

2 April 2008

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the Thematic Debate “Recognising the
Achievements, Addressing the Challenges and getting back on Track
to Achieve the MDGs by 2015”**

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I welcome you to the second day of the General Assembly's thematic debate on the Millennium Development Goals.

I would like to begin by thanking all our panelists, special guests and the moderators, and, in particular the Deputy Secretary-General for her comprehensive summary of yesterday's debate.

The expertise and experience that we brought to bear on this important issue enabled the Assembly to have – in the words of one of our distinguished moderators Kandeh Yumkella, Director-General of UNIDO, “a frank, open and introspective dialogue”.

The Panel discussions on ‘poverty and hunger’, ‘education’ and ‘health’ and the message from the President of Mali have reaffirmed our view that making progress on these targets will have a catalytic effect on all the Millennium Development Goals.

When I opened the debate yesterday, together with the Secretary-General, I set the context of our discussions.

We know that our pace is too slow; that we need a decisive impulse to mobilize all our efforts, and involve all our partners to achieve all the MDGs, in all countries, on time.

It is clear from our debate yesterday that we have the solutions. The key issue is that we all have to deliver on our commitments, scale-up our efforts and accelerate progress. Failure is not an option.

But neither can we descend into mutual accusations which only divert our attention from action and undermine our partnership.

Mutually accountability is the only way forward.

When aid is effectively aligned behind national governments and predictable over the long term rapid progress can be achieved.

Leaders across every level of the development system now need to hold themselves to account, as Jayaseelan Naidoo – Chairman of the Development Bank of South Africa – rightly noted.

We need to urgently translate political commitments – made at the highest level – into results on the ground.

We need more commitment and dedication.

Excellencies,

2008 is the year when our promises must be delivered on the ground to have a lasting impact on the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable.

Yesterday, high expectations were expressed about the General Assembly's leadership role, including at the High-level Meeting in September 2008, which should focus on delivering tangible outcomes.

I therefore look forward to your interventions today, and tomorrow, to send a strong signal to the many forthcoming meetings on development this year, including – the G8, UNCTAD, ECOSOC, the Accra Conference, and the Financing for Development Conference in Doha.

It is clear that the General Assembly wants to see concrete results on Poverty and Hunger, Education and Health and more investment in agriculture and infrastructure, particularly in Africa, to achieve the MDGs on time.

But our efforts must not end in 2008. I therefore propose that each year until 2015, the General Assembly convenes a Thematic Debate on the Millennium Development Goals to take stock of progress and to hold all partners to account for their promises.

As Prime Minister Vanhanen of Finland pointed out, ‘Development is the basis of our security and the means to achieve a more just society’.

Each of these elements are interlinked. And each element represents one of the core values that the United Nations was founded upon.

A world with less poverty will be a safer one. A fairer and more secure place; one in which every person has the opportunity to fulfill their human potential.

We should not lose sight of this goal.

Thank you for your attention.