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I am very pleased to have this opportunity today to stand before you and present not only a book to President Fernandez, but I am going to give him a package of two books, because it is a wonderful opportunity to speak about the year 2015, which is the deadline for achieving the MDG's, and it's also an opportunity for me to speak ten years later about that, which is a book I just published a few weeks ago called "The End of Poverty", because basically these two books suggest something that is very important for the Dominican Republic and I believe for all of us, I hope for all of us.

The MDG's are objectives that ask the world to make a common effort to reduce poverty in half by the year 2015, and if we think deeply about that, and I have felt very fortunate to have such wonderful colleagues as John Gagain and many colleagues from the United Nations, like Niky Fabianic, and many of the experts who have contributed to this.

When we hear about the MDG's and the objective of reducing poverty in half by the year 2015, we realize that we have an even more astounding opportunity facing us, and that is the subject of my book "The End of Poverty", which says that 2015 is an achievable date, we can reduce extreme poverty in half in a decade, we can do more. The MDG's can reduce infant mortality and the mortality of mothers at childbirth, reduce hunger, ensure access to drinking water, to sanitation, we can do these things by the year 2015 and as these things are done we can prepare the way to completely end the type of suffering that comes with the extreme needs that so many people face around the world and we can do this, our generation by the year 2015, and if you will allow me, Mr. President. I would like to present to you the two-step plan and share some things concerning how this can be achieved in this country and around the world.

I think there is something very important that I should perhaps correct. The MDG's are not the objectives of the United Nations, although they were objectives that were suggested by Secretary General Kofi Annan at the beginning of the new millennium.

The MDG's are our objectives; they are the objectives that have been adopted by the 191 members of the United Nations, at the millennium meeting in September 2000. Five years ago at the largest assembly of world leaders in history, one hundred forty-seven heads of state and government and representatives of more countries of the United Nations met on the occasion of the beginning of the new millennium and realized something very important, and that was that the beginning of the new millennium was the time of great potential for the development of human beings, because the millennium was beginning with more scientific knowledge, more technological knowledge, more economic wealth than had ever been imagined in the past history of human beings. We also entered the new millennium with anxiety and uncertainty, and in spite of all the wealth, with tremendous suffering throughout the world, and what the world leaders realized is that this is suffering that can be alleviated, that can be solved and that should be solved for our safety on this planet, so they decided in September of the year 2000, acting together, as a

global community to find practical ways to reduce extreme poverty, the type of poverty that leaves children at the threshold of death, that leaves mothers dying because they cannot obtain emergency medical care, that leaves one billion people in the world fighting against chronic hunger, that these problems had and begged for a solution with all of the science, technology and wealth that we have before us, so they adopted the eight MDG's, the Dominican Republic, the United States, all of the United Nations countries.

Approximately one and a half years later, in March of 2002, the world leaders met once again, this time in Monterrey, Mexico, and they in fact started a plan, a design in general terms of how this global association could be carried out to achieve the MDG's, and this is called the Monterrey Consensus, and is in fact a wonderful document, it is a document that is signed by rich countries, poor countries, where there is a common agreement; that the countries are going to be well-governed, that the rich countries are going to help the poor ones through financing, that the countries are going to live with civilized rules of international trade, that the rich countries are going to help the poor ones to obtain technology that they need to achieve these objectives of reducing extreme poverty.

For a while it seemed that we were on the right path, on the path of true progress, and I would say in the past two years, however, we feel quite disappointed, the world that we knew went off course, from thinking about these issues, September 11th happened, two wars in Afghanistan, then Iraq, and very sour debates in the international community about the course of global events, and we have lost time and time for us could be a matter of convenience or not, but losing time for the poor of the world means death, because the extreme poverty that millions of people suffer on the planet is so acute that eight million people die simply because they are too poor to survive, they die of hunger, they die of treatable diseases, preventable diseases, lack of access, the mothers in childbirth because they are too poor to have access to the basic needs to survive, we have lost time.

But something else is achievable: I was asked, I was given the honor of being a consultant on these issues, of organizing a worldwide effort to try and think in a coherent, concrete and specific way about what could be done to reach 2015 without regretting the fact that once again we did not reach the objectives, that we could reach 2015 having achieved these objectives and creating the Millennium Project with 267 scientists who are experts in development, business leaders, civil society organizations, leaders from all over the world, we organized into ten working groups, then the poor Secretary General had to receive fourteen volumes from us on January 17 of this year, 2700 pages, but these fourteen volumes had an objective, including the volume on the perspective that I just gave to President Fernandez, which said, whether it was the one on HIV/AIDS or the volume on malaria or the one on tuberculosis or concerning hunger, or water and sanitation, what these studies have demonstrated is that yes, in fact we have practical ways of helping the most poor, we can reach them in time, by 2015. Not one thing is asked for that has not been promised to the rich countries or to the poor, all we have to say to the countries is "do what you said you would do! You don't have to do anything else, don't make any new promises, simply do what you said you would do", and if it's done by 2015, you will be saving 8 million people each year, who if they did not die early in pain, tragically, would allow economies that are stagnated in poverty to escape from this trap that is poverty, will allow all parts of the world to enter the path of economic development, and as I argued already in the book, the end of poverty, do it, do it ten years after 2015 and let's take this all the way, end extreme poverty, not make any new promises, but just follow what we said we would do. So we have tried to start this with the guidance of the Secretary General.

We are looking all over the world for countries where there is dynamic leadership and a commitment to the fight against extreme poverty to find ten countries that will be the pioneers in this process; we call them “pilot countries”, and of course, the reason why I am here today is because we feel extremely proud and pleased that with President Fernandez, the government of the Dominican Republic, and the people of the Dominican Republic, the Dominican Republic is one of the ten pilot countries.

And President Fernandez did something extremely important at the beginning of his administration, and that was to establish a Presidential Commission on the Millennium Development Objectives to ensure that these basic objectives for the people of this country, will receive the due focus and priority, analytical attention and political weight, so that this country can achieve the MDG’s by 2015.

Today we have met with the Commission and we have begun a two day review of the work of the Commission under the leadership of John Gagain, and with the participation of the United Nations Agencies, with the cooperation of the development partners in the country, the support of the World Bank and of the International Monetary Fund, and the support of many, many experts from this country in the areas of health, agriculture, infrastructure, ecology, environmental protection, among other critical aspects of the fight against extreme poverty. We have had half a day of meetings so far and tomorrow we will have more specific meetings about this.

Allow me to quickly share with you what I think that we are finding, although the work of the Commission is underway: First, there has been tremendous progress, and second, I believe that we should say, John, that your entire team and all of those listening are very excited about the progress and the process... why? Because instead of the government doing things every day the way they did yesterday, perhaps to a greater or lesser extent, the idea here is to reach for the stars, ask how we can get from here to there, it is not simply to establish beautiful objectives, but rather to be practical regarding them, what is needed so that infant mortality is reduced by two thirds, what is required to reach the cane growers to help them escape from extreme poverty, what is needed to save mothers who are dying in childbirth in this country in numbers that are too great, because a country with these revenues and these capacities can save a mother in childbirth. This is still very significant, and it is controllable and solvable, so this is an exciting process because it is not the government as it has always been, but the government heading toward where the country wants to be.

And what is also exciting about this is that it is not only a matter of party politics. No government, no country is the owner of these objectives, they are the objectives of the Dominican Republic and of the people all over the world. They are everyone’s objectives, and no party is going to say “we are not in agreement with reducing infant mortality by two thirds, these are not our goals”. No one is going to say “we didn’t sign on with this fight against malaria or for treating people with AIDS”. These are the objectives for the entire country, so the process has been extremely exciting.

But the third point I want to mention is that it has also been extremely interesting and a challenge, because it is easy to state objectives, we do it all the time, but it is much more difficult to fulfill the objectives. We know this, and usually it seems that when we achieve the objectives it is almost as if we stumble at the end. What is not so easy is to plan a ten-year process to say “we’re here today and this is where we should be in ten years”. How are we going to get there in a systematic way so that the whole country comes together in a serious process that will bring together people and that demands respect from both parties, from Congress, from civil society, from the provinces, from the national government? And that is the challenge, the challenge with

which this Commission is struggling and the challenge against which the country is going to struggle very soon, when the Commission issues a report, which I am sure will be very exciting.

There are many specific objectives, fighting against specific diseases, helping to ensure that there is drinking water available, providing emergency obstetric care even for young adolescents who are dying in labor at childbirth, making hospitals function adequately, because they are not functioning as they should, with the best standards that can be achieved. The Commission is working in each area, on every detail, understanding what it is we are seeing. It is a matter of financial resources, there is a need for new investments, for building new clinics, schools, roads, or the matter of political processes, of how the government is or is not responsible for these tasks, or the matter of how the local government is acting or party politics? These are some of the challenges that are being analyzed right now, and I can tell you briefly, having listened for several hours to the discussion, that what they are finding is fascinating.

To the previous questions, the answer is yes, a little of everything that we have talked about before, it is partly political, partly management, science and technology, party resources that must be invested in these critical areas. But there is an overwhelming truth that we are fighting, Mr. President, distinguished representatives: We are finding that these objectives are achievable and the Dominican Republic has all of the motives possible to expect that the entire country can cross this finish line by 2015, and that the country will be free of extreme poverty, and that it has a healthcare system, that the country will feel proud, that it has created jobs and that it is protecting the physical environment of the country, and I believe that this is the most pleasing and the most important news of all.

All those who know me know that I am tremendously optimistic regarding the Dominican Republic, because I can't help it, so when I have come in the middle of a crisis I say to you "don't worry, this will soon pass". When I was here, when the President was entering office and there was a tremendous economic crisis, and the currency was very low and interests were incredibly high, you hadn't seen anything like this, I said "it's ok, I know the Dominican Republic, you will get through this". And I have been so happy that when I returned, once again I had been right: the country is in fact coming out of the crisis.

But this does not mean that you don't have more to do, because coming out of a crisis means that you are reaching a point where you can think, not about tomorrow, or next week, about the next points, but about 2015 or 2025; not unrealistic fantasies, but realistic possibilities for this country.

Allow me to say, on behalf of the Secretary General, on behalf of the Millennium Project that I head, that it is a tremendous honor for us to be working with you in the Dominican Republic, it is a great privilege and also it is extremely exciting because you are going to prove that we have been right all along.

Thank you!!