



HOLY SEE

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**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore
Apostolic Nuncio
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**63rd session of the
United Nations General Assembly**

**High-level event on the Millennium Development Goals
convened by the Secretary-General and the
President of the General Assembly**

New York, 25 September 2008

Mr President,

When in the year 2000 the leaders of the world convened in this hall, they took up the commitment to fight extreme poverty by setting specific goals to address hunger, education, inequality, child and maternal health, environmental damage and HIV/AIDS by 2015.

This great responsibility was assumed out of international solidarity as well as in the name of human rights. It is, therefore, not a mere coincidence that our meeting is taking place in the same year that we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

A precise relationship exists, in fact, among the Millennium Development Goals as set forth in the UN Millennium Declaration and human rights. What is more, they have in common the objective to preserve and protect human dignity.

In addition, the achievement of these goals is closely interrelated with respect for human rights. While the goals are ultimately political commitments, the human rights inherent in each goal make achieving them a social and moral responsibility.

It is with this sense of responsibility that the world is reunited today at the highest level of representation to take stock of the situation.

The Secretary-General's Report rightly acknowledges the progress which has been achieved across the spectrum, but it also sounds a strong alarm as the delivery on commitments made by member States remains deficient.

Areas such as official development aid, trade, debt relief, assistance for capacity development, access to new technologies and essential medicines continue to fall behind our commitments and our words of support.

We are lagging behind in honouring our word, and more importantly, the people of the world who look to us for leadership, are running out of hope and trust.

The last eight years have shown that with international, national and local commitment many nations are now more economically independent.

Some developing countries have become middle income countries and middle income countries are on the brink of turning into highly developed economies.

Several Least Developed Countries have made remarkable progress with some of the MDGs, for example, the elimination of extreme poverty and the achievement of universal access to education.

Nonetheless, the recent high rate of economic growth in many LDCs has not contributed sufficiently to tackling the situation of generalized poverty. The LDCs remain behind and are in serious delay for attaining the goals as set out in the Millennium Declaration, and in some cases reaching the goals may prove impossible.

A failure in attaining the MDGs in the LDCs and other poor countries would mean a moral failure of the whole international community and have political and economic consequences even beyond the geographic boundaries of the LDCs.

It is therefore important that this forum be a moment of reflection on communal responsibility.

The MDGs will be achieved if their attainment becomes a priority for all States.

Above all, we need to foment a new culture of human relations marked by a fraternal vision of the world, a culture based upon the moral imperative of recognizing the unity of humankind and the practical imperative of giving a contribution to peace and the well-being of all.

The money and resources that the LDCs need in terms of direct aid, financial assistance and trade advantages are meager compared to the worldwide military expenses or the total expenses of non-primary necessities of populations in more developed countries.

The fact that various LDCs with rather limited resources are obtaining important results should inspire the international community.

The effectiveness of civil society, including religious organizations serving poorer populations, is the practical proof of the possibility to achieve the goals by 2015 or in the proximate successive years.

Civil society and faith-based organizations remain indispensable actors in the delivery of vital goods and services, and greater efforts should be made to allow them access to populations in need. After all, these organizations are often capable of serving the needs of the most destitute and underprivileged.

The Holy See and its affiliated organizations are committed to providing humanitarian as well as development assistance around the world.

Mr President,

With only seven years remaining until the end of the MDGs campaign, it is important that we focus upon the goals in the Millennium Declaration which were agreed upon by our Heads of State.

To debate and create new targets, such as those on sexual and reproductive health, risks introducing practices and policies detrimental to human dignity and sustainable development, distracting our focus from the original goals and diverting the necessary resources from the more basic and urgent needs.

In these days we are witnessing a debate on an economic rescue aimed at resolving a crisis that risks disrupting the economy of the most developed countries and leaving thousands and thousands of families without work.

This rescue of enormous proportions, which amounts to many times the whole of international aid, cannot but raise a pressing question. How are we able to find funds to save a broken financial system yet remain unable to find the resources necessary to invest in the development of all regions of the world, beginning with the most destitute?

For this reason, the globalization of solidarity through the prompt achievement of the MDGs established by the Millennium Declaration is a crucial moral obligation of the international community.

It is also a great and most effective means of giving stability to the global economy and assuring the prosperity and enjoyment of human rights for all.

Thank you, Mr President.