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“The work of the UN system in creating momentum and consensus on action leading up to the 2010 Summit”

Remarks of Olav Kjørven, Assistant Secretary-General and
Director of UNDP's Bureau for Development Policy

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

It is an honour to be here speaking to you today at this prominent event in support of the MDGs and in preparation for the 2010 Summit.

We are pleased that the 2010 Summit and review process is already generating great interest, as witnessed just a few weeks ago at an event hosted by UNDP on the sides of the GA-- where a large number of Ministers from around the world restated their commitment to the MDGs and to making the Review process and Summit a turning point in MDG progress.

It is a pleasure to be a part of this distinguished panel, I enjoy hearing the insights and perspectives of our panelists and look forward also to hearing from many of you.

Your presence here is an indication of your commitment to the MDGs. Supporting countries to meet the MDGs is a core part of what the UN system does, and thus the commitment we bring here today.

In the past few years, quite a few UN Country Teams have seen the efforts and dedication of member states pay off in a range of successes that demonstrate that the ***MDGs are not just aspirational, they are in fact achievable.***

We have seen such successes in:

- o **Malawi** where agricultural productivity has doubled in a short period of time;
- o **Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda** where primary school enrolment has increased substantially;
- o **Zambia** where access to basic rural health services has been improved;
- o **Niger** where the feasibility of large-scale reforestation has been demonstrated;
- o **Togo, Niger and Zambia** where a dramatic and impressive fall in the incidence of malaria has been made possible through the free distribution of bed nets. And in
- o **Malaysia and Thailand** where there has been remarkable progress in maternal health.

Still, as Professors Duflo and Jameel have demonstrated - despite these impressive examples, positive changes in the lives of the poorest are taking place at an unacceptably slow pace and in some countries, hard fought gains are being eroded.

The stark reality is that:

- o Most low-income countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, remain off-track in almost all the Goals;
- o Several middle-income countries lag in specific goals, including gender equality, and are home to deep pockets of impoverished citizen who are often deprived of even essential public services;

This last point is not made often enough. Escalating inequality means that **even** where progress toward the MDGs seems on track, there are glaring discrepancies - in particular because the poorest women and men are **excluded from the benefits of economic growth** *and too often from the protections and opportunities of the formal economy altogether*, Turkey..

- o We are already seeing the impact of the food, fuel and economic crises. More people have been pushed into poverty and it is likely that we will soon see a slowdown or reversal of key MDG targets.

- o **Climate change will increasingly threaten** to undo hard fought gains. To avoid this, countries must rise to the daunting challenge of transforming their economies to strengthen climate resilience, protect the most vulnerable and use new funding sources to move towards low-carbon development.

These are the range of obstacles to MDG progress we face today

Yet, it is possible - building on the real life achievements in countries around the world - to turn these ominous challenges into opportunities. The time to do this – however- is running out. We must use every opportunity between now and the Summit to do four things:

1. Advance a deeper understanding of what works and what doesn't – pointing to the large and growing body of evidence from local and national efforts in countries around the world;
2. Based on that, RAPIDLY invest in the things that actually work and where we can achieve demonstrable scaling up success
3. Galvanize a renewed coalition of diverse actors committed to working together, country by country, to overcome key constraints to MDG progress;
4. Build urgency and consensus around the need to ensure that countries hit by the global economic crises - and the growing threat of climate change - can sustain progress and avoid MDG reversals and human development catastrophes.

If we are to deliver on the promise of 2015 - it will be because the world decided finally and determinedly to come together at next year's Summit - not just to renew old commitments, but to solve the real life problems faced by the millions forced to try and survive on less than one or two dollars every day.

We are within reach of a collective international commitment to make significant improvements in the health and well-being of millions of marginalized and excluded citizens. The world has the required know-how, technology and resources. We cannot miss this opportunity; anything less than success will compromise the credibility of

future collective commitments, movements and coalitions. If today's political leaders also want to be tomorrow's leaders, not just in name but in gain, seen as credible in the eyes of publics across the globe, it is now or never.

This is why in the coming weeks and months, the UN will be working closely with its partners to do three things:

1. **Coordinate a 12 month series of global, regional and country initiatives** that spark early and continued political momentum – leading up to the 2010 Summit. The UN will bring together high level government officials, parliamentarians, donors, local actors, civil society organizations, the UN system and key private sector actors identify critical points where we can work together to accelerate progress towards the MDGs.
2. **Build the analytical and actionable case for accelerating progress on the MDGs** by updating and strengthening national assessments that identify the bottlenecks that impede implementation and the good practices that can accelerate progress.

We know that certain initiatives have made a big difference: school feeding programmes keep children in school and improve their nutrition; investing in skilled attendants help deliver babies and reduce child mortality.

What we still don't understand, in many cases, however, is what it takes to make these or other programmes effective – on the required scale – taking into consideration the specific context and constraints faced by the country, region and community. We need to fully appreciate and understand the governance and capacity deficits as well as policy and fiscal constraints that prevent progress.

To fill this gap, we are taking forward a MDG Acceleration Framework that brings together capacity and governance assessments with more traditional techniques to identify constraints, focus solutions and target investments. This will be the first time that we apply the range of tools the UN has on hand. With 90 countries undertaking

UN Development Assistance Frameworks in the next three years the introduction of this approach is very timely.

3. Critically the MDG Acceleration Framework goes well beyond assessment –**we will use it to bring the UN system together behind a core package of services that channels our collective energy to overcoming binding constraints and expanding what works. There is no prescription. This will look different in all countries and even within countries. In many cases it may mean doing more of what we already do – in concert with likeminded partners – including** strengthening the national and local capacities that make governments better listeners, more trusted service providers, and more responsive to needs, especially in times of emergency; expanding access to the energy which lights homes and thereby helps women stay healthy and girls attend school expand access to safe delivery and reproductive health services that keep women and children safe; and mobilize resources that can bring these efforts to scale and make them sustainable.

Together – working as a coalition - we believe that the MDGs can be achieved. Much needs to be done in the short lead up to the 2010 UN MDG Summit. This is only the beginning but we are encouraged that partners are starting to realise just how high the stakes are and are signing up to help make this the turning point it must be.

We look forward to working with all of you in lead up to 2010 and beyond to 2015.

Thank you