

20 September 2010

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss,
President of the 65th Session of the General Assembly,
at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the
Millennium Development Goals**

Heads of State and Government,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

“The strength of the community is measured by the well-being of the weakest of its members”

This phrase is close to my heart; I also quoted it during my acceptance speech. It is taken from my country’s Constitution and it perfectly expresses the principle that solidarity is the foundation of any community. It acknowledges that we have a moral duty to care about the well-being of others. It seems to me that this aptly sums up what the international community undertook to do when it established the Millennium Development Goals.

At the Millennium Summit in 2000, we adopted the most ambitious programme ever launched to combat poverty. In so doing, we demonstrated that all the peoples of the United Nations formed a single community and that no one had the right to remain indifferent to the abject poverty and suffering of others. By launching the Millennium Development Goals, the General Assembly gave great hope to millions of men and women; now we must meet their expectations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We must achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We want to achieve them. And we can achieve them.

In addition to the action taken by Governments, we have also seen unprecedented momentum on the part of civil society and the private sector. It must be stressed that this is remarkable and it is vital to continue working together.

Today, though, I first call upon each one of you, as an individual, as a Head of State or Government and as a Member of the United Nations, to reaffirm the commitment made at the Millennium Summit and declare that we want to create, today, the conditions that are needed in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Eight goals, 15 years to achieve them: one of the great merits of the Millennium Development Goals is that a clear programme was established, with targets and a deadline.

Where are we now, after ten years of efforts, at a time when the world is recovering from the economic and financial crisis?

The Secretary-General's excellent reports and the documentation produced by the various United Nations agencies give us the answer: the picture is mixed. Real progress has been made in some respects: poverty has declined in overall terms. But we are lagging behind in some regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa. And we are also falling short in some areas, especially with regard to eradicating hunger, reducing child mortality and improving maternal health. Additional efforts are needed. The economic and financial crisis has also undermined progress, but the preceding decades of strong growth showed the strong potential of the global economy. We must be confident; we have the know-how and the resources to succeed, and we can do it.

But that requires commitment from the donors and commitment from the beneficiaries, leading to a genuine partnership. This partnership must also include civil society and the private sector. If we want to succeed, we have to do it together.

Heads of State and Government,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This High-level Plenary Meeting opens under excellent auspices. The document that we are going to adopt is based on a broad consensus. I would like to thank each and every one of you who has transcended purely national interests and negotiated to obtain a solid outcome enjoying strong support. This document provides us with a guide for our actions until 2015. I invite you to engage in calm and constructive debate over the coming two days. I hope that, at the end of this High-level Plenary Meeting, we will have sent the international community a strong message about our will to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

We must do it, we want to do it and we can do it. We do not have the right to fail. The eyes of the world are upon us, let us not disappoint it.