. So the question next year is that if the developing countries have to achieve these goals there has to be a down payment, an upfront sort of, you know...investment from rich countries. Not just a dump of aid but also on trade, on debt and on the all the set of things, which developed countries have to do because there's a long gestation period, and this is why processes like the international financing facility which the UK is promoting where there's a down payment, that we bring upfront some investments today; because if you want to get children out of school ten years later, you need to have the schools and the teachers, etc. today. It doesn't happen overnight. So we are saying that 2005 is a very crucial year where all countries come together and say yes – they're going to rededicate themselves, recommit themselves not just in words but actual actions.

**JENKINS:** Can't let you get away without asking about your own department because over this side of the street we get occasional rumors that the campaign, at least in the past, has been unfocused, hasn't been as well organized as it could be. You've been in-charge there I think a little less than a year. Guilty as charged? Things improving? How would you describe the work of your own department?

**SHETTY:** In a sense, we are very much demand-led because the campaign is something which cannot be run by the United Nations; we can't go and kind of you know, campaign in some countries saying that you need to achieve the goals. This has to come from citizens, civil society organizations, parliamentarians, local authorities, celebrities, inside these countries taking responsibility. So for example if you take Philippines, their national groups are now monitoring the budgets in the Philippines saying, "How much of the budgets that are

actually going towards the Millennium Development Goals? Is there adequate investment? Are these investments reaching people?" I gave you the example of the Spanish campaign where there is a huge platform created now in Spain, pushing for the quality of aid to improve now that the Spanish government is actually committed in terms of aid volume...

**JENKINS:** So that makes you essentially what, sort of cheerleaders, you're the clearing house to say that this is the way, it's the best practices and what have you? Is that what you're doing?

**SHETTY:** Yes, we're helping to facilitate, to give information, to encourage. But at the end of the day the only way in which this can sustain and have a kind of... you know, internal energy because the premise of the campaign is that leaders are accountable to their own citizens in any democratic state because they are not accountable to any global structure, I mean they are, but the only way it's going to change is if there's national pressure from citizens towards their own leaders ...

**JENKINS:** And you can't go into the Congo and tell the people of the Congo to complain about their lousy government, for example?

**SHETTY:** I mean you could, but I'm not sure if it's sustainable.

**JENKINS:** Or you wouldn't keep your job for long (laughter)?

**SHETTY:** I mean at the end of the day, it's the Congolese citizens who have to do that.

**HAMANN:** I would like to ask you to look 10 years ahead. What is the risk of not meeting these goals? You said they are not enormously ambitious. What is the risk of not achieving these goals? Because if you look at this exercise, this is a huge exercise in terms of development and what not. And if this does not succeed, then what's going to happen? Will the world sort of throw up its hands and say, "Well, we've tried everything and...?"

**SHETTY:** There is no question of it not succeeding, because we already have enough evidence to show that the fact that the goals have been agreed [to]are creating a greater focus, a greater coordinated effort, aid levels have gone up a little bit further. So things are already starting to happen so if we don't achieve everything in all countries by 2015 – are we going to have a complete rethink? I don't think so because the important thing is that whenever there are global targets and a global kind of focus, it accelerates progress – it gives a certain energy to it and things move more quickly than they would have otherwise. I mean there's only this famous thing of the Alma - Ata Declaration, the health for all by 2000; so people asked me, "But we didn't achieve health for all by 2000?" It's true, but what about the counter question, "Would we have been worse off if we didn't have a goal to go by?" And I think there's academic study also which show that having global targets, having peer pressure,

having bench marks, having monitoring processes actually help things move more quickly in the right direction.

**DEEN:** Speaking of national budgets, where does global military spending fit in to this picture? Because I read that report last week that global military spending is expected to go up to about 950 billion dollars, almost a trillion, and we are going on to cold war levels, you know. As part of your campaign, do you discourage countries from cutting down on military and...?

**SHETTY:** Absolutely, I mean as I said we can only make these facts known, we can highlight these issues - they are at unacceptable levels and particularly when very poor developing countries are investing in this kind of arms, it's obviously something which we do raise and the national campaigns are raising it, which is why it comes back to the same point I made earlier that our view is that the reason why the goals are not being achieved at the pace that we would like them to be achieved is not because the world doesn't have enough money - we have the resources, it's just that it doesn't go to the right things. I mean, you raised your eyebrows Tony when we said 50 to 75 billion dollars..."

**JENKINS:** I was going to say, "If you believe you can raise that sort of money, I've got a bridge I can sell you" (laughter).

**SHETTY:** That's really nuts. I mean if you look at what's being spent on arms and on wars recently, I mean, what are we talking about? So if you look at in perspective, say when...

**JENKINS:** But it's so easy to spend money on weapons.

**SHETTY:** Of course, it's easy but it's all a matter of...that's why we're saying at the end of the day that it's a matter of political will of wanting to do things. If the world today decides to do it, there is no reason why we can't achieve these goals.

**JENKINS:** So far we've talked about countries, citizens putting pressure, we've talked about what the UN can do, but there has been in recent years a growing understanding that direct foreign investment and trade can deliver far larger amounts of money that one can expect to get from aid budgets. Have you - and obviously what that does is then start to engage the private sector. Are you involved in going after the private sector? And does that then not give large multi-national corporations more power to affect these development goals?

**SHETTY:** Yes, I mean...if you look at the development goals in hunger, poverty, education, water, etc...we do feel that the primary responsibility is still with governments. Because the providers of services to poor people, or even opportunities to poor people at this point in time, particularly in poor countries, is still in the realm of the government. So we shouldn't lose focus and say that suddenly, you know...if we have foreign direct investment things are going to change overnight because there are many pre-conditions required to help

achieve, to bring in foreign direct investment. If you have a population which is educated, which is healthy, which is aware of its rights, then you have as much more likely that you're going to get FDI into the country; and this is why that in sub-Saharan Africa, many parts of sub-Saharan Africa do not actually attract a huge amount of FDI because it's quite misleading to say that now FDI globally is six times the quantity of aid levels because it's not going to the places we are talking about. But should we encourage multinational corporations to get involved? Of course, I mean in the first place by being good corporate citizens, by following the rules, by actually investing on their own workers, and the environment around and in national development processes. But we are not supportive of, in a sense, privatizing health or education at the cost of its reaching poor people.

**HAMANN:** If you had one thing to pick on your wish list with respect to the MDGs, what would it be – more money, more political will?

**SHETTY:** For us the political will issue is the centerpiece. We feel that if we can actually get our minds focused on it, and rich and poor country leaders agree to do this, re-commit themselves and get people's popular participation in this process – that's going to make the difference. Everything else follows from there.

**JENKINS:** Well Salil Shetty I'm afraid we're out of time, we'll have to leave it at that. Thank you so much for joining us. Our guest today has been Salil Shetty, the Director of the UN's Millennium Campaign. He was interviewed by Thalif Deen of the Inter Press Service and Louis Hamann of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporations.

I'm Tony Jenkins, thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

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