

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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REMARKS TO THE HIGH-LEVEL EVENT
ON THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

New York, 25 September 2008

Mr. President of the General Assembly,
President Kikwete of Tanzania,
Prime Minister Brown of the United Kingdom,
Prime Minister Wen of China,
Prime Minister Al-Thani of Qatar,
Prime Minister Spencer of Antigua and Barbuda,
Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
President Barroso of the European Commission,
Mr. Gates of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation,
Ms. Bhatt of the Self Employed Women's Association,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this historic gathering.

I thank the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for his leadership.

Let me also pay tribute to the President of the 62nd General Assembly, His Excellency Srgjan Kerim, who made the Millennium Development Goals a priority during his tenure.

I am also pleased to welcome senior Government leaders.

CEOs.

Philanthropists and civil society representatives.

Religious figures and development experts.

An array of global and regional organizations.

This is a tremendous turnout. It bodes well for our work.

Excellencies,

Eight years ago in this hall, we set ourselves ambitious goals to free humankind from hunger, illiteracy, disease, disempowerment and environmental degradation.

Today, we have many successes on which to build.

Measles vaccinations that have prevented 7.5 million deaths.

Inroads against AIDS.

Surging school enrolment in several African countries, following the abolition of school fees.

Millions of poor households have risen out of extreme poverty, not just in China and India, but in many countries, including some of the poorest.

We are on the way to cutting extreme poverty and hunger in half by 2015, as the goals had summoned us to do.

But, Excellencies...

While we are moving in the right direction, we are not moving quickly enough.

Sub-Saharan Africa actually saw the number of poor increase between 1990 and 2005.

Women and girls suffer persistent bias and neglect, evidenced by disturbing gender gaps in health, education, employment and empowerment.

The current financial crisis threatens the well-being of billions of people, none more so than the poorest of the poor. This only compounds the damage being caused by much higher prices for food and fuel.

We must rise to all of these challenges immediately.

We must inject new energy into the global partnership for development.

Excellencies,

We are the first generation to possess the resources, knowledge and skills to eliminate poverty.

Experience shows that where there is strong political resolve, we see progress.

And where there is partnership, there are gains.

Our recent campaign against malaria is proof.

Malaria kills a child every 30 seconds. Yet far faster than anyone expected, we are close to containing this scourge. The most recent data show that we are on track to get full coverage by 2010 and end malaria deaths by 2015. How did this happen?

With a path-breaking public-private coalition.

With solid science and precise financing.

With coordination and the right mix of countries and partners.

And above all, with leadership.

This is a new kind of problem-solving. Now, what we have done with malaria, we should do with education, maternal health, climate and agriculture.

We must repeat this success. I'm here to tell you we can.

There's no better place to start than global health. Before the year is out, the President of the General Assembly and I plan to bring together all the main constituencies to get this new effort up and running.

Even more immediately, I urge you all stakeholders to send a clear signal of readiness to reach agreement on the way forward at the Doha Review Conference on Financing for Development in December.

Excellencies,

Poor people around the world look to their governments and to the United Nations for help and solidarity.

We are accountable to them. Here in this house, everyone counts.

So let us live up to our responsibility.

I ask you to be bold in your commitments. I ask you to be generous.

Tell us what you will do, and how you will do it.

I also hope you will agree to my proposal to hold a formal Summit in 2010 to take stock of our achievements. I hope that we will be able look back on 2008 as the year when the MDGs were put on track.

I have been truly inspired by the global mobilization behind the MDGs, and by the great numbers of people pouring into UN Headquarters for the partnership events connected with this meeting.

We must respect this call to action.

There is no more time to lose.

Let us keep our promises.

Thank you very much. Je vous remercie.