

UN chief spotlights role of job creation in fighting poverty



17 October 2010 – Marking the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today underlined the crucial role of decent and productive work in building peaceful and stable societies.

More than half of the world's working population – totaling some 1.5 billion – is in vulnerable employment, lacking formal work arrangements and social security. They “often earn too little to provide for their families, let alone climb the ladder of economic opportunity,” Mr. Ban **said** in his message on the Day.

More than 60 million people around the world have pushed into poverty by the global economic crisis, with unemployment up by nearly one third since 2007.

Bridging the gap from poverty to decent work, the Secretary-General said, will require investing in policies fostering job creation promoting decent labour conditions deepening social protection systems and easing access to education, public health and job training.

He also called for a special emphasis on youth employment. Young people are three times more likely to not be employed than adults, with more than 80 million youth having been unemployed last year, the highest number ever.

“One of the best ways for youth to see a future of hope is through the prism of a decent job,” Mr. Ban stressed.

World leaders agreed on an agenda to step up the global fight against poverty at last month's summit in New York to review progress made so far in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the eight anti-poverty targets with a 2015 deadline.

“Despite encouraging advances in many corners of the globe, hundreds of millions of people still live in appalling conditions, lacking even the most basic services,” the Secretary-General said.

“Addressing the global jobs crisis is central to changing this picture – to defeating poverty, strengthening economies and building peaceful and stable societies,” he added.

Some 1.4 billion people live on less than \$1.25 a day, while nearly 1 billion are hungry.

"Behind these statistics are real lives, mothers and fathers without the means to support their families, young people with little hope or prospect for a better future," Juan Somavia, Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), said.

"Real and lasting change for the better must start with the conviction that not only can we achieve the MDGs, but also that we must go beyond," he declared.

Mr. Somavia pointed out that the economic and social models driving poverty can be transformed into economic growth coupled with social justice.

"But it will not be done through business as usual or through isolated initiatives," he said, accentuating the need for decent work.

"Promoting growth and empowering people, protecting economies and protecting people must go hand in hand," the ILO chief said.

"On this day, let us commit to upholding the dignity of every human being through the dignity that decent work provides. It is central to people's lives – and must be central to development strategies."

For her part, Magdalena Sepúlveda, an independent United Nations human rights expert, noted that even if the MDGs are met, many people will be left behind.

"Human rights, including non-discrimination and equality, can be powerful tools in tackling poverty," she said.

A rights approach would direct efforts to the most vulnerable and marginalized, said the UN Independent Expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty.

"We will not end poverty through aspirational rhetoric," she said, calling for words to be translated into action with rights at their core.

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