

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON THE 500-DAY MARK TO THE CONCLUSION OF THE  
MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

**“500 DAYS OF ACTION TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD”**

**18 August 2014**

There are many fires raging around the world today -- political turmoil, bloodshed, public health emergencies and human rights abuses. But there also burns a flame of hope – encouraging progress in the global drive to improve the lives of the world’s poorest through the Millennium Development Goals.

Adopted by world leaders in the year 2000, the MDGs are an ambitious 15-year roadmap to fight poverty, hunger and disease, protect the environment and expand education, basic health and women’s empowerment.

This week marks a milestone on the journey: we are now 500 days from the conclusion of the MDGs.

Quietly yet cumulatively, against the predictions of cynics, the MDGs have helped unite, inspire and transform.

Global poverty has been cut in half. More girls are in school. More families have better access to improved water sources. More mothers are surviving child birth and more children are living healthier lives. We are making huge inroads in fighting malaria, tuberculosis and other killer diseases.

I have met many individuals who owe their survival to this campaign. Yet millions still struggle against extreme poverty and inequality. Too many communities have no proper sanitation. Too many families are still being left behind. And our world faces the clear and present danger of climate change.

Now is the time for MDG Momentum.

The ideas and inspiration of young people will be especially critical in this effort and their role must grow even more. That is why I will mark the 500-day MDG moment at United Nations Headquarters with education advocate Malala Yousafzai and 500 young people.

Action in four areas can help fuel progress:

First: making strategic investments in health, education, energy and sanitation, with a special focus on empowering women and girls, which boosts results across the board.

Second: focusing on the poorest and most vulnerable countries, communities and social groups that have the toughest road to progress despite their best efforts.

Third: keeping our financial promises. These are difficult budgetary times. But budgets should never be balanced on the backs of society's weakest individuals.

Fourth: deepening cooperation among governments, civil society, the private sector and other networks around the world that have helped make the MDGs the most successful global anti-poverty push in history.

The challenges are daunting. Yet we have many more tools at our disposal than at the turn of the millennium -- from the expanding reach of technology to the growing understanding of what works and what does not.

Action now will save lives, build a solid foundation for sustainable development far beyond 2015 and help lay the groundwork for lasting peace and human dignity.

We have 500 days to accelerate MDG action. Let's make every day count.