

REPUBLIC OF POLAND
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High-level Meeting on
the Millennium Development Goals
General Assembly of the United Nations

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STATEMENT

by

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Distinguished Chairmen,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset let me thank you for convening this important and timely meeting which gives us all an excellent opportunity to discuss the crucial issue of the state of implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services...Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance.... Everyone has the right to education” - these postulates contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights demonstrate the strength of links between human rights and development. The final document of the 2005 UN summit complemented these values with security, creating a triad which today is one of the foundations of the UN efforts to implement the MDGs.

The UN Millennium Declaration and the MDGs constitute the primary point of reference for the Polish program of foreign assistance. In the year 2000, the Government of Poland - similarly to the 189 UN member states at that time - pledged to attain the eight Millennium Goals, seeking to eliminate poverty and to level inequalities across the world.

These goals must not be perceived merely as noble ideas - they must be treated as specific tasks to be performed. For this reason, the elimination of poverty is not only a moral imperative - it is a necessity that guarantees security and political stability. In the era of globalization, socio-economic problems of the developing countries have a significant impact on the political and economic situation of the entire planet.

The problem of poverty and hunger is particularly evident today, when the world food crisis - through quickly rising prices of staple foods - has alarmingly increased the number of people suffering from poverty. People living on the brink of poverty are no longer able to satisfy their basic food needs. Thus, the international community faces a profound challenge of overcoming the crisis and introducing mechanisms that will prevent its recurrence.

Poland shares the widely-held view that if the present situation continues, it could lead to the increase in the number of people affected by poverty and undernourishment, and to simultaneous cuts in government spendings on health and education, since the available resources would be primarily allocated to financing the basic food needs. In a situation when hunger and undernourishment cause the deaths of 3.5 million children a year (almost 10 thousand a day), that could fuel social unrest in many parts of the world. At the same time, it could prevent the timely implementation of the MDGs, particularly the ones concerning the poverty and hunger reduction, decrease in children's mortality rates, upgrade of health care for mothers, and boost in the basic schooling.

All the problems and difficulties enumerated above, including the climate change and the energy crisis, emphasize the need for a cohesive international action to deal with the effects of the current crises.

We recognize the need to undertake joint efforts to give new impetus to process of the implementation of the global development program centered on the MDGs. Poland has acceded to the Call for Action Declaration of July 31 2007. We hope that the Declaration - reflecting a broad agreement between numerous states, business community, NGOs and religious groups - will add to the effective and complete implementation of the MSGs.

Poland is actively involved in the debate on the MDGs and the prospects for their fulfillment in the internationally endorsed deadline, by 2015. Poland, in line with its commitments, systematically increases the share of its Official Development Assistance (ODA) in the GNP: in accordance with the set targets, it will reach 0.17% in 2010 and 0.33% in 2015. Since the accession of Poland to the European Union, the value of the Polish ODA has increased almost threefold - reaching 363 million USD last year (as compared to 137 million USD in 2004).

Mindful of the food crisis, Poland has prepared programs that will upgrade farmers' skills by teaching them how to apply the most advanced agricultural methods. Furthermore, we support administration reforms in partner countries, helping them to build free-market economies. Most Polish aid projects have education, health and environment protection at their core.

Financing for development is a crucial element of the MDGs' implementation. Accordingly, Poland attaches great importance to the Monterrey Consensus Review Conference (Doha, November 29 - December 2). We sincerely believe that it will reaffirm the commitments made by the international community as regards financing for development, open the way

for additional funding, and provide a stimulus to the development cooperation.

Apart from the above, we hope that the Review Conference will give us all the opportunity to discuss the issues of climate change, resultant ecosystem alterations and increasingly frequent natural disasters – since these phenomena make development projects more costly and more difficult to carry out.

The 19th century Russian writer Nikolai Gogol wrote in one of his letters: *“If you want your assistance to have the desired effect, you must thoroughly study the person you want to help”*. Indeed, it is essential for the donors and recipients to maintain ongoing collaboration and exchange of information. It is also of utmost importance that the community of recipients adheres to the rules of good governance, and assumes responsibility for the initiatives designed to implement the MDGs.

In our view, when granting aid, it is essential to structure it in accordance with the needs of recipient countries. The assistance should mainly focus on promoting agriculture, health, education and access to drinking water – with the priority assigned to education. The assistance should also allow for the development of the local infrastructure, in particular in the fields of electricity, transport and communication, especially in the rural areas.

Moreover, the effectiveness of the development assistance depends on the smooth cooperation between the state actors as well as the private sector and NGOs involved in its implementation.

The American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie used to say that *“No man can become rich without himself enriching others”*. Poland, which received substantial economic aid during the difficult years of totalitarianism and transition into democracy, feels obliged to help others, now that its own economy is thriving.

Ladies and Gentlemen, there is no magic medicine for the evils and distress tormenting the world. For this reason, the only possibility for the international community to effectively face the challenges of today’s world is to work together, create conditions for a wide global collaboration.

Distinguished Chairmen,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Thank you for your attention.