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Empowering women key to development and poverty alleviation – Migiro



Deputy Secretary-General Asha Rose Migiro

25 March 2010 – Enabling women to improve their lives will hasten economic development, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro said today, calling for the enforcement of women’s rights and an end to all forms of gender-based violence.

“Increasing gender equality and women’s empowerment, as a means of accelerating growth and development, is an end in itself,” Ms. Migiro **told** a meeting on the Millennium Development Goal (**MDG**) related to women’s empowerment and employment.

“It allows individual women and girls to enjoy their full human rights, and it leads to more stable economies and stronger societies,” she told the meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark, convened to consider recommendations for the MDG high-level plenary session to be held in New York in September.

She said the UN was working to empower women and gave the example of Burkina Faso in West Africa where women accustomed to the back-breaking work of grinding grain manually were now benefiting from a project where the UN had introduced simple engines that mill grain, crushes nut and can generate electricity to run welding machines and charge mobile telephones and power water pumps.

“The women who run it – the women who own it – get business training, earn an income and gain a new standing in the community,” the Deputy Secretary-General

said of the project which has been implemented in 200 villages in Burkina Faso during the past five years.

Ms. Migiro pointed out that although some improvement had been made in the attainment of some of the MDGs, progress has been uneven.

Between 1999 and 2004, sub-Saharan Africa achieved one of the largest ever reduction in deaths from measles. It has also shown the fastest growth in primary school enrolments – from 58 per cent to 74 per cent.

However, progress in improving maternal health has been slow, and encouraging trends in the eradication of hunger in the early 1990s were reversed largely by the global food price rises of 2008, Ms. Migiro said.

She called for increased resource commitments and other measures such as debt relief, trade, taxation and investment in climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes to fuel progress towards the attainment of MDGs.

“Aid to developing countries in 2010 is expected to reach record levels, after increasing by 35 per cent since 2004. But it will still be less than the world’s major aid donors promised five years ago at the Gleneagles and Millennium + 5 summits,” the deputy Secretary-General said.

“Just as important as this financial support is coherent and predictable policy environment, both national and international levels,” she added.

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