



A UNA-USA Advocacy Agenda 2006 Fact Sheet:

THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Background

At the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000, the largest-ever gathering of world leaders, every UN member state agreed to a declaration reaffirming the values and principles of the organization and rededicating themselves to the promotion of peace and security, sustainable development, human rights, democracy, and good governance. Stating that the “central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world’s people,” world leaders pledged in the Millennium Declaration to “create an environment—at the national and global levels alike—which is conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty.” They also included in the declaration a set of clear, time-bound, and measurable development targets for combating poverty, hunger, disease, and environmental degradation, among others. Subsequently referred to as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), these targets provide a common global development strategy that has generated an unprecedented level of coordinated action within the UN system, the donor community, and developing countries.

Millennium Development Goals

Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

- By 2015, halve the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day and those who suffer from hunger.

Achieve Universal Primary Education

- By 2015, ensure that all boys and girls complete primary school.

Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

- Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

Reduce Child Mortality

- By 2015, reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five.

Improve Maternal Health

- By 2015, reduce by three quarters the ratio of women who die during childbirth.

Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and Other Diseases

- By 2015, halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

Ensure Environmental Sustainability

- Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources.
- By 2015, halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water.
- By 2020, achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

Develop a Global Partnership for Development

- Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory, and includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – nationally and internationally.
- Address the special needs of the least developed countries, including tariff- and quota-free access for their exports, enhanced debt relief, and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction.
- Address the special needs of landlocked and small island developing states.
- Deal comprehensively with developing countries’ debt problems.
- Develop decent and productive work for youth.
- In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.
- In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies – especially information and communications technologies.

What Makes the MDGs Special?

The MDGs are unique for several reasons. Most importantly, they have unprecedented political support, having been agreed upon by every UN member state. Secondly, they are specific, measurable, and time-bound (most of the goals are to be achieved by 2015). Lastly, they are achievable, with rapid advances in certain areas demonstrating that the ambitious goals can be met.

The Role of the United Nations

The MDGs have been placed at the center of the UN system's development work. As such, they provide a shared framework for aligning development efforts at all levels - making these initiatives more coherent, coordinated and effective. With its universal membership and global operations, the United Nations is well positioned to direct the international community's efforts to achieve the MDGs. To do so, the UN has launched four initiatives: 1) the Millennium Campaign (www.millenniumcampaign.org), which aims to build public awareness about and political support for the MDGs in both developed and developing countries; the Millennium Project (www.unmillenniumproject.org), which is an independent advisory body that in early 2005 issued a plan of action for achieving the MDGs; 3) a process of country-level and global monitoring of progress; and 4) an effort to provide countries with practical assistance and operational support for designing and implementing policies to achieve the goals.

How Are We Doing?

Overall, progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals has been uneven, both within and among countries. Some countries and regions have experienced substantial progress, while others have had little success, or have even regressed. For instance, according to the UN's 2005 MDG progress report, poverty rates are falling worldwide, but millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa have fallen deeper into poverty. Likewise, while five developing regions are close to achieving the goal of universal primary education, less than two-thirds of sub-Saharan African children currently receive primary schooling. In his foreword to the UN's latest progress report, Secretary-General Kofi Annan observes, "This report shows that we *have* the means at hand to ensure that nearly every country can make good on the promises of the Goals. Our challenge is to deploy those means."

Recent Developments

At the UN World Summit in September 2005, all 191 UN member states reiterated their strong support for timely and complete achievement of the MDGs. Member states also reaffirmed their commitment to a global partnership between developed and developing countries, whereby developing countries pledged to adopt comprehensive national implementation strategies for the MDGs and to improve transparency and good governance, and developed countries resolved to support these efforts through increased development assistance and debt relief. Another notable development at the World Summit was President Bush's unequivocal reaffirmation of the United States' commitment to the Millennium Development Goals.

Congressional action on the Millennium Development Goals during 2005 included the following: the introduction of a House resolution (H. Con. Res. 172) calling for continued US leadership, and the commitment of the necessary share of resources, in support of the MDGs; Senate approval, by unanimous consent, of legislation (S. 1215) requiring an administration report on US and international policies and progress toward fulfilling the MDGs by their 2015 deadline; and a House resolution (H. Con. Res. 120) that affirms the commitment of Congress to the achievement of the MDGs.

April 2006

For more information, visit: www.un.org/millenniumgoals.