



Statement

by

**H.E. Ambassador Nawaf Salam
Permanent Representative of Lebanon
to the United Nations**

at the

**High-Level Event on the
Millennium Development Goals**

**New York
Thursday, September 25, 2008**

Check against delivery

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Mr. President,

The world has never been as rich as today.

Yet, more than 1/3 of total world population is still living in extreme poverty.

No less alarming as to the situation of our world is the fact that while we stand mid-way on the path which we had set to achieving the millennium development goals, many countries are still lagging behind; and at their current pace of progress, they will not be able to attain their millennium development goals. In other words, they will not be able to lift their population out of poverty.

With the current global food, energy, and financial crises, with the threats of climate change, and with the persistence of violent conflicts, the ghost of poverty looms over us more than ever.

Moreover, little progress seems to have been made in many regions of the world as to the overarching goal of reducing absolute poverty by half by 2015. In fact, Sub-Saharan Africa alone remains home to half of the extremely poor population of this continent, a figure that has not changed for over 25 years.

Mr. President,

The increase in food prices has made 1 billion people go hungry as it has left another 2 billion people undernourished. Furthermore, the current food crisis has pushed over 100 million people into extreme poverty. Those mostly hurt are the poor who do not produce their own food, because now they have to allocate a larger portion of their expenditure to food and less to other basic needs like health and education.

Mr. President,

The current food crisis should serve as a wake up call for developed countries to scale up their Official Development Assistance (ODA) to developing countries and to invest in agricultural and rural development.

This crisis also tells us how crucial it has become that developed countries remove trade barriers, trade subsidies and other trade distorting measures, thus ameliorating market access to agricultural products coming from developing countries. In this context, the priority remains the need to provide duty-free and quota-free market access for all least developed countries.

It is indeed a historic opportunity for the emergence of a truly open, rule based, predictable, and non-discriminatory trading system. A system, which also serves the development agenda.

Mr. President,

Rest assured that we are also aware that the developing countries need to promote pro-poor growth strategies along with the need to promote their agricultural productivity and trading capacity. It is noteworthy to mention that agriculture is the main livelihood of an estimated 86% of the rural population and provides jobs for an estimated 1.3 billion smallholders and workers. Increasing food productivity requires a better management of the land resources and the transfer of technology. It also requires the promotion of investment in land and the provision of micro-credits for smallholder farmers. The production of biofuel should not come at the expense of the production of food. Therefore, the biofuel producing countries need to develop a strategy for the sustainable production of this commodity.

Mr. President,

The key for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is no riddle.

Quite simply, such key lies in the implementation of commitments made in the outcomes of the major United Nations Conferences and Summits in the economic, social and related fields of the past decade. And the key to this key remains in genuine commitment to the Global Partnership for Development. Today, 3 billion people receive 1.2% of the world's global revenue while one billion receive 80%. Hence, the need is to fight poverty both within and among nations. And needless to add that unless we succeed in our goal of empowering women, we will not be on track, not only in the alleviation of poverty but on all Millennium Development Goals.

Here, allow me, Mr. President, to call upon the international community to give special attention to the Arab countries lagging behind in their development progress and those are mainly the least developed countries of the Arab world. As a matter of fact for the two periods 1990-1995 and 2000-2004, while the proportion of the population living below the national poverty lines decreased by almost 5% in the Mashreq region of the Arab world and by almost 3% in its Maghreb, by contrast it increased by almost 10% in the Arab LDC's, from 37% to 46.8% .

Mr. President,

We also call for the organization of a review conference in 2010 in order to take stock of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and in order to make the appropriate adjustments needed to reach those goals.

Mr. President,

Lebanon has continuously showed firm commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. However, the last Israeli aggression against the Lebanese population in 2006 adversely affected our efforts towards the attainment of sustainable development in Lebanon.

Now, let us hand in hand join our efforts to make poverty and hunger eradication an achievable goal by 2015.

Alleviating poverty is not only a social and economic imperative. It is first and foremost a fundamental ethical duty.

It should become unacceptable to all of us, that in the 21st century, a century of scientific and technological revolutions, a century of wealth and abundance, millions of children around the world still die of hunger and poverty.

Thank You Mr. President