

6 May 2008

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
at the UK-UNDP 'Business: Call to Action'**

Thank you Ms. Bedawi.

President Kagame,
President Kufuor
Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentleman,

May I begin by thanking the Prime Minister for convening this important meeting with the United Nation to galvanize private sector support for the Millennium Development Goals.

I would also like to praise all the industry and business leaders who signal, by there presence here today, that the private sector is prepared to work for a social dividend.

When Gordon Brown first came to the United Nations, as the new British Prime Minister in July 2007, he had the foresight to alert us to the gravity of the 'development emergency' we face.

He also had the leadership to bring together leaders from business and government to sign-up to the 'MDG Call to Action Declaration'.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Millennium Development Goals – agreed by the General Assembly in 2000 - represent a unique moment of global partnership.

Since then, considerable progress has been made to eradicate poverty. But at this historic halfway point to achieve the MDGs in 2015, it is clear that it has been too uneven and too slow.

The global food crisis, rising energy prices, shaken financial markets and slowing economic growth threaten to wipe out the gains of recent years. Decisive action is now needed.

The stakes are high. If we achieve the MDGs on time 500 million people will be lifted out of poverty, 300 million more people will be adequately fed, and 30 million young children's lives will have been saved.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The General Assembly has put development at the heart of its policy agenda by prioritising the MDGs, climate change and Financing for Development.

We recently held a debate on the MDGs at the United Nations, and launched the ‘Call to Action’ to make 2008 a decisive year for global peace and prosperity.

One of the key conclusions to emerge was that working more closely with the private sector are essential to make quicker progress; and, that business should be encouraged to develop new markets in the developing world by providing goods and services for the poorest ‘bottom billion’.

Today it is time to move beyond words; to explore new opportunities and to develop new initiatives that can unleash your expertise, investment and technology to support growth in developing countries; to go beyond philanthropy by leveraging your core business in support of achieving the MDGs and making a profit.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Many business leaders will be invited to announce new initiatives and champion specific MDGs during a special meeting with Heads of States at the United Nations in New York on 25th September, which I have convened with the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon.

The purpose of this meeting is to reaffirm the dedication and commitment of Member States and the UN system to unconditionally meet the MDGs.

Partnerships with the private sector are part and parcel of this.

So without further ado, I would like to invite Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, to set out in more detail what he expects from you and how together we can build a truly global partnership for development.