

# WE CAN END POVERTY 2015 MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

UNITED NATIONS SUMMIT  
20-22 September 2010, New York  
High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly



WE CAN

## United Nations convenes world leaders to deliver on anti-poverty commitments

PRESS RELEASE

### *Civil society and business leaders join Summit to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015*

UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK, 13 SEPTEMBER — Heads of State, joined by leaders from civil society organizations, foundations and the private sector, will meet at the United Nations from 20 to 22 September to spur collective action against extreme poverty, hunger and disease.

The United Nations Summit on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) — officially a High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly — will bring together world leaders to commit to an action agenda to achieve the eight anti-poverty goals by their 2015 target date.

Almost 150 Heads of State and Government are expected to attend the Summit, convened by the UN General Assembly and chaired by the Assembly's incoming and outgoing presidents, H.E. Joseph Deiss (Switzerland) and H.E. Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki (Libya), just prior to its annual high-level debate.

Ten years after world leaders committed to the Goals laid out in the Millennium Declaration — and with only five years left until the 2015 target date for achieving the Goals — the Summit comes at a crucial time to galvanize commitments and accelerate progress.

“We must not fail the billions who look to the international community to fulfil the promise of the Millennium Declaration for a better world,” UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in his report, *Keeping the Promise*, issued earlier this year as a basis for the intergovernmental negotiations on the Summit outcome document. “Our world possesses the knowledge and the resources to achieve the MDGs,” Mr. Ban said. Falling short of the Goals “would be an unacceptable failure, moral and practical.”

#### A MIXED PICTURE

A number of countries have achieved major successes in fighting poverty, improving school enrolment and child health, expanding access to clean water, strengthening control of malaria and tuberculosis, and providing increased access to HIV treatment, according to the UN *Millennium Development Goals Report 2010*, the latest progress report on the Goals. These successes have taken place in some of the poorest countries, demonstrating that the MDGs are indeed achievable with the right policies, adequate levels of investment and international support.

Yet progress has been uneven and — without additional efforts — several of the Goals are likely to be missed in many countries, according to the report. Around 1.4 billion people still subsist on less than \$1.25 a day, the international poverty line defined by the World Bank. Around one billion people suffer from hunger. Almost nine million children die each year before they reach their fifth birthday, hundreds of thousands of women die due to complications of pregnancy or child birth every year, and only half of the developing world's population has access to improved sanitation, such as toilets or latrines.

The challenges are most severe in the least developed countries, land-locked developing countries, small island developing states, countries in or emerging from conflict, and those most affected by climate change.

“It is clear that improvements in the lives of the poor have been unacceptably slow, and some hard-won gains are being eroded by the climate, food and economic crises,” the UN Secretary-General said.

The economic crisis took a heavy toll on jobs and incomes around the world and severely impacted the ability of the poor to feed their families, according to the *MDG Report 2010*.

Moreover, many donor countries, concerned with large fiscal deficits and rising debts in the wake of the global economic crisis, are taking fiscal austerity measures. “But economic uncertainty cannot be an excuse for slowing down our development efforts,”

Secretary-General Ban said. "By investing in the MDGs, we invest in global economic growth."

According to the 2010 report by the Secretary-General's MDG Gap Task Force, *The Global Partnership for Development at a Critical Juncture*, aid flows reached an all-time high in dollar amounts, at \$120 billion, in 2009, but still fall short of the promises made at the 2005 Group of Eight (G8) Gleneagles meeting and the longstanding UN target of 0.7 per cent of donor countries' annual income.

"Meeting the goals is everyone's business," Mr. Ban said. Falling short would multiply the dangers of our world — from instability to epidemic diseases to environmental degradation."

## **ACTION ON WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH**

The Summit will start with an opening session featuring statements by the General Assembly Presidents, the Secretary-General, a representative from the United States (as the UN host country), the President of the UN Economic and Social Council, and the heads of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, UN Conference on Trade and Development and UN Development Programme.

The subsequent plenary meetings — one on each morning and each afternoon over the three days — will feature statements by Heads of State and Government. Representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations and the private sector, selected during the preparatory process leading up to the Summit, will be among the speakers at the closing session.

Parallel to the plenary meetings, six roundtable sessions — one each morning and afternoon — will allow leaders to have more in-depth discussions on the themes of poverty, hunger and gender equality; health and education; sustainable development; emerging issues and evolving approaches; the special needs of the most vulnerable; and widening and strengthening partnerships. The roundtable sessions, which will include representatives of NGOs, civil society organizations and the private sector, are open only to the participants. Summaries of the deliberations will be presented at the closing plenary meeting.

The Summit is expected to conclude with the adoption of an action agenda for achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, including steps to be taken to advance progress on each Goal.

In addition, a number of high-profile partnership events, bringing together leaders from Governments, the UN system, civil society, foundations and the private sector, are expected to result in announcements of new initiatives and actions, including on women's and children's health.

In a special event from 2:30 to 4:00pm on 22 September, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, together with leaders from Governments, foundations, NGOs and business, is expected to launch a Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, setting out key actions to improve the health of women and children worldwide, with the potential of saving 16 million lives by 2015. "For too long, maternal and child health has been at the back of the MDG train, but we know it can be the engine of development," Mr. Ban said earlier this year. "We must accelerate progress on the MDGs — and there is no issue that can better jumpstart that effort."

The UN Secretary-General will also chair a Private Sector Forum on 22 September, bringing Chief Executive Officers together with Government and civil society leaders to highlight actions the private sector can take to boost progress on the MDGs and announce new partnerships in support of the Goals.

The last day of the Summit (22 September) will be held in parallel with a high-level General Assembly meeting on biodiversity, followed by the opening of the annual high-level debate (23 September) and a special two-day meeting on the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (24-25 September).

**For more information on the Summit** and a complete list of partnership events, please visit: [www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010](http://www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010).

**For more information on the Millennium Development Goals**, please see: [www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals).

**For a live webcast** of the Summit and related press conferences, please see [www.un.org/webcast](http://www.un.org/webcast).

**For general media information**, contact the UN Department of Public Information:

Pragati Pascale, Tel: +1 212 963 6870, e-mail: [pascale@un.org](mailto:pascale@un.org)

Martina Donlon, Tel: +1 212 963 6816, e-mail: [donlon@un.org](mailto:donlon@un.org)

Newton Kanhema, Tel: +1 212 963 5602, e-mail: [kanhema@un.org](mailto:kanhema@un.org)

**For interviews, story ideas and other information on the MDGs**, please consult the list of inter-agency communications officials in the press kit and on the event website.

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