

UN urges donors to boost aid to poor countries despite economic crisis



UNDP Administrator Helen Clark

9 September 2009 – Facing possible shortfalls in funding due to the global economic crisis, the United Nations Development Programme (**UNDP**) today called on donors to “continue, and ideally boost, their current commitments” to help the agency pull the world’s developing countries out of poverty.

“I am concerned that we may not meet our income targets for 2009 and 2010, and that we will face a continuing imbalance between contributions to regular and other resources,” UNDP Administrator Helen Clark said, calling on the Group of Eight (G8) leading industrialized countries to fulfil their oft-stated pledge to commit 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance (ODA).

She stressed that the Millennium Development Goals (**MDGs**), the UN-endorsed targets which seek to mitigate a host of social ills ranging from poverty and hunger to maternal and infant mortality to lack of access to health and education, all by 2015, remain at the core of UNDP’s Strategic Plan.

“With 2015 now barely six years away, we need an enormous focus on the MDGs,” she told a session of the Executive Board of UNDP and the UN Population Fund (**UNFPA**). “Nowhere is that more important than in Africa, especially in these challenging times when African nations and their peoples have been hit hard by the economic crisis.

“As is well known, no country in sub-Saharan Africa was on track to achieve all the MDGs before the crisis. It would be a double blow if the global recession acted to reverse hard won progress towards the MDGs.”

Many developing countries, facing reduced domestic revenue this year, need support to maintain budgets for basic services like health and education, vital ingredients in meeting the MDGs, Ms. Clark said.

"If children are pulled out of school because of the effects of the crisis on their families and their countries' budgets, they may never get a second chance in education. If children have poor nutrition because of the crisis, the long-term effects on their cognitive skills and productive potential are serious," she added.

"Profound economic crisis in vulnerable countries then may extend into a humanitarian crisis, and at worst precipitate instability and conflict. The consequences may take years or even decades to remedy, ultimately at a much greater cost to the international community than timely support right now."

Without secure and predictable funding, UNDP cannot plan ahead and be fully effective in helping countries reach their development goals, Ms. Clark said.

"We will, however, spare no effort to meet our resource projections. We do deeply appreciate the ongoing support of our donors, and urge them to continue, and ideally boost, their current commitments. We can also consider how our donor pool could be expanded," she added.

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