UN SYSTEM TASK TEAM ON THE POST-2015 UN DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Assessment of MDG8 and lessons learnt

Thematic Think Piece

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January 2013

Following on the outcome of the 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations Secretary-General established the UN System Task Team in September 2011 to support UN system-wide preparations for the post-2015 UN development agenda, in consultation with all stakeholders. The Task Team is led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme and brings together senior experts from over 60 UN entities and international organizations to provide system-wide support to the post-2015 consultation process, including analytical input, expertise and outreach.

Assessment of MDG8 and lessons learned

MDG 8 was conceived at the UN Millennium Summit when Member States agreed "to create an environment – at the national and global levels alike – which is conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty."[1] It subsequently took shape to include the indicators and targets related to aid, trade, debt relief and increased access to essential medicines and new technologies as suggested in the "Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration."[2] Refinement to the indicators was further made by the Interagency Expert Group on the MDG's to better reflect and monitor the targets.

While considering the changes in the development landscape since the conception of MDG 8 and paying special attention to the challenge of making all partners accountable, this think piece makes recommendations for the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda based on the lessons learned from executing MDG 8 and a review of its strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths and shortcomings of the MDG8 framework[3]

Strengths

MDG 8 provided a simple, transparent and easy-to-understand framework. It clearly identified the areas that stakeholders thought the world should focus on in order to create an external environment favorable to helping developing countries reach their development aspirations.

MDG 8 provided an integrated set of quantitative targets, which galvanized discussions by political leaders, international organizations, CSOs and the media around a defined agenda intended to direct resources and policy towards poverty reduction and development.

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1 UN Millennium Declaration, A/RES/55/2, 18 September 2000
2 A/56/326, 6 September 2001
3 See annex 2 for a list of targets and indicators of MDG8.

MDG 8 is the only MDG goal that focuses on the means to achieve development goals. It defined concrete cross-sectoral areas of assistance with the aim of promoting coherence of development efforts within the international cooperation framework. The goal also designated direct responsibility to the donor community.

Although not explicitly, the MDG 8 framework was consistent with international responsibilities outlined in the Declaration on the Right to Development, including the mobilization of resources and political commitment.

MDG 8 explicitly recognized the special needs of vulnerable countries and called for strengthening of commitments to increase ODA to LDC, LLDCs and SIDS, increase duty-free quota-free market access for LDCs and enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries and for the cancellation of official bilateral debt. Thus, MDG 8 helped to focus the attention to key groups of developing countries.

Weaknesses

The targets and indicators of MDG 8 lacked precise goals to fulfill or benchmarks. For example, it only calls for more generous ODA to countries committed to poverty reduction, but do not provide any quantitative nor time-bound target. Similarly, the rest of the indicators only measure the progress in each area.

Many of the indicators are not consistent with the targets. For example, Target 8.D commits to deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries, whereas the associated indicators focus mainly on the progress of the more limited set of poorest most indebted countries under the HIPC and MDRI initiatives. Targets 8.E and 8.F call for cooperation with the private sector, but no measure of private sector’s contributions has been proposed. Moreover, the indicators of the latter target measure ICT only while the target calls for increased access to new technologies more broadly.

There is a lack of data to adequately track the targets in some areas of the global partnership. For example, the proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis has been measured by the MDG Gap Task Force with data from national and subnational surveys on availability of selected essential medicines and their prices in the public and private sector. But the survey samples were small and were not done periodically to show progress.

While the global partnership galvanized broad support for an international development agenda, important shortfalls remain in delivering on many of its aspects. This lack of progress in MDG 8 reflects, at least in part, political difficulties in agreeing on more precisely defined targets and commitments on many of the dimensions of the global partnership for development. [4]

Although MDG 8 assigned clear tasks to the donor community, it did not leave responsibility to the developing countries. Thus, it did not foster a true partnership and did not move away from the traditional "donor-recipient' paradigm.

Despite the UN placing importance to the Right to Development when creating the office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights in 1993,[5] the human rights aspect including the duty to international cooperation was not made explicit in MDG 8.

MDG 8 has often been misinterpreted as focusing solely on aid commitments, which would facilitate filling the financing gaps for achieving the goals. This may have created unreasonably high expectations about the role of aid and downplayed the importance of domestic policies and domestic resource mobilization in financing the MDG's and promoting development.

MDG 8's scope omitted important actors and related areas. Thus, the MDG Gap Task Force introduced the coverage of non-traditional donors and innovative sources of financing, but also monitoring new forms of trade protectionism; going beyond the HIPC initiative; and introducing new technologies, other than ICTs, such as for addressing climate change or disaster risk reduction.

4 UNTT on post-2015 agenda Discussion Note: Review of the contributions of the MDG Agenda to foster development: Lessons for the post-2015 UN development agenda
5 A/RES/48/141

MDG 8 has often been perceived as separate to the rest of the MDG's. Although in principle, it was supposed to support the achievement of the MDGs, there are no explicit links between MDG 8 and other related MDGs. For example, access to essential medicines makes no reference to the health-related MDG's, and no mention is made to the allocation of resources to priority areas identified by MDG's 1-7. In addition, there is a lack of attention to the inherent synergies among the MDGs and their implications on resource requirement.
MDG 8 lacks cohesion between its diverse targets. It was not until the Secretary General created the MDG Gap Task Force that more focused, integrated and detailed monitoring started.

Changing external environment and the global partnership

New sources of development financing

While ODA remains the dominant source of funding for development cooperation, other sources including non-DAC ODA, private philanthropy and innovative sources of development financing continue to grow. Non-DAC aid reported to the OECD amounted to $9.7 billion in 2011, with over half coming from Saudi Arabia. Although the amounts received from these countries are relatively small, these flows have increased threefold in real terms since 2000 and have the potential to become larger. Other emerging donors, like Brazil, China, India, South Africa and Venezuela are estimated to provide around $3.1 billion (in 2010)[6] with higher estimates reaching $34 billion.[7]

Private philanthropy from various sources in developed and developing countries is increasingly seen as an important complement to ODA, as recognized by the High-Level

6 Estimated from data in Felix Zimmermann and Kimberly Smith, "More Actors, More Money, More Ideas for International Development Co-operation", Journal for International Development, Wiley, July 2011.
7 Estimated from data in Julie Walz and Vijaya Ramachandran (2011), Brave New World: A Literature Review of Emerging Donors and the Changing Nature of Foreign Assistance, Working Paper CGD. Although these flows are similar to ODA, they may not be comparable to the ODA data and ODA receipts would have to be discounted from these amounts.

Event on MDGs in 2010. Estimates of private assistance flows in 2010 range from about $30.6 billion to $56 billion.[8]

In addition, a number of countries have sought to develop innovative sources of development financing (IDF). IDF mechanisms have been implemented in global health and climate financing, and have had an important impact in the former, in particular. However, they have raised only very limited additional resources. In total, innovative mechanisms have administered $5.5 billion in health financing and $2.6 billion in climate financing over the last decade.[9]

Furthermore, only a small share of funding of the global health initiatives comes from innovative sources of finance. Their contribution lies mostly in the restructuring of existing funds to better match funding needs, and in the innovative distribution of funds. Another challenge with innovative financing and private giving, is that it is difficult to determine how much is actually devoted to supporting development efforts.

As a result of proliferation of development efforts, actors and mechanisms with no coordination mechanism governing aid flows from non-traditional donors, aid has become more fragmented.

Rise of the South

The economic rise of emerging developing countries has given them more voice in global economic discussions and multilateral discussions. In part as a response to the financial crisis of 2007-2008 and amid growing recognition that key emerging countries were not adequately included in global economic and governance discussion, the Group of Twenty has emerged as the leading platform to discuss global financial matters. Heads of States and Governments of the G-20 countries have regularly met since November 2008, and a number of commitments pertaining to the areas of MDG 8 have been made at these Summits.

8 The source for the lower estimate is OECD, Statistical Annex of Development Cooperation Report 2012; the higher estimate is from Carol Adelman, Kacie Marano and Yulya Spantchak, The Index of Global Philanthropy and Remittances 2012 (Washington, D.C.: Hudson Institute Center for Global Prosperity, 2011).
9 United Nations (2012). World Economic and Social Survey 2012: In Search of New Development Finance. Sales No.E.12.II.C.1.

Starting at the 2008 Washington Summit and reaffirmed and extended at subsequent summits, G-20 countries have pledged to work to resist introducing trade protectionist measures in response to the crisis. The G-20 also took action to provide multilateral development banks with sufficient resources to continue helping developing countries gain access to finance during the crisis. At the 2011 Cannes Summit, the G-20 launched the Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture, which aims at investing in agriculture, improving food security as well mitigating the adverse effects of price volatility. In addition, G-20 countries made pledges related to specific existing development commitments.

Besides development cooperation, South-South cooperation has also grown significantly in finance and trade. China, in particular, has invested heavily in infrastructure in Africa. Partners from the South have increasingly opened up their markets to products from LDCs by providing preferential market access, increasing South-South trade.

Multilateralism versus regionalism and bilateralism

In the last decade, compounded by the global economic crisis, multilateralism has weakened and plurilateralism is becoming the preferred form of international cooperation. While it can be argued that multilateralism is essential to tackle issues of global scale and importance, regional dimensions of development are now recognized as critical to ensuring effective and coordinated response where multilateral negotiations fail. This can be seen, for example, in the proliferation of regional and bilateral trade agreements in light of the Doha Round impasse. [10]

Increasing concern of climate-related issues

Climate-related concerns have received much greater attention and will most likely have increasing predominance in global relations in the years ahead. Thus, the main challenge for the global partnership will be how to incorporate these with economic and social concerns.

10 See more in UN Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, New Partnerships to implement a post-2015 development agenda, Discussion note.

Accountability in the global partnership

Review of progress towards implementing the principles of the Paris Declaration revealed that while an increasing number of countries have established mutual accountability mechanisms since 2005, progress falls short of the Paris Declaration target. Only 38 per cent of countries reported as having mutual accountability reviews in place in 2010.[11] Lack of political leadership and capacity constraints have been identified as major obstacles to stronger mutual accountability.

A comprehensive accountability mechanism for new development cooperation actors has not been established. But some progress has been made over the past years. The UN Development Cooperation Forum, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, is promoting a balanced and inclusive development partnerships with mutual accountablity. In addition, the establishment of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation at the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness is another step towards supporting and ensuring monitoring and accountability of all development stakeholders.

The majority of commitments for development cooperation is made in international forums, and are non-binding collective statements of intention (with the exception of commitments made in treaty bodies such as the WTO). UN Summits, in particular, have been criticized for failing to deliver strong results. There is no global executing mechanism to reach commitments or an enforcement body.

Furthermore, the lack of precise targets also limits accountability in that it does not put pressure on the country's legislature to accede to the committing authority's promise. On the other hand, specific commitments are likely to challenge mobilizing political support to meet the target.

With the proliferation of international commitments in different forums, it has become difficult not only to assess and improve mutual coherence but also to strengthen monitoring

11 MDG Gap Task Force Report 2012 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.11.I.11), based on OECD, Aid Effectiveness 2011: Progress in Implementing the Paris Declaration (Paris, 2012) and based on broad-based surveys carried out in 105 countries by UN/DESA and UNDP.

of delivery. There has been a widespread lack of clarity on the amounts and policies committed by countries, the extent of the delivery of such commitments and the extent of the additionality or exclusivity of the commitments. In many cases, goodwill fails to translate into action as pledges do not turn into disbursements and policy commitments are not reflected in national strategies.

In this context, the Secretary-General of the UN proposed the creation of an Integrated Implementation Framework (IIF), a web-based tool designed to identify and monitor progress in commitments towards the MDGs and associated delivery gaps.[12] Making commitments and delivery gaps more transparent should enhance the ability of relevant stakeholders to hold actors accountable vis-à-vis their pledges. The IIF as such does not provide a solution to the problem of non-delivery, but attempts to increase transparency and analyze pledges and commitments for consistency and clarity. The International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) provides more information on forward spending plans for development by donor countries and institutions.

Lessons learned and recommendations

Simple and transparent framework

The new framework should remain simple and transparent with clearly defined goals and targets for the global partnership in order to improve transparency and accountability. However, attention should be given to areas where it may not be feasible to define quantitative targets and where a different format may be needed.

Monitoring (including for additionality of commitments) and accountability of all stakeholders should be built into any framework. Such a mutual accountability mechanism needs to include new actors recognizing their differentiated responsibilities. The UN Development Cooperation Forum could take the lead in the development of a comprehensive accountability mechanism.

12 The IIF became operational in June 2012.

Global Partnerships should be linked to development goals

The link between partnerships and development goals should be made explicit whenever possible so as not to be seen as separate activities. However, the Global Partnership should also be defined as a whole in order to make the scope of responsibilities and target areas clear.

Coherence of development efforts

The new framework should acknowledge cross-sectoral linkages and ensure coherence of efforts across these sectors. Partnerships that can act as direct enablers of separate goals should be mainstreamed considering synergy with other goals, while attention should be given to avoiding fragmentation.

New actors

The new framework should not be partnerships of developed versus developing countries and donors versus recipients. The full range of stakeholders should be reflected and given specific roles.

Global partnerships should specify the roles and actors at the global, regional, national and local levels.
Global partnerships should create a conducive environment for developing countries while helping countries retain national ownership, strengthen their domestic capacities and resource mobilization.

Focus on vulnerable groups

Focus on the special needs of LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and HIPCs should remain as these groups still require special attention.

Annex 1: The state of the global partnership

Official Development Assistance (ODA)

Following stagnation in the 1990s, ODA has increased by almost 60 per cent in real terms between 2000 and 2011, and from 0.22 per cent of DAC donors' GNI to 0.31 per cent. Aid to the least developed countries and sub-Saharan Africa more than doubled in real terms.

However, in 2011 the effect of the global economic crisis manifested itself, and after reaching a peak in 2010, ODA fell almost 3 percent in real terms. This represents the first significant fall, excluding years of exceptional debt relief, since 1997. In order to meet the UN target, aid would need to more than double from the current $134 to $300 billion.

The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action Initiatives formalized actions that donor countries would take to improve the quality and effectiveness of aid. Although only one of the 13 targets of the Paris Declaration was met at the global level, considerable progress has been made in implementing commitments to improve various dimensions of aid effectiveness as a result of these initiatives. Shifting the focus from pure aid effectiveness to a more holistic approach consistent with the changing nature of the development finance architecture, the Busan High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness proposed a global partnership for effective development cooperation that would embrace traditional donors, South-South donors, developing countries, civil society organization and private funders.

Market Access (trade)

Developed countries have increasingly provided more access to exports from developing countries and LDCs, and in 2011, 80 per cent of their products entered the markets duty-free quota-free (DFQF), up from 65 and 70 per cent in 2000, respectively. However, progress has been largely stalled since 2004 and remains well behind the pledge made in 2005 to provide 97 per cent DFQF market access to LDCs. One of the main vehicles for advancing progress towards the commitment to develop further an open rule-based multilateral trading system that delivers more benefits to developing countries (Target 8.A) is the Doha Round of trade negotiations of the WTO. However, it remains at an impasse.

The global crisis has also presented some challenges to developing countries and their efforts to expand their trade opportunities. Beyond the downturn of trade in 2009, commodity prices have remained volatile, trade restrictive measures have been on the rise, trade finance availability has tightened, and tighter immigration policies were introduced.
The Aid for Trade (AfT) initiative was launched in 2005 to help developing countries build the supply side capacity and trade related infrastructure that they need to assist them in taking advantage of trade opportunities. The Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) for LDCs coordinates donors' support and levers more AfT resources to LDCs. Total resources devoted to the AfT initiative increased 80 per cent from an average of $25 billion in 2002-2005 to $45 billion in 2010.

Debt sustainability

Forty of the world's most heavily indebted poor countries were to benefit from an estimated $76 billion under the HIPC and additional $33.8 billion under the MDRI initiatives launched in 1996 and 2005. As a result of these initiatives, 36 of these countries have already received debt relief, which reduced their debt burden by 90 per cent, allowing them to allocate more resources for poverty reduction and development. However, despite the success of these debt relief initiatives, given the lack of a comprehensive debt workout mechanism and with the HIPC initiative largely completed, any new countries requiring debt relief will have to rely on ad hoc processes.

Overall, developing countries managed the global crisis reasonably well, but many developing and transition economies have faced debt difficulties during the crisis, including increased debt servicing ratios and (renewed) risks of debt distress, as well as worsening fiscal and current account balances. In light of the recent debt difficulties in developed and developing countries, the IMF and World Bank have recently taken steps to review and adjust their frameworks for identifying countries in unsustainable debt situations to allow analysis to take into account individual country-specific issues and changing debt profiles.

Access to essential medicines

Despite greater global focus on health issues, little progress has been seen in increasing access to essential medicines. Available data to measure progress in availability and prices of essential medicines do not allow assessing progress in this area since 2000. However, surveys during the period 2007-2011 show that essential medicines are only available in 52 and 68 percent of public and private health facilities, and average prices are 3 to 5 times international reference prices, respectively.

A number of steps and initiatives have been taken to improve access to and reduce costs of essential medicines. These include the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI), UNITAID (a special international facility that purchases medicines for the treatment of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis), the International Finance Facility for Immunization (front-loads aid to accelerate the availability of funds for immunization) and the Advance Market Commitment for Pneumococcal Vaccines (provides guaranteed market demand at a specific price for producers of vaccines). The majority of the resources provided by these initiatives are, however, not new and additional, but rather existing ODA and private contributions that have been channeled into the health sector.

Access to new technologies

Access to ICTs has expanded exponentially especially in developing countries, where mobile phone subscriptions have grown from just 2 per cent of the population in 2011 to almost 80 per cent in 2011; and Internet users increased from 3 to 26 per cent of the population in the same time period. However, the digital divide between developed and developing countries remains wide, and the cost of ICT services remains prohibitive in many developing countries, especially LDCs.

The number of subscriptions to ICT services continued to grow rapidly despite the global economic crisis, particularly in developing economies. However, it did have a negative impact on revenues and investment of the ICT sector, especially in developed countries, whereas in most developing countries they continued to increase.

A number of initiatives have attempted to fill the lack of time-bound targets and to recognize the importance of ICT for development. Ten targets were agreed at the World Summit on the Information Society in 2005. In 2010, the Partnership on Measuring ICT for

Development launched a Task Group to track progress on these targets. In 2011, the Broadband Commission proposed concrete targets to guide broadband internet policies and monitor uptake and affordability of broadband internet.

Annex 2: Targets and indicators of MDG8

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development	
Targets	**Indicators**
Target 8.A: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction—both nationally and internationally **Target 8.B**: Address the special needs of the least developed countries Includes tariff and quota free access for the least developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction **Target 8.C**: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-	*Some of the indicators listed below are monitored separately for the least developed countries (LDCs), Africa, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.* Official development assistance (ODA) 8.1 Net ODA, total and to the least developed countries, as percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income 8.2 Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation) 8.3 Proportion of bilateral official development assistance of OECD/DAC donors that is untied 8.4 ODA received in landlocked developing countries as a proportion of their gross national incomes 8.5 ODA received in small island developing States as a proportion of their gross national incomes Market access 8.6 Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and least developed countries, admitted free of duty 8.7 Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries 8.8 Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as a percentage of their gross domestic product 8.9 Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity

second special session of the General Assembly) **Target 8.D**: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term	Debt sustainability 8.10 Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative) 8.11 Debt relief committed under HIPC and MDRI Initiatives 8.12 Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services
Target 8.E: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries	8.13 Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis
Target 8.F: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications	8.14 Fixed telephone lines per 100 inhabitants 8.15 Mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 inhabitants 8.16 Internet users per 100 inhabitants

UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda

Membership

Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Co-Chair

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Co-Chair

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Department of Public Information (DPI)

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG)

Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

International Labour Organization (ILO)

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS)

Office of the Deputy Secretary-General (ODSG)

Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS)

Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (OSAA)

Peace building Support Office (PBSO)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP)

United Nations Global Compact Office

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)

United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)

United Nations Millennium Campaign

United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA)

United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)

United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination Secretariat (CEB)

United Nations University (UNU)

United Nations Volunteers (UNV)

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

Universal Postal Union (UPU)

World Bank

World Food Programme (WFP)

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

World Trade Organization (WTO)