



PRESS RELEASE

UN Agencies: Investing in development is not only the moral choice, it is also in everyone's self-interest

Time for a new kind of multilateralism:

We cannot address the challenges of the 21st Century with 20th Century tools

Doha, 29 November 2008 — The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) calls on all members of the international community to honour their commitments and invest more in sustainable human development and the Millennium Development Goals.

In a statement issued on the eve of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, the UNDG highlights the need to identify concrete ways in which the current multilateral system can be reformed to better respond to the unprecedented challenges posed by the global economic crisis.

The Doha Conference comes at a difficult time for the global economy. The world is confronted by a host of multidimensional and interconnected challenges: a global economic and financial crisis and the effects of the continuing volatility of food and fuel commodities, as well as the ongoing challenge of climate change.

“From some angles, the situation looks almost insurmountable. But the reality is that while we may face an unavoidable immediate global downturn, it is the decisions we make as policy makers at national and international levels that will determine how deep and long the present recession will be,” said Kemal Derviş, Chair of the UNDG. “We have in our hands the keys that can open up the doors to a future of sustainable and equitable growth.”

What we need to do

Even though this conference comes at a difficult time for the global economy, the UNDG argues that funding for development is not only a matter of resources, but also of political will. The world spends almost US\$1.3 trillion a year on armaments. Many more trillions are being mobilized for the financial crisis. The US\$140 billion already pledged for official development assistance by 2010 is therefore clearly affordable.

The UNDG says that the increase in aid must be matched with increases in quality and effectiveness. Most notably, we must deliver aid more predictably and transparently, streamline conditionality, and make more strategic use of aid to complement growing new sources of development finance.

Extraordinary times require extraordinary actions, the UNDG asserts. The statement appeals to world leaders to find solutions that meet immediate needs and long-term development goals.

Now, the UNDG insists, is not the time to allow the global fight against poverty, hunger and disease to fall by the wayside. The statement affirms that governments must renew their pledge to spend 0.7 percent of their GNI to Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Increasing levels of human development is part and parcel of the process of reviving economic demand and shoring up social stability, as well as being a humanitarian imperative. Otherwise, many countries will see eight years of relative gains, especially in the achievement of halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015, eroded and—ultimately—reversed. As the costs of dealing with this most recent crisis mount, developing countries could see the current dismal trio of limited access to financing, volatile commodity prices and a diminishing market for exports made worse by shrunken ODA flows.

The statement also stresses that developing countries need to mobilize more domestic resources and implement the policies needed to tackle poverty and promote growth and development. Specifically, more resources need to be invested in sustainable human development through concurrent investments in education, nutrition, health, decent work, human capacity, rights and opportunities, social protection, food assistance, agriculture, and infrastructure.

There is, the UNDG argues, a unique opportunity to make the global economic recovery sustainable. Strengthened public investment programmes are needed to boost economic demand and employment. The fiscal stimulus required to support global economic growth in response to the financial crisis gives an unprecedented opportunity to invest in new technologies, green jobs and our global green economy. Investments made now in the mitigation of and adaptation to the effects of climate change may provide an opportunity to both boost demand in the short-run and contribute to inclusive economic growth, access to energy and poverty reduction in the long-run.

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A reformed, stronger and more inclusive multilateralism, affirms the UNDG, is the only option if we are to find workable and fair solutions. We cannot address the challenges of the 21st century with the tools of the 20th century, the UNDG contends.

The new structure should recognise the vulnerability of poor countries to the negative impact of interconnected crises: financial instability, climate change, volatile prices for food and energy, and unacceptable levels of hunger, poverty and inequality. And in developing policy responses decision-makers should never forget that the poor and most vulnerable had no hand in precipitating the crisis or the climate challenges we now face.

Only a global, equitable, inclusive and stronger multilateral system of international cooperation can generate the kind of investment, collaboration, synergies and innovation needed to simultaneously tackle global poverty, hunger, environmental sustainability, human development and climate change.

The UN Development Group stands ready to assist

The United Nations has a key role to play in this renewed multilateralism. With its inclusive membership, intergovernmental processes, leadership in peacekeeping, rapid engagement in post-crisis countries, and its ability to learn from the experience of the more than 160 countries

where it has a presence on the ground, the UN system can play a critical role in transforming development finance into development results.

Bringing together the various agencies, funds and programmes of the UN development system, the UN Development Group is a reliable partner with a unique depth of capacity and breadth of voice. It stands ready to strengthen its efforts to assist countries in responding to the current global crises with sustainable solutions to development challenges.

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Note to Editors

- The United Nations development system is a neutral partner for developing countries. Its collective presence is global, with teams in 136 countries and programmes in 160 countries. It delivers over \$16 billion worth of activities that support development every year and is guided by national priorities within a globally-agreed normative framework of human rights and development goals.
- The UN development system helps countries to access sources of development finance, provides policy and technical advice, and strengthens national capacities to respond to existing and emerging development challenges. It plays a crucial role as part of a broader global framework to achieve effective financing for development and attain sustainable and equitable development outcomes.
- The UN Development Group unites 33 UN funds, programmes, agencies, offices and departments, and five observers to deliver more effective support to developing countries. The Secretary-General created the group in 1997 as a mechanism to strengthen the UN system and coordinate its operational activities for development at the country level. The UNDG creates common policies and mechanisms to help its members analyse country issues, formulate strategies, implement programmes, monitor results, and advocate for change. This creates synergies, efficiencies, and economies of scale that result in better development assistance.
- UNDG members include: ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, FAO, IFAD, ILO, ITU, OHCHR, OSAA, SRSGCAC, UN DESA, UN DPI, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNIFEM, UNODC, UN-OHRLLS, UNOPS, UNWTO, WFP, WHO, WMO, the World Bank (observer), UNFIP (observer), OCHA (observer), the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General (observer), and the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General (observer).
- For more information on the UNDG, visit: www.undg.org