

ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN AFRICA



Recommendations of the MDG Africa Steering Group

EMBARGOED until Tuesday, 1 July, 1:00 p.m. Cairo Time

PRESS RELEASE

With aid lagging, African leaders and key international organizations launch a landmark consensus report on how to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in Africa

Plan agreed to translate existing commitments into on-the-ground results that tackle poverty, hunger, disease

(SHARM EL-SHEIKH, EGYPT, 1 JULY) At a critical time for Africa, and with just one week until the Group of Eight leaders meet in Hokkaido, Japan, to discuss how to speed up poverty reduction on the continent, key African leaders joined forces with the multilateral development system to say—in one voice—that the G8 needs to make good on its existing promises to support African development and that African and international leaders have produced a practical plan to use this support to reduce poverty on the continent.

On the final day of the African Union Summit, UN Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro, African Union Chairperson and President of the United Republic of Tanzania H.E. Jakaya Kikwete and African Union Commission Chairperson H.E. Jean Ping launched a landmark report that has been jointly produced and endorsed by their respective organizations, together with the heads of the African Development Bank Group, European Commission, International Monetary Fund, Islamic Development Bank Group, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and World Bank Group.

The report, a product of the MDG Africa Steering Group, an initiative of United Nations Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon, comprises a set of key recommendations that detail how Africa can fight extreme poverty, hunger and disease to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Although great strides have been made in some countries, especially in increasing school enrolment, improving access to clean water and expanding HIV/AIDS treatment, progress in many African countries is not on track to meet the Goals.

“Until now, we have not had a clear understanding amongst the major multilateral institutions on the specific policies, projects and programmes that need to be implemented to get Africa on track to achieving the Millennium Development Goals,” said Mr. Ban. “The MDG Africa Steering Group recommendations provide a roadmap for unprecedented and much-needed progress in the region.”

Importantly, these recommendations are largely contingent on the G8’s fulfilment of its 2005 Gleneagles Summit pledge to increase official development assistance (ODA) to Africa by US\$25 billion annually (in 2004 dollars) by 2010. The OECD/DAC’s latest figures show that net annual ODA to Africa has so far increased by only about a quarter of the US\$25 billion promised. Measured in 2007 US dollars, the Gleneagles commitment implies total net bilateral ODA flows to Africa of about US\$62 billion per year.



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“The Steering Group’s recommendations are a call to action,” said Mr. Kikwete. “They outline focused investments in agriculture, education, health and infrastructure that are critical to present and future efforts to reach the MDGs. We now need to implement the recommendations to ensure that we halt the spread of hunger, disease and suffering.”

“African leaders are looking to the G8 to turn their existing promises into action—the credibility of international commitments is at stake,” said Mr. Ping. “There are many development success stories across Africa that can be replicated in more countries with additional financing. The MDG Africa Steering Group’s recommendations provide a framework—with the seal of approval of the multilateral institutions—to spread these successes across the continent.”

The Steering Group has issued the most comprehensive assessment of the external financing needed to reach the MDGs in Africa to date. Existing EU and G8 commitments, combined with present aid flows from other sources, are sufficient to finance the estimated US\$72 billion a year in external money required to implement the Steering Group’s recommendations.

Rising food prices, record energy costs and climate change all threaten to reverse existing advances toward the MDGs. The World Bank estimates that high food prices and climate change could together drive over 100 million people into extreme poverty. This would undo most of the gains the world’s poor have made over the last decade.

The MDG Africa Steering Group recommendations call for targeted investments in agriculture to launch a green revolution in Africa; stepped-up support to education and healthcare systems; major projects to fill critical gaps in the continent’s infrastructure and trade networks; and improvements in national statistical systems so that progress on the MDGs can be tracked more effectively. The recommendations also call for increased ODA quality and predictability as disbursements increase to finance these investments.

With the momentum generated by strong economic growth rates in many African countries, increased commitment to domestic resource mobilization, improving governance and better policy performance, the Steering Group contends that the MDGs can still be achieved in Africa by 2015. These solid efforts by African governments need to be matched by follow-through on existing G8 aid commitments to help Africa make major gains in the fight against poverty.

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