

UNITED NATIONS



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**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS TO HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT  
OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

**New York, 28 June 2010**

Ambassador Hamidon Ali,  
Distinguished Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to open this High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council.

As we meet, the world is still grappling with the aftershocks of multiple crises.

The financial, food and climate crises have set back efforts towards the Millennium Development Goals and threaten future progress.

We live under the shadow of continued global financial and economic uncertainty.

The recovery from the most severe recession in recent history has been tentative and uneven. It cannot compensate for the losses suffered.

Tens of millions more people have been pushed into extreme poverty.

Yet, despite these setbacks, there is reason for optimism.

The 2010 Millennium Development Goals Report shows that we have made significant progress in some countries on reducing extreme poverty over the past decade.

The overall poverty rate is expected to fall to 15 per cent by 2015 – that is half of 1990 levels.

More children than ever before now have access to education.

Global school enrolment stands at 85 per cent. Many countries have crossed the 90 per cent threshold.

We have seen significant declines in child mortality and the incidence of measles, malaria and neglected tropical diseases.

We have also seen dramatic increases in access to antiretroviral treatment for HIV/AIDS.

Tens of millions of lives have been saved through collective action by governments, civil society and international organizations.

These successes -- many of which have taken place in the world's poorest countries -- show that the MDGs are achievable.

They show that where we try, we succeed. If we don't try, we fail.

The recipe is clear: the right policies, adequate investment and reliable international support.

However, let me inject a note of caution.

Overall progress has been uneven.

We are likely to miss several Goals, especially in the least developed countries, land-locked developing countries, small island developing states and countries in or emerging from conflict.

Climate change remains a threat to sustainability. Hunger and food insecurity stalk millions.

Stubborn disparities persist – between rich and poor ? between rura



In too many countries, policies, legal frameworks and social justice systems are just not adequate.

Of all the MDGs, the one where we have achieved least success is on maternal health.

Each year between 10 and 15 million women suffer long-term disability due to complications during pregnancy or childbirth.

Every year, more than a million children are left motherless. In the 21st century, it is unacceptable that mothers should still be dying as they deliver new life.

I urge this Council to generate support for our Joint Action Plan on women's and children's health.

Indeed, you have a crucial role in making women central to all future negotiations on development.

The outcome of the recent 15-year review of the Beijing Declaration should feed directly into your negotiations, and into the outcome of the MDG Summit in September.

Together, we must urge governments to change attitudes and policies towards women and girls.

We must end inequality and discrimination, and make women and girls aware of their inalienable rights.

This is a landmark year for gender issues. We are commemorating the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and the Tenth Anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325, to name just a few highlights.

And this year, we are on track for another major step forward.

We must strengthen political commitment to change laws and policies that discriminate against them.

Women's contributions in homes and in workplaces are essential to improving food security ? to building community resilience to climate change and natural disasters ? and to finding lasting solutions to poverty.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I count on you to maintain focus on gender equality and women's empowerment in your negotiations at the Annual Ministerial Review and at the Development Cooperation Forum.

And I urge you to consider how to expand your national efforts towards the Millennium Development Goals.

Each is achievable. We have the tools. Let us match them with political will and cooperation.

I wish you a most productive session.

Thank you very much.