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Sub-Saharan Africa Continues Steady Progress on Millennium Development Goals

Building on impressive strides on health and education, accelerated action needed towards anti-poverty targets

Nairobi, 1 July – Building on impressive strides made, sub-Saharan Africa must continue to ramp up efforts towards achieving many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by their 2015 target date, a new UN report says.

The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013 launched today by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in Geneva, finds that sub-Saharan Africa has made steady progress for its 1 billion people, with fewer mothers and children dying, growing numbers of women in power and broadened access to health and education services, alongside sharp drops in malaria and tuberculosis deaths.

The eight Millennium Development Goals, with a number of sub-targets covering a range of poverty, hunger, health, gender equality, education and environmental indicators, were agreed by all countries as an outgrowth of the UN Millennium Summit in 2000, most with a due date of 2015.

The *MDG Report 2013* emphasizes that progress for all children in sub-Saharan Africa is “within our grasp.” The region doubled its average rate of reduction of child deaths from 1.5 per cent a year in 1990-2000 to 3.1 per cent a year in 2000-2011, although it still has the highest child mortality rate in the world. From 1990 to 2011 for children under age five, the mortality rate dropped by 39 per cent (from 178 deaths per 1,000 live births to 109) and the proportion of those who are underweight

The proportion of the region's population using an improved water source increased from 49 per cent to 63 per cent between 1990 and 2011, according to the report. New sanitation policies adopted in recent years throughout the developing world have shown remarkable success in ending open defecation, a practice that poses serious health and environmental risks to individuals and entire communities. In almost 100 countries, many in sub-Saharan Africa, new approaches to sanitation have taken root and the number of declared 'open-defecation-free villages' is rising. The proportion of the world's population resorting to open defecation declined from 24 per cent in 1990 to 15 per cent in 2011.

Building MDG momentum

Work to boost MDG achievement must continue to tackle some of the greatest challenges for the region, the report says. That includes bolstering development efforts to further reduce the poverty rate, which fell only 8 percentage points over the last two decades, and addressing the needs of 414 million people still living on less than \$1.25 a day.

Accelerated efforts are also needed to continue gains in combating HIV and to build on the momentum in fighting malaria through the use of insecticide-treated nets. The region had the world's highest child mortality rate and the second highest prevalence of underweight children among all regions in 2011. That year, one in nine children died before age five, more than 16 times the average for developed regions, accounting for 3.4 million of the 6.9 million under-five deaths worldwide. The pace of change must accelerate even further if the MDG target is to be met, the report says, and efforts must concentrate on countries with the highest number of under-five deaths, such as Nigeria, and countries with the highest under-five death rates, such as Sierra Leone and Somalia, with rates of 180 or more per 1,000 live births.

With the region continuing to face rising demands for education from a growing population, the report says 32 million more
