

UNDP Administrator Helen Clark's Speaking Points at the G8 Development Ministers' Meeting

Tuesday, 27 April 2010, Halifax at 1pm

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Introduction

In just under 150 days from now the special review Summit on the MDGs will convene in New York. It is hoped that the outcome will be an MDG action agenda to accelerate progress towards meeting the Goals by their target date of 2015.

My message to you today is that achieving the MDGs is possible. There are a range of tried and tested policies which ensure progress. If they are backed by strong global partnerships, we can achieve the Goals.

Commitments from leaders at all levels – including all of us here today – can help accelerate progress.

The MDG Summit can help make that happen.

Progress towards the MDGs to date

The good news is that significant progress has been made towards a number of the MDGs, including in some of the world's poorest countries.

At a global level, our world had been moving closer to meeting MDGs like that for universal primary education, although not yet fast enough to meet the 2015 MDG target.

The deaths of children under the age of five have been declining steadily worldwide, although progress here is also not fast enough yet to meet the relevant MDG.

A number of countries, again including some of the poorest, have recorded impressive results in combating extreme poverty and hunger; and in expanding access to clean water and HIV/AIDS treatment.

Yet, progress is uneven and often too slow to meet the 2015 deadline.

We are still far from reaching the global target of reducing maternal mortality rates by 75 per cent between 1990 and 2015.

I am pleased that you will be having a special session on child and maternal health

today. Both areas are so important in their own right, as well as for meeting other MDGs too.

A wave of devastating natural disasters, a global recession, the lingering effects of food and fuel crises, and the reality of climate change have shown how fragile progress on the MDGs can be. The lack of progress in completing WTO's Doha Development Round does not help development. Neither does the lack of a binding climate agreement.

Those countries either in or emerging from conflict, and others affected by high levels of armed violence, face additional obstacles.

The challenges are especially significant in sub-Saharan Africa, where no country is currently on course to achieve all the MDGs by 2015.

UNDP's contribution to the MDG Review Year and Summit

With just five years left to achieve the MDGs, the September Summit is a good opportunity to re-energize the global MDG effort, and agree on a concrete action plan to accelerate progress. The support of G8 members is essential to help drive this work.

We want the Summit to have firm evidence on what has worked to achieve the MDGs. Together with other UN agencies, we are helping some thirty governments prepare detailed national MDG reports. These will highlight progress to date; and examine what has worked and what more needs to be done. A synthesis of the country reports will be made public in June.

Drawing on this country level evidence, we are preparing an "International Assessment" of what it will take to achieve the MDGs by 2015. It will identify common and underlying success factors, from sound policy frameworks, to effective institutions and sufficient or better allocated resources.

The assessment will also highlight recurring national and international constraints on MDG progress, and suggest ways in which countries can respond effectively to shocks and build resilience to economic volatility and climate change. From this analysis, recommendations will be drawn on the concrete measures which can help to accelerate development progress.

An advisory panel has been established to guide our work comprised of twenty leading technical experts from Member States and multilateral organizations. Its job is to ensure that the International Assessment is of the highest quality, and has taken into account a broad range of perspectives and constituencies.

The International Assessment will be completed in time for the G8 leaders meeting in June. It can contribute both to their deliberations and to the inter-governmental negotiations on the MDG Summit outcome document.

To promote its findings on what works, UNDP is participating in a series of global and regional events - such as this - in the build up to the Summit, to help generate support for a strong outcome document.

On the ground, UNDP and its partners in the UN Country Teams will be taking every opportunity to work with governments and development partners on initiatives to accelerate progress.

Using our evidence base, UNDP has been developing a new diagnostic framework for this work. It will be able to guide UN Country Teams through a process which identifies both constraints on MDG achievement and solutions which could help.

The aim is to build strong partnerships around specific action plans to achieve the MDGs.

Emerging elements for an MDG action agenda

While the action plans for each country will have to be context-specific, UNDP's analysis and experience highlight some of the following areas for priority :

1. An important way to reduce poverty sustainably is to foster inclusive economic growth. Growth is supported by investment and access to markets, including through trade. Completing the Doha Development Round of the WTO must be seen as a priority.

So must be the application of the Global Jobs Pact developed by the ILO, which promotes a job rich recovery from the global recession.

Then, because so much poverty has a rural face, growth also needs to support rural development. The renewed international attention on agricultural sector development we are seeing is critical.

The FAO estimates that about 2.5 billion people in the developing world depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Increasing agricultural output not only helps increase food security, but can also reduce poverty and spur inclusive economic growth.

Access needs to be expanded to the inputs which will lift agricultural productivity,

including fertilizers and better seeds. Poor farmers, especially women, need their land rights secured. Rural infrastructure and access to finance and markets need to be improved.

One example of innovation in accessing markets is the agricultural commodity exchange established in Ethiopia. It links into the international price system and is transparent for producers. UNDP is proud of its association with the initiative.

2. Public investments and targeted interventions in health and education will also help accelerate efforts towards all MDGs.

Remarkable progress can be made on increasing the school enrolment of the poorest children by abolishing fees, constructing schools in underserved areas, and boosting the recruitment of teachers.

Then, there are a number of cost-effective innovations in the field of nutrition which can be scaled up, including nutrient supplements to address the specific needs of young children. Food and nutritional supplements have been shown to reduce the incidence of child illness.

We also know that skilled attendance at birth helps prevent maternal death. What is needed is a concerted effort to bring such interventions to scale.

Between 2005 and 2008 the number of women receiving treatment for prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV trebled.

Between 2003 and 2008, as a principal recipient for Global Fund programmes in 34 countries, UNDP contributed to providing community outreach for HIV and TB and for malaria prevention to more than 20 million people.

UNDP is not a specialized expert agency in health and education, but we are using our role as co-ordinator of the UN development system to support the mandates of other agencies which are.

3. Social protection programmes and employment guarantee schemes can make a huge difference in tackling poverty and reducing vulnerability.

In March I was able to see India's major rural poverty reduction initiative in action. With UNDP support, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is providing a right to a minimum of 100 days work a year, benefiting some 46 million households. That is significant by any standard.

4. Access to energy needs to be prioritised, because of the spin offs it has for

productivity and quality of life. This is particularly important for women.

In West African countries, like Burkina Faso and Mali, where I am travelling on Friday, UNDP has helped provide access to diesel-powered energy. It transforms women's lives by reducing the time spent on domestic chores, and offers new opportunities for earning income.

In a carbon-constrained age, growth which is based on lower carbon footprints is also vital. To achieve that, a climate deal which generates significant funding for mitigation would enormously help.

5. Investing in women and girls also stands out as a key part of the breakthrough strategy we need to accelerate MDG progress.

The benefits of doing so are intergenerational. A mother's level of education, for example, is a significant variable affecting her children's educational attainment and opportunities.

Meeting a woman's need for sexual and reproductive health services could increase her chances of finishing her education, and breaking out of poverty.

UNDP works with governments around the world to expand women's economic opportunities; strengthen the legal status and rights of women; and ensure women's inclusion, and participation in decision making.

In Papua New Guinea, a law reserving seats for women is being proposed which would lift the number of women parliamentarians from one to 22, bringing that country close to the current global average for women's participation. UNDP has supported this effort.

We do so in the belief that increasing the participation of women in decision-making will ensure that more attention is paid to meeting the needs of women and girls.

6. Strong national leadership, capacities and ownership are essential for development progress.

Development thrives where there is wise leadership investing in people, institutions and infrastructure. It will thrive particularly where governments are responsive and accountable to their citizens.

To implement MDG initiatives effectively, we have learned that countries need, and too often lack, sufficient institutional capacity and well-functioning and effective co-ordinating mechanisms. The work which UNDP and others do to build capacity

needs support.

7. MDG 8 needs to be fully revived. The world needs partnerships for development which go beyond traditional development co-operation frameworks and reflect new geopolitical realities. North-south, South-South, and triangular co-operation all have a role to play. So do civil society and the private sector.

Most of the resources needed to achieve the MDGs have to be raised and allocated effectively from a country itself. Yet, well targeted and predictable ODA can be catalytic for meeting the Goals.

It can support countries to develop the capacities and programmes needed to meet the MDGs and to attract private investment and new sources of climate finance.

It would be very important for MDG achievement if ODA levels pledged previously, including by the G8, were reached.

According to recent forecasts by the OECD, ODA levels in 2010 will be around \$20 billion short, in 2004 prices, of what donors pledged in Gleneagles. Of that shortfall, around \$2 billion is the result of lower-than-expected donor GNI owing to the economic crisis. But close to \$18 billion is the result of lower-than-promised giving.

Closing

If we form strong global partnerships, if we support what works, if we back people of vision and action - we can meet the MDGs.

Let's use this meeting, and other events leading up to the MDG Summit, to help reach an agreement on an action agenda for the MDGs – one which will be a genuine turning point in the fight against poverty.

I look forward to hearing your reflections, perspectives and ideas on what it will take to meet the MDGs.