



Statement

by

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**Substantive Session
of the Economic and Social Council
Annual Ministerial Review**

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Substantive Session
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High-level segment
Annual Ministerial Review

“Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development”

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen

This is a historical moment for we are now testing the results of our efforts to improve the work of the Council. It is up to us to make it successful and efficient. It is now more important than ever that we avoid overlap and duplication of work. We welcome this first Annual Ministerial Review of the Council and we also welcome the launching of the Development Cooperation Forum **tomorrow** and we look forward to a fruitful Forum in New York next year.

The theme for this first Annual Ministerial Review is well chosen. It emphasizes the important role of the Council in reviewing the progress made in implementing the Millennium Development Goals and promoting stronger efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger and to encourage global partnership of all stakeholders for development. The Millennium Development Goal number 8, on a global partnership for development, indicates that it is our common responsibility to work towards achieving the first seven Goals. The global partnership rests on the principles of transparency, accountability, good governance, equity and commitment to poverty reduction. I would like to underline the fact that for the developing countries to achieve these Goals, it is absolutely critical that the developed countries deliver on their end.

There are many different ways to strengthen our common efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger; all very important, but time allows me to only highlight a few.

ODA

Increased Official Development Assistance (ODA) is crucial. Many developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, have little chance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals by the target date, unless significant additional resources are made available. We applaud those countries that have committed to increasing official development assistance. Iceland is also shouldering its responsibility. Over the next two years, Iceland's development assistance will almost have tripled in size and we are determined to do even more. Beyond 2009, our assistance should increase even further, with the ambition of reaching the UN target of zero point 7 per cent (0.7%) of GNI (Gross National Income) as soon as possible.

Gender equality

I would like to draw your special attention to the importance of promoting gender equality in the fight against poverty and hunger. Women are the key to development. By empowering women and ensuring equal opportunity, countries can achieve great gains. There is, however, a long way to go. Women are still much more likely than men to be poor, malnourished and illiterate. They usually have less access than men to employment and they are far less likely than men to be politically active. Women's empowerment should be included in any national development strategy and ensuring gender equality is vital to sustainable development and the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. We want to see more determined efforts by development partners and UN agencies to pursue gender equality. The work of UNIFEM must be given more weight within the UN. Iceland has increased its support to the work of UNIFEM more than tenfold over the last two years, and we will increase our support even further.

Women play a fundamental role in the development of the LDC's, and experience has shown that support for the education, health and economic activities of women has a multiplier effect for their communities. For this reason we have increasingly directed our development cooperation at gender specific projects in the LDC's. This has been done through our bilateral work and we have also supported the work of UNIFEM in these countries.

Food security

Food security has been an important aspect of our partnership for development. Fish is one of the principal sources of protein for many of the poorest. Iceland's bilateral fisheries projects have therefore contributed to the improvement of food security and reduction of malnutrition. We have also increased our emphasis on food security through increased support for the UN World Food Programme. The campaign against hunger will continue to be an important aspect of Iceland's development cooperation.

Capacity building

Education and capacity building are important tools for eradicating poverty and hunger. Education has been at the center of our development cooperation. Recognizing the close link between poverty and illiteracy; basic education and adult literacy programmes have also become a significant part of our bilateral development cooperation. A special emphasis has been placed on education and capacity building of people living in poverty. Projects in this area have also involved education of fishermen in the partner countries and of experts in the field of geothermal technology and fisheries in the UN University training programmes in Iceland.

Mr. President, the list is much longer than time allows. There is no simple formula for eradication of poverty and hunger. However, the formula will need to include increased official development assistance, food security, gender equality, infrastructure development, access to energy, education and health services, fair trade, good governance respecting the principles of sustainable development and a clear and secure legal environment as well as improved investment climate for private sector development. It needs a global partnership for development. It needs the realization of all the eight Millennium Development Goals.

Thank you.