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**“An effective UN in a more secure and just world”**  
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I begin today by congratulating the United Nations Association of the United Kingdom for organising this conference dedicated to discussion of the UN’s role in building a more secure and effective world.

You have brought together here people from all walks of life to debate these issues, and you have convened a number of us who are currently working at the UN, or have in the past, across many fields.

I come today for the UN’s development stream, representing the “hands on” people out in the field who work on behalf of all the UN’s member states for development.

At UNDP and across the UN’s funds, programmes, and specialized agencies, we are unconditional advocates for development. Our work is fundamental to building a more secure and just world.

But our work is only one of the many contributions made to development. These days the development arena is multi-faceted involving not only and necessarily the leadership of developing countries themselves and the traditional donors, like the United Kingdom.

Development contributions are being made on a large scale across the South, through civil society and the mega philanthropic funds, and increasingly through the private sector too.

The UN, however, with its universal membership, its convening role, its perceived neutrality, and the idealism which characterized the writing of its charter and the development of its mission has a special role to play. That role is to provide global leadership for development.

In recent years the UN Intellectual History project, led by Sir Richard Jolly and colleagues, has written about the great ideas emanating from the United Nations and those who are associated with it which have provided leadership on critical issues, including human rights, gender, the environment, and development.

This year will see the twentieth publication of the Human Development Report, produced by a dedicated unit in UNDP with the support of distinguished experts in academia and beyond.

Over the past twenty years, many hundreds of human development reports have been produced at the global, regional, national, and local levels. Without doubt, these reports have been influential in demonstrating that there is more to development than an increase in Gross Domestic Product. If that GDP increase does not translate into tangible improvements in the lives of ordinary people, then it has failed the test of advancing human development.

The theme of my remarks today, however, is not about the worth of the human development concept. Much more will be said on that theme when the twentieth anniversary report is released later this year.

Today, I want to address the Millennium Development Goals at the ten year mark – ten years after most of the world’s Heads of State and Government, including me, travelled to New York at Kofi Annan’s invitation for the Millennium Summit.

It is for good reason that the UN Intellectual History Project credits the MDGs with being one of those great ideas to emanate from the UN.

Put simply the MDGs are the most broadly supported, comprehensive, and specific poverty reduction targets the world has ever established. For the international community, they represent a concerted effort to focus and scale up our individual efforts.

For all those living in poverty, reaching the MDGs offers the means to a better life - a life with access to adequate food and income; to basic education and health services; to clean water and sanitation; and to empowerment for women. Put simply, advancing the MDGs will be an important milestone in our quest for a more just, secure and peaceful world.

Many successes have been achieved over the past ten years, and it is important that we celebrate them and seek to replicate them. That’s because progress has been uneven across the Goals and within regions and nations. If we are to reach the MDGs by the target date of 2015, the Review Summit at the UN in September must spark five years of accelerated progress.

That progress needs to reach the countries, communities, and marginalized groups which have been left behind – overlooked, bypassed, and unable to benefit from progress made elsewhere.

I was able to see many examples of progress during my visit to four countries in Africa in May. Just some of them:

- Tanzania was able to increase its net enrolment rate in primary school by over 90 per cent between 1991 and 2006;
- Burkina Faso and South Africa were able to cut in half the proportion of people which lacks access to improved drinking water; and
- Mali is successfully expanding access to energy in rural communities across the country.

Worldwide, the number of children reaching their fifth birthday has increased steadily – although progress is not yet fast enough to meet the target.

Around the world, including in some of the poorest countries there are good examples of impressive results in combating extreme poverty, hunger, and HIV/AIDS.

These successes demonstrate that the MDGs can be achieved. That is the message UNDP brings to today's conference and to all events leading up to and including the September Review Summit.

### Threat of setbacks

A series of concurrent crises in recent years, however, has not made the task of achieving the MDGs any easier. There has been a wave of devastating natural disasters, the global recession, the lingering effects of the food and fuel crises, and the reality of climate change – all conspiring to thwart development progress.

In 2009, for the first time in history, more than a billion people were estimated to have suffered from chronic hunger, around 130 million more than before the food and the economic crises hit. The economic crisis left an estimated 50 million more people in extreme poverty in 2009, and is projected to leave an additional 64 million people in extreme poverty by the end of 2010.

In many countries, export prices and volumes declined, remittances dwindled, and tourist flows and foreign direct investment slowed.

While the impact has undoubtedly been a setback to hard fought development gains, it cannot become an excuse for lowering our level of ambition for the MDGs. On the contrary, it makes achieving them more urgent and compelling.

Meeting the MDGs means building fairer and more inclusive and resilient societies – societies which stand a better chance of withstanding such shocks in future.

### Preparing for the MDG Summit in September

It is critical now to inject momentum and a sense of urgency around achieving the MDGs. The September Summit needs to be forward leaning and action oriented.

World leaders need to agree on a concrete action agenda to take us through to 2015. The voices, advocacy, and networks of civil society, including all represented here today, need to be heard in support of a successful outcome for the Summit and for 2015.

UNDP believes that there is a range of tried and tested policies, which scaled up and adapted to national contexts, can ensure MDG achievement. As well, where civil society, the private sector, CEOs, philanthropists, political leaders, and the multilateral organizations come together in effective global partnerships, we can achieve together extraordinary things – as the world has in expanding access to HIV medicines, supporting mass vaccinations for children, and scaling up the distribution of bed nets to prevent the spread of malaria.

Through experience in the field, development practitioners are continually learning what works, why, and how. UNDP strives to capture and share lessons from its day-to-day work with partners around the world.

As part of the preparations for the summit, we have worked with the other agencies in UN Country Teams, and with host governments in around thirty countries on in-depth national MDG reports.

Our aim is to provide a strong evidence base of what is working to achieve the MDGs.

Then, drawing on those in-depth studies, we are preparing an “International Assessment” of what it will take to achieve the MDGs by 2015. The Assessment identifies common and underlying MDG success factors, and it highlights recurring national and international constraints on progress. From this analysis, we are making recommendations drawn on the concrete measures which can accelerate development progress.

The assessment is due to be launched this month, in time to inform negotiations on the Summit outcome document, inform the G8 leaders (whose sherpas and development ministers have already been briefed), and complement the Secretary General’s MDG progress report which will offer a target by target account of global progress to date.

Meanwhile, on the ground, UN Country Teams are taking every opportunity to help their partners accelerate progress.

We are piloting an MDG acceleration framework designed to help government and development partners identify the interventions which will have the most impact, and the policies which can sustain hard-won gains.

The aim is to make the most of scarce resources, by building strong and broad partnerships around the specific actions which can speed up MDG achievement. The talent and energy of organizations represented in this room is very much needed in this global effort.

### Action agenda

While any action agenda must be adapted to each country’s unique context, our analysis and experience, thus far, highlights eight common areas and opportunities for priority action. I share them with you here.

First, we need to support country-led development:

To accelerate and sustain progress, development strategies must be locally-owned and based on broad national consensus. It helps immensely where a country’s institutions are responsive and accountable, and have the capacity to implement MDG policies and programmes.

Development partners, including civil society organizations, can help by supporting inclusive development planning which reflects the perspectives of the poor and marginalized; and also by supporting the strengthening of the local and national capacities needed to mobilise resources, deliver services and make evidence-based policy decisions. UNDP offers its generic expertise in

helping build the capacity of governments to plan and deliver, and ensure that aid is used effectively.

For example, while UNDP is obviously not a specialised agency working in the area of maternal health, we can be active behind the scenes building capacity which ensures that midwives are actually paid, health centres have electricity, and the Ministry of Health has the people, equipment, and know-how to function effectively.

Second, we need to foster inclusive economic growth:

Evidence suggests that rapid reductions in poverty and hunger result from economic growth which is job-rich, and which has a specific focus on agriculture in countries where large numbers of people live on the land. A fair distribution of income, assets, and opportunities also helps.

2.5 billion people in the developing world depend on agriculture for their living. Boosting agricultural production can simultaneously reduce poverty and improve food security. To be more productive, farmers need fertilizer, seeds, extension services, secure land rights, and access to markets. This requires improvements in rural infrastructure as well as a global trade deal which works for poor people and poor countries.

Recent decades saw a sharp decline in the share of official development assistance going to the agricultural sector. The G8 agreement at L'Aquila last year to invest in Global Food Security was a very positive step away from that trend. It is now imperative that partners deliver on the commitments they made in L'Aquila in a timely fashion.

Third, we must improve opportunities for women and girls:

That will be a powerful driver of MDG progress across all the Goals.

The empowerment of women and girls must be a top priority. That must include measures which reduce the burden of domestic activities and free women to generate income, care for their children, and send their girls to school; as well as offering broader political empowerment.

Children born to women with some formal education are more likely to survive to their fifth birthday, receive adequate nutrition, and be immunized and enrolled in school.

Thus, investment in women and girls is not only the right thing to do, but also will have intergenerational and community-wide benefits.

Fourth, we need to target investments in health and education, in clean water and sanitation, and in the professionals who run these services.

This will not only save lives, but also help to lay the foundation for sustained human development and growth. Healthy and educated people are better able to improve their own lives.

Rapid improvements in both education and health care have occurred where adequate public investment accompanied the elimination of user fees.

New partnerships have funded mass immunization, the distribution of bed nets and antiretroviral drugs, and skilled attendants at birth. We know that these interventions work. Now we need a concerted effort to bring them to scale and ensure that the gains can be sustained, even in times of economic downturn.

Sustaining improvements, including in quality, requires long-term commitments to developing effective systems and institutions, and to skills and professional development. This work is often less visible, as it doesn't leave a physical footprint, - but it is absolutely vital. Education ministries, for example, must be capable of driving improvements in teacher quality. Transport ministries need to ensure that the roads which have been built can be maintained.

Fifth, we need to scale up social protection and employment programmes and other targeted interventions:

We have seen social protection and cash transfer programmes expand access to nutritional supplements, increase the frequency of health check-ups, and keep children in school.

Rather than being seen as a drain on a nation's budget, social protection needs to be seen as a critical investment in building the resilience to cope with present and future shocks.

Sixth, we need to expand access to energy and promote low-carbon development:

Expanding energy access has a multiplier effect on MDG attainment. It increases productivity; reduces smoke-related deaths; brings lighting to homes, schools and hospitals; and frees women and girls from time-consuming domestic chores like grinding grain.

In a carbon-constrained age, growth based on reduced carbon footprints is also vital for all countries. To achieve that, a climate deal which generates significant funding for low-carbon energy and development solutions is essential – and must not be allowed to fall off the international list of priorities.

Seventh, countries must be able to mobilise domestic resources to finance the MDGs:

Many of the resources needed to achieve the MDGs have to be raised and allocated effectively from a country itself.

Thus, improving domestic resource mobilisation is critical to accelerating MDG progress - whether by improving tax collection, broadening the tax base, or through other innovative methods of raising revenue.

Resources also need to be spent well. Countries should be routinely evaluating and adjusting their budgets to maximize the return on their investment of public monies.

Expanding the reach and range of financial services in the developing world is also important for capturing the domestic savings which can spur private sector development from the micro level up.

Eighth, the international community does need to deliver on its ODA commitments and improve the predictability and effectiveness of aid.

Well targeted and predictable aid is a critical catalyst for meeting the MDGs, and for helping countries to build the capacities and programmes they need to design and deliver programmes and attract private investment.

The shortfall between the development assistance projected for 2010 and what was promised at the G8 meeting in Gleneagles in 2005 amounts to around 0.05 per cent of the combined 2010 Gross National Income of developed countries. This gap can and should be filled, even in these challenging times. Some countries are living up to their commitments, but others are not.

### Global Partnership & UN effectiveness

UNDP hopes that member states negotiating the outcome document for the MDG Summit will agree on an action agenda which is based on the evidence of what works.

We also hope that renewed global partnerships will drive the agenda forward.

With the profound changes we have seen in development co-operation in the last two decades, teamwork is now more important than ever. There are many more players to be co-ordinated. And if a new climate agreement can be reached, the finance which flows from that in time will surpass traditional official development assistance in size and scope.

The UN's universality, impartiality, and its comprehensive approach to development, see it well placed to lead in this new environment. To be effective, however, we must stay ahead of the trends. In UNDP, we are moving fast to get better at capturing and sharing the knowledge we generate, facilitating the transfer of know-how across the South; and strengthening and widening our partnerships with countries of the north and the south, and with philanthropic and civil society organisations and the private sector.

### Conclusion

No single actor can achieve the MDGs, promote sustainable development, or tackle the global problems we face. The UN as a convener of nations, a contributor of big ideas with global reach, and a mobiliser of collective international will and commitment to act for development is indispensable to overcoming development challenges, working in partnership with others.

Through MDG achievement, our world collectively has the opportunity to offer a better life to billions of people. We have the opportunity to see results in 2015 which make us all proud of what we have supported. The actions decided on in September are critical to realizing the promise of the MDGs for the world's poor and for a more secure and just world.