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Secretary-General

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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC'S WORK TO REACH ANTI-POVERTY GOALS INSPIRATION TO INTERNATIONAL

COMMUNITY, SAYS SECRETARY-GENERAL IN SANTO DOMINGO ADDRESS

Following is UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's address at the Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo (FUNGLODE) in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 4 August:

My wife and I are delighted to be in your wonderful country, and to experience the beautiful scenery that people come from over the world to see. We arrived only yesterday, but we like all of it so far!

In fact, we already feel at home here. New Yorkers feel a special bond with the Dominican Republic. Over half of all Dominican immigrants in the United States live in the New York state. Parts of New York City feel more Dominican than Santo Domingo. Which is fine with me. Give me a good *longaniza* over hot dogs anytime!

Of course, we are deeply excited to be in the land of Pedro Martinez, David Ortiz and Manny Ramirez. Not just because of the magic they perform on the baseball diamond; equally, for how they joined forces with United Nations to provide relief and recovery assistance following the terrible floods that hit your country two years ago. Thanks to the generosity of Pedro, David and Manny, and the way they motivated the Boston Red Sox and their fans to contribute, the people of the devastated town of Jimani have been able move into new homes, with hopes for a better life.

It is equally exciting to witness at first hand your country's efforts to ensure that all its resources -- and the progress and investment that come with them -- benefit all of the Dominican Republic's daughters and sons.

In particular, I am impressed with your country's work to reach the Millennium Development Goals -- our shared blueprint agreed by all the world's Governments for building a better world in the twenty-first century.

The Dominican Republic has really mobilized itself behind these eight commitments, ranging from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education -- all by the target date of 2015.

Just today, I met with the Presidential Commission on the Millennium Development Goals, the body created by President Fernández two years ago.

Your President has demonstrated just the kind of vision we need, by setting up the Commission to monitor progress, and to give guidance to Government ministries and local authorities on the steps needed to reach the Goals.

At the same time, he has asked the Commission to do something equally important: to maintain a dialogue and flow of information to and from all sectors -- public and private -- on the work that is being done. Only by sustaining awareness and engagement among all arms of Government, civil society and the private sector can we make real and enduring headway in moving towards the Goals.

That effort to build and keep up consciousness is working. We can see this in the vigorous support for the Goals that the Dominican people have expressed, speaking through numerous voluntary groups that have joined in partnership with the Presidential Commission and the United Nations Millennium Campaign.

How, then, are the Millennium Development Goals different from other bold pledges that became broken promises over the past 50 years? I would say they are different in five ways.

First, rich countries have accepted, for the first time, their share of responsibility to support the efforts of poor countries, through more and better aid, debt cancellation and fairer trade.

And developing countries have accepted their share, through improved governance and better use of resources.

Second, the Goals are people-centred, time-bound and measurable.

A classic complaint about development aid is that resources tend to be wasted by corruption and mismanagement, and that we have no way to track progress and ensure accountability. Now, we have a set of clear, measurable indicators, focused on basic human needs. We have clear benchmarks of progress -- or the lack of it -- both globally and on a country-by-country basis. As President Fernández has said, the Goals enable us to better understand what we must do, while they challenge us to identify next steps, to assess what resources are needed, and to find them.

Third, the Goals have unprecedented political support.

The eight Goals were drawn from the Millennium Declaration, which was endorsed by all Member States of the United Nations six years ago. Never before have such concrete goals been formally endorsed by rich and poor countries alike. Never before have the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and all the other main arms of the international system come together behind the same set of development objectives -- and stood ready to be held accountable for achieving them.

Fourth, the Goals have unprecedented popular support.

They represent a set of simple, but powerful, objectives that every man and woman in the street, from Santo Domingo to Sydney, can easily understand and support.

Fifth -- and most important -- the Millennium Development Goals are achievable.

They are certainly challenging, but they are also technically feasible. They are not just wishful thinking.

Take the first goal -- that of reducing extreme poverty by half. Over the past 15 years, there has been a massive, unprecedented reduction in poverty, led by Asia.

Latin America and the Caribbean are predicted to see growth of around 5 per cent this year -- the second time in 25 years that the region will see four consecutive years of growth, with the regional gross domestic product (GDP) posting a cumulative rise of almost 18 per cent. The Dominican Republic is one of the three countries with the highest growth rates in the entire region.

Globally, among the different Goals themselves, we have a mixed scorecard. There have been major advances in reducing hunger, improving access to drinking water and sending more children to primary school.

But mothers continue to die needlessly in childbirth throughout the developing world. HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria continue to spread and to kill. Gender equality remains no more than a dream for women in many countries. Damage to the environment is a growing threat to people's food and water supplies, to their livelihoods and homes.

There is no autopilot, no magic of the marketplace, no rising tide in the global economy that will lift all boats. If current trends persist, some of the poorest countries will not be able to meet many -- or perhaps any -- of the Goals by 2015. Considering how far we have come, such a failure would be a tragic missed opportunity.

That is why the concept of a global partnership between rich and poor countries -- the eighth Goal -- needs to become a reality. Let me recall the terms of that historic compact.

Developed countries must give full support. That means providing more and better-quality development assistance. It means offering wider and deeper debt relief. And it means making the trading system one that truly supports development.

Recent lamentable setbacks in the Doha negotiations have led some participants to contemplate settling for something less than a true development round -- or for no round at all. That must not happen. We must sustain the determination and political courage needed to conclude the talks by the end of this year.

Let us remember that two thirds of the world's poor live in rural areas and depend on agriculture. That means we have to end agricultural subsidies in rich countries, to give farmers in the developing world a fairer deal. And we have to end trade and non-trade barriers that stifle progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

If developed countries do their part, so must the developing ones. Each one of them has a duty to its people to take charge of its own development. That means building better governance and fighting corruption. It means devising and stimulating policies and investments that strengthen the economy. It means making real resources available to build better lives.

It means assuming the primary responsibility to achieve all of the first seven Goals -- covering poverty, hunger, education, the environment, women's rights and health, including the fight against HIV/AIDS.

It means integrating the global Goals into national policies, plans and budgets. Only when the goals are owned at the national level, and at the municipal and provincial levels; and only when resources are invested in them, will they be translated into services and benefits for the poor.

And it means transparent and accountable governance. Only when citizens, parliaments and media work in concert, will corruption be rooted out and Governments be held to account.

In all these endeavours, the Dominican Republic has made an exceptionally promising start. You are an inspiration to the international community, and an example to the developing world. I will follow with interest your progress in the next decade. I will no longer be Secretary-General, but I will definitely still be in your corner.

And now I will be pleased to try and answer your questions. *Muchas gracias*. Thank you very much.

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