



# MDGs Bulletin

A Briefing Note on the president of the United Nations General Assembly's Special Event towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals

Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

ONLINE AT [HTTP://WWW.IISD.CA/MDGS/SE/](http://www.iisd.ca/MDGS/SE/)  
VOLUME 153, NUMBER 10, FRIDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2013



## BRIEFING NOTE ON THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S SPECIAL EVENT TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: 25 SEPTEMBER 2013

On Wednesday, 25 September 2013 at United Nations Headquarters in New York City the President of the UN General Assembly (UNGA or General Assembly) convened a one-day Special Event Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Special Event was divided into opening and closing plenary sessions and two pairs of parallel roundtable sessions where participants were asked to reflect on key questions regarding the achievement of the MDGs by 2015 and shaping the post-2015 development agenda. As starting points for the discussions, participants used the Secretary-General's 2013 report to the UNGA "A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015" (document A/68/202) and a Secretariat "background note," which posed key questions for consideration and discussion. During the opening plenary a negotiated outcome document was endorsed that will be forwarded as a President's text to the General Assembly for its adoption.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

At the Millennium Summit in September 2000, UN member states unanimously adopted the Millennium Declaration (A/RES/55/2).

At the 56th session of the UNGA in 2001, the Secretary-General (SG) presented his report entitled "Road map towards the implementation of the UN Millennium Declaration" (A/56/326). An annex of the report contains eight development goals with 18 targets and 48 indicators, commonly known as the MDGs. The first seven goals are on: eradicating poverty in all its forms; halving extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education and gender equity; reducing the mortality of children under five by two-thirds and maternal mortality by three-quarters; reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS; halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water; and ensuring environmental sustainability. The final goal outlines measures for building a global partnership for development.

**WORLD SUMMIT 2005:** In 2005 a high-level plenary session of the General Assembly conducted the first comprehensive review of progress in achieving the MDGs and

considered further efforts required to achieve the goals. In the Outcome Document (A/RES/60/1), world leaders underscored the need for the international community to strengthen development cooperation, as well as implement comprehensive national development strategies to achieve the internationally agreed development goals and objectives. In addition, agreement was reached to provide immediate support for quick impact initiatives to support anti-malaria efforts, education, and healthcare.

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON THE MDGs:** On 25 September 2008, the SG and the President of the General Assembly convened a High-Level Event on the MDGs, which evaluated progress towards achieving the goals at the halfway point towards the 2015 target. Among the initiatives launched at the event were a global campaign to reduce malaria deaths to near zero by 2015 and a task force on maternal mortality.

**MDGs SUMMIT:** The High-level Plenary Meeting of the 65th Session of the UNGA on the MDGs took place from 20-22 September 2010 under the theme "We can end poverty by 2015." The main outcome of the Summit was a document entitled "Keeping the promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals," which calls for increased efforts at all levels to attain the MDGs, and includes an action agenda for achieving the goals by 2015. Additionally, the Global Strategy on Women's and Children's Health was launched.

### BRIEFING NOTE ON THE SPECIAL EVENT OPENING SESSION

John Ashe, President, UN General Assembly (UNGA), welcomed participants, explaining that the Special Event was being held not only to acknowledge development progress, but also the gaps in MDG implementation and to commit to completing the work by 2015. He explained that the Special Event would: endorse an initial roadmap to guide UN work between now and a UN Summit in 2015 to define the post-2015 development agenda; and that its roundtables should provide critical ideas on how to define the goals and the framework that the 2015 Summit will adopt.

UN Secretary-General (SG) Ban Ki-Moon urged member States to do everything possible to achieve the MDGs by 2015. He said his report will provide the starting point for designing a post-2015 universal sustainable development agenda that is bold in ambition yet simple in design and rights-based. He added that it would have a particular emphasis on women, young people and marginalized groups, eradicating poverty, protecting the planet's resources, emphasizing sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and supporting action to address climate change.

The *MDGs Bulletin* is a publication of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) <[info@iisd.ca](mailto:info@iisd.ca)>, publishers of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <[enb@iisd.org](mailto:enb@iisd.org)>. This issue was written and edited by Ryo Nakamura and Keith Ripley. The Editor is Robynne Boyd <[robyne@iisd.org](mailto:robyne@iisd.org)>. The Director of IISD Reporting Services is Langston James "Kimo" Goree VI <[kimo@iisd.org](mailto:kimo@iisd.org)>. Funding for coverage of this meeting has been provided by the European Commission (EC). IISD can be contacted at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0Y4, Canada; tel: +1-204-958-7700; fax: +1-204-958-7710. The opinions expressed in the *Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD. Excerpts from the *Bulletin* may be used in other publications with appropriate academic citation. Electronic versions of the *Bulletin* are sent to e-mail distribution lists (in HTML and PDF format) and can be found on the Linkages WWW-server at <<http://www.iisd.ca/>>. For information on the *Bulletin*, including requests to provide reporting services, contact the Director of IISD Reporting Services at <[kimo@iisd.org](mailto:kimo@iisd.org)>, +1-646-536-7556 or 300 East 56th St., 11D, New York, New York 10022, USA.



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Néstor Osorio, President, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), stressed the need to give voice to youths to ensure sustainable progress and noted ECOSOC's work to strengthen global partnership for development.

Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister, Fiji, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, underscored the MDG implementation gaps. He stressed that the Millennium Declaration and outcome documents from the Rio+20 and other major international summits, including the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities," should guide the elaboration of the post-2015 agenda.

José Manuel Barroso, President, European Commission, urged all parties to "finish what we started." He noted that the EU has committed special funds to help countries that are off-track in achieving the Goals by 2015. He also emphasized the need to place "eradicating poverty within one generation" at the heart of the post-2015 development agenda.

Donald Ramotar, President, Guyana, stressed the need for an international framework to ensure that the gains made under the MDGs are irreversible, by addressing the challenges posed to development policies by the international financial crisis, climate change, external debt and an inequitable international trade system.

Paul Kagame, President, Rwanda, emphasized that "the achievement of the MDGs are not a ceiling, but a floor," and underscored that a greater emphasis should be placed on working with the private sector and investment in education and new technologies to tap the potential of youth.

Jacob Zuma, President, South Africa, called for intensified development efforts at the national level as well as greater support at the international level through collaborative efforts, including through building on the existing commitments.

Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister, Japan, proposed human security to be made a guiding principle of the post-2015 development agenda to address gender, poverty, education and health and hygiene issues. He underscored the importance of the promotion of universal health coverage and the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction.

Jens Stoltenberg, Prime Minister, Norway, said Norway's MDG-related priority in the final stretch to the 2015 deadline, specifically health of mothers and children. As for defining the post-2015 agenda, he highlighted Norway's interest in seeing the inclusion of sustainable energy for all and a strong emphasis on women's rights and gender equality.

Eamon Gilmore, Deputy Prime Minister, Ireland, stressed that equality, inclusion and fundamental human rights must be at the core of the post-2015 development agenda, with a commitment to eradicate poverty and hunger and empowering women and girls.

John Kerry, Secretary of State, US, emphasized "the historic opportunity to rid the world of extreme poverty in the next two decades." He stressed the need to further invest in health and education, strengthening the core institutions of democratic and accountable governance, and energy for all.

Vladimir Makei, Foreign Minister, Belarus, on behalf of the Commonwealth of Independent States: emphasized: the need for all parties to fulfill existing commitments regarding development financing; and the importance of forging partnerships with middle-income countries, since they are key to achieving the MDGs by 2015.

Wang Yi, Foreign Minister, China, stressed that the new development agenda must prioritize poverty reduction with a particular attention to the hunger and unemployment. He said the follow-up implementation mechanism must guarantee the provision of development financing.

Jim Yong Kim, President, World Bank Group, stressed that a unified set of goals must be agreed and that they should not be diluted with "too many targets and immeasurable goals."

Helen Clark, Chair, UN Development Group (UNDG), called for more progress in achieving the MDGs by 2015, through the MDG Acceleration Framework, to increase the credibility of the post-2015 development agenda.

William and Melinda Gates, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, identified that the key elements for the success of the MDGs include set deadlines and accountability measures, and a specific focus on measurements.

Barbara Martinez, Latin American and Caribbean Network of Young People Living with HIV, underscored that investment in HIV-reduction measures help boost poverty eradication, social inclusion and gender equality.

#### **ENDORSEMENT OF THE OUTCOME DOCUMENT:**

During the opening session, a negotiated outcome document was endorsed by acclamation for submission to the General Assembly as a President's text for adoption. The document provides a quick list of considerations and observations about the current state of MDG implementation, and then outlines priorities for accelerating progress, what is needed from the "Global Partnership for Development," and the roadmap toward establishing the post-2015 development agenda.

Regarding accelerating MDG implementation, the document:

- resolves to particularly target the most off-track MDGs;
- calls for urgent implementation of all commitments under the global partnership for development so as to overcome the gaps identified in the MDG Gap Task Force Reports;
- strongly emphasizes all approaches that have a cross-cutting and multiplier effect, particularly promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls; and
- calls for the mobilization and effective use of all resources, public and private, domestic and international, to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

As for the post-2015 development agenda, the document:

- resolves that the agenda should reinforce the commitment to poverty and hunger eradication and sustainable development;
- calls for a single framework and set of goals that are universal in nature and applicable to all countries, which promote peace and security, democratic governance, the rule of law, gender equality and human rights for all;
- calls for launching intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 agenda to start during the 69th UNGA Session;
- calls for the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the intergovernmental committee of experts on Sustainable Development Financing to conclude their work by September 2014;
- requests the SG to release by end-2014 a synthesis report of all post-2015 development agenda inputs; and
- calls for adopting the new agenda at a summit in September 2015.

## ROUNDTABLE SESSIONS

In the morning and afternoon two pairs of parallel high-level roundtable sessions were held, with each asked to address: MDG gaps and weaknesses; the acceleration of MDG implementation to achieve the Goals by 2015; and ideas for shaping the post-2015 development agenda.

In the morning Roundtable 1 was co-chaired by Jacob Zuma, President, South Africa, and Abdullah Gül, President, Turkey. The parallel Roundtable 2 was co-chaired by Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister, Bangladesh, and Eamon Gilmore, Deputy Prime Minister, Ireland. In the afternoon Roundtable 3 was co-chaired by Thomas Yayi Boni, President, Benin, and Friis Bach, Minister of Development Cooperation, Denmark. The parallel Roundtable 4 was co-chaired by Igor Lukšić, Deputy Prime Minister, Montenegro, and Lubna Khalid Al Qasimi, Minister for International Cooperation and Development, United Arab Emirates.

### MDG GAPS, WEAKNESSES AND CHALLENGES:

Many participants praised the MDGs as an effective catalyst for collective action, noted various successes but conceded that work remained to be done, and said the international community cannot become complacent.

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Maldives, Marshall Islands and the Philippines highlighted that the effects of climate change are undermining socioeconomic progress. Seychelles discussed the challenges faced by small island developing States (SIDS), and, for some states, the paradox that achieving the MDGs meant receiving less aid. Italy said the MDGs had been set assuming strong economic growth, good governance and rapid expansion, regardless of current world conditions.

Mozambique, Lesotho, Turkmenistan, Marshall Islands, Malaysia, Cuba and Qatar stressed that the implementation of MDGs should consider the unique conditions of each country, including the special challenges faced by the least developed countries (LDCs), SIDS, landlocked developing countries, (LLDCs) and middle income countries, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Bolivia said implementation of the MDGs has been vulnerable to the financial crisis, climate change and wars, and called for restructuring the world's financial system and resolving the climate change crisis. Papua New Guinea said lack of infrastructure, poor levels of education, lack of decent employment opportunities, and institutional weakness hampered its efforts to achieve the MDGs. The Philippines called for resources to improve data related to MDGs.

The UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) said a key lesson for the post-2015 agenda from the MDGs process was that economic growth cannot be taken for granted, and suggested industrial development may be the main driver for poverty reduction.

The Center for Autonomy and Development of Indigenous Peoples said that indigenous peoples are invisible in national statistics and data on MDGs. She called for the inclusion of culture as the fourth pillar of development.

**ACCELERATION OF MDG IMPLEMENTATION TO MEET THE 2015 DEADLINE:** The UN Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS urged ensuring ODA commitments are fulfilled and given highest priority to LDCs in the MDGs implementation.

Maldives called on all nations to fulfill their ODA commitments, and suggested debt conversion in favor of climate change adaptation projects.

The International Development Law Association called for prioritizing the most off-track MDGs and the countries left behind, but also excluded or marginalized communities. Belgium said efforts to achieve the MDGs by 2015 must be redoubled.

**THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA:** Thailand, Bhutan and Germany stressed that the process of setting the agenda should be as inclusive as possible. Bhutan and Thailand also called for regional inputs.

Spain said the post-2015 agenda needs to be "ample and ambitious." Italy said the new agenda should unite MDGs and SDGs in a coherent framework, be based on a rights approach, and define poverty as a manifestation of exclusion. OHCHR said the agenda should embrace a new development paradigm grounded in human rights. Mexico called for the agenda to be transformative and integrate social, economic and environmental aspects of development. Germany said the development agenda must be people-oriented and planet-centered. Ecuador urged a new approach to development based on the "buen vivir" (good living) concept.

India said the agenda must: be based on the Rio+20 outcome document and its principles, especially common but differentiated responsibilities; integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development; put a greater focus on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns among developed countries; and not shift burdens to large developing countries.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) stressed "implementation, implementation, implementation."

Croatia called for a shift from quantitative to qualitative indicators in measuring development progress. The International Organization for Migration suggested that the migration trends and impacts should be considered and reflected.

Cyprus called for an integrated, holistic and rights-based approach. Nicaragua urged greater emphasis on adequate means of implementation and on having the political will to change the current world economic order. Egypt, Sweden and Third World Network stressed the importance of improved market access in trade and technology. The Arab NGO Network for Development urged the agenda to include new financial architecture, reforms of the international trading system, and a binding framework under the UN requiring multinational corporations to respect human rights.

The SG's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development called for including inclusive finance to achieve the universal access to financial services for households and enterprises. The International Telecommunications Union urged that the agenda should harness the catalytic power of information, communication and telecommunications technologies.

Brazil, France, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, China Energy Fund, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the UN Economic Commission for Europe called for a fundamental shift towards SCP patterns.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature called for a more comprehensive approach to nature. Bolivia and France urged action on climate change. Iceland emphasized major improvement in conservation and improvement of soil resources. Lesotho and Saudi Arabia stressed the need to



address the effects of climate change and land degradation. Seychelles called for embracing the green economy and blue economy.

Regarding **possible foci for the post-2015 agenda**, many participants urged for gender equality and the empowerment of women, with some adding women's access to sexual and reproductive health. The Women's Center for Global Leadership called for the agenda to focus on enabling environments and structures that help realize women's rights.

Numerous participants also underscored that tackling poverty and hunger should be a core focus of the post-2015 development agenda. Global Call for Action against Poverty said the agenda needed to tackle the structural causes of poverty.

Egypt suggested youth. Canada, Costa Rica, Luxembourg, Portugal and CARITAS International called for a focus on the most vulnerable groups and countries. Bhutan called for also focusing on the poorest countries.

Lesotho, the Philippines, ECLAC and International Labor Organization suggested the creation of decent jobs. ECLAC proposed a focus on the elderly and youth. Eritrea said food security should remain a top priority.

Ukraine suggested that the post-2015 agenda focus on equal opportunities and social justice, efficient health care, quality education, and the development of infrastructure. The Russian Federation urged addressing education, health care and social infrastructure, good governance, inclusive growth, combatting non-communicable diseases, unemployment, and access to energy and transportation. The World Health Organization also called for action on non-communicable diseases to be included in the agenda.

Cyprus, Sweden, Hungary and the International Institute for Democracy urged an emphasis on democracy, good governance, transparency, accountability and the rule of law. Luxembourg and the UK also underscored the importance of good governance.

On **possible goals in the post-2015 development agenda**, Lithuania called for progressive goals based on equality, equity, rule of law, good governance, accountability, peace and security. Canada said any new goals should be realistic, focused and achievable, with strong measurement and accountability tools.

The Netherlands, Hungary, OECD and Global Water Partnership proposed a standalone goal regarding water. France suggested elimination of extreme poverty by 2030. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies proposed disaster risk reduction.

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization said the agenda's education goal should focus on equity and equality throughout life, especially for girls and women.

The World Food Programme called for the agenda to commit to achieving zero hunger.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union urged that democracy be a standalone goal.

The International Development Law Association called reducing inequality as both a standalone goal and a cross-cutting theme.

Algeria stressed that focus on any post-2015 goals set should not be a precondition for cooperation and aid.

#### **CLOSING SESSION**

**SUMMARY OF ROUNDTABLE SESSIONS:** South Africa summarized Roundtable 1 key messages as: the focus for MDG implementation until 2015 should be placed on

countries with off-track targets, the most marginalized groups and the LDCs; water and sanitation remain a priority and job opportunities are a decisive factor for poverty eradication. On crafting the post-2015 development agenda, key messages include: it requires an open, transparent and inclusive approach; it must be based on the Millennium Declaration and the UN charter; SDGs should start from where MDGs leave off; and it needs to be a universal agenda with limited number of targets .

Co-Chair Gilmore summarized the Roundtable 2 key messages as: a particular concern regarding inequalities involving women and girls; gender equality should be a standalone goal in the post-2015 agenda; the need for a renewed focus on fragile and conflict-affected countries, as well as LDCs; the importance of democracy, human rights and the rule of law; a stress on access to education; and "an extraordinary global will" to adopt a new and ambitious post-2015 development agenda that eradicates extreme poverty and hunger.

Co-chair Boni summarized the Roundtable 3 key messages as: progress made in MDG implementation should encourage bold steps post-2015; MDGs' shortcomings include not addressing energy, communications and transportation infrastructure, and lack of a conceptual framework for social and economic integration; implementation challenges include governance problems, inadequate financing, and climate change; stepped up action is needed on access of women and children to basic services, change of consumption and production methods, and improved access to water and health for all; all countries should elaborate their own roadmaps to accelerating MDG achievement by 2015; and the international community should commit to eradicating extreme poverty from the planet by 2030.

Co-chair Al Qasimi summarized that Roundtable 4 key messages as calling for: poverty eradication, the rule of law, human rights, and governance as pre-conditions for sustainable development; the need to step up efforts to combat the effects of climate change and environmental degradation; focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, including youths and women, in crafting the new development agenda; upholding all the Rio Principles, including common but differentiated responsibilities, in the post-2015 agenda.

**CLOSING REMARKS:** During closing remarks, Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General of the UN, emphasized the importance of accelerating MDG implementation so as to have greater credibility when setting the post-2015 agenda. He explained that the UNDG will engage all actors in a second round of global conversations regarding the post-2015 agenda. He urged member States to work together to define an agenda that eliminates poverty and promotes justice, human rights, peace and sustainable development.

Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director, UN Population Fund, said the MDGs show that focused international efforts can make a difference, and urged a renewed focus on improving maternal health, providing women and girls access to sexual and reproductive health, and helping women and girls exercise their rights.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director, UN Women, called for further efforts towards better quality of public education, better use of technologies, and equal pay for men and women. She proposed a standalone goal for gender equality and mainstreaming gender equality in all goals.

The Special Event closed at 7:03 pm.