



**Address delivered by Mr. John R. Gagain Jr., Executive Director
of the Presidential Commission on the Millennium Goals and
Sustainable Development (COPDES)
Visit to the Dominican Republic of Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, Special
Advisor to U.N. Secretary-General & Director of the U.N.
Millennium Project, Presentation of the Preliminary Results of the
MDG Needs Assessment
National Palace, Las Cariátides Room
April 27, 2005, 9:00am**

His Excellency, Dr. Leonel Fernández, Constitutional President of the Republic;
Honorable Dr. Margarita Cedeño de Fernández, First Lady of the Republic;
His Excellency, Dr. Rafael Alburquerque, Vice President of the Republic;
Honorable Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, Special Advisor to the U.N. Secretary-General
Officials of the U.N. System, World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank,
Distinguished Guests, Ministers, Diplomatic Corp,
United Nations Millennium Project staff,
Friends

When we last met on December 3rd, we as a country launched a report that spoke not only of the projected possibilities of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), most of which state that achieving the MDGs under the current situation are not likely or improbable, but also on that same occasion, we responded firmly by launching a framework, a multisectoral structure, led by President Fernandez and various Ministries, more formally referred to as the Presidential Commission on the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development (COPDES).

Since that day, less than 4 months later, this structure and process have converted themselves into what other Member States at U.N. Headquarters in New York City, development experts, professors, our President, and others have called the “Dominican Model”.

Mr. President, this structure the “Dominican Model”, has converted itself into a system includes: Nine working groups, with an additional more than 20 sub-groups and several sub-sub-groups; multisectoral plenary meetings, technical meetings, joint government – U.N. Country team meetings, Cabinet meetings, small working groups, meetings with donors, etc.; A structure that permits the U.N. Country Team to designate a counterpart agency or agencies, which provides constant, local level technical assistance for ensuring our achievement of the MDGs; A pro-women approach to achieving the MDGs where the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (SEM) has designated representatives to all Sectoral Working Groups in order to ensure that gender is mainstreamed throughout the poverty eradication planning process.

This multisectoral / transversal approach put forth by SEM was followed, rightly so, by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARN), which also designated representatives from the Ministry in order to maintain environment sustainability as a common thread throughout all sectors.

Mr. President, other institutions, including civil society and the private sector, even Comunidad Digna, designated representatives to the process. World Bank Country Representative, Christina Malmberg-Calvo designated representatives from the Santo Domingo Country Office as well as World Bank Headquarters in Washington, DC to each of the Working Groups. The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) Country Director, Moises Pineda assigned Mr. Armando Godinez as his representative to the MDG process. Cooperación Española, USAID, GTZ, and other development assistance agencies have participated actively in the process as well.

We must thank Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, Lenora Suki, Guido Schmidt-Traub, John McArthur, Chandrika Bahadur, Margaret Kruk, Mariana Kastrinakis and the rest of the U.N. Millennium Project team who have also provided Sectoral, as well as overall technical support, both directly and through the U.N. Country Team. Special thanks to our colleagues and partners at the U.N. Country Team, especially Niky Fabianic and Fernando Ferran who have led this effort to date.

Mr. President, as you know, after having consulted the Technical Secretary, we have made the National Planning Office (ONAPLAN) a full partner in this process, due to its technical expertise, its mandate, and the importance of directly aligning this process, particularly the MDG Needs Assessment, to the 2006 National Budget.

Mr. President, with your vision of having made the MDGs a priority, by creating the COPDES and asking the Ministers to work collaboratively with the Technical Secretariat and ONAPLAN, the MDGs have managed to break the historical tendency of planning the following year's budget based upon previous public expenditures.

Together (and I repeat "together"), we as a government, we as a nation are looking to the future.

Mr. President, next year's budget will be based upon results; it will be based upon the needs of the people, particularly the most marginalized populations, based upon medium and long-term goals; and it will work to ensure that the Dominican Republic achieves the Millennium Development Goals for the year 2015.

Today is the day Mr. President. In less than just four months, the Ministers, along with the Working Group Coordinators, Analysts, and partners, were able to compile the preliminary results of the Dominican Republic "MDG Needs Assessment", which as you know will not only serve as a basis for revising our country's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), but also our 10 year National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS). It will also serve as a basis for your speech before the U.N. General Assembly in September, which is the 60th Anniversary of the United Nations, the 5-year anniversary of the Millennium Summit and potentially the largest gathering of Heads of State in the history of the world.

It is an honor to be one of the eight pilot countries of the U.N. Millennium Project, however, this privilege has not only been an honor globally, but its implications at the national and local level have been vital to the sustainable development of the Dominican Republic.

The virtue of the MDG Needs Assessment planning process is that it has forced answers to pivotal questions out in the open—all of which are important to our long-term development. The answers include new policy options, new laws, modification of existing laws, institutional change, coherent and effective responses to natural disasters, salary increases for our key services providers; and the capacity building of doctors, teachers, hospital managers, and public administration officials.

Although we have made much progress, this process has had significant challenges.

Mr. President, this process has brought about a paradigm shift in the way in which government operates, among itself, and with society. Sectors, which have traditionally not worked together in the past, must work together now, in order to address the synergies. No one (01) Ministry alone will effectively confront poverty. In addition, achieving one (01) MDG is very unlikely without achieving all the MDGs. The MDG Needs Assessment we present today intends to put ALL the interventions pertinent to achieving the MDGs—the goods, services, and infrastructure—along with their costs, on the table.

Interventions have a dollar value, which if effectively aligned with next year's budget, will ensure a step forward towards achieving the MDGs. At the same time, however, it will show that certain sectors will need larger budgets in 2006, and in the medium-term, in order to fulfill the public interventions that are necessary for achieving the MDGs, while other sectors receive smaller budget allocations in the interest of prioritizing social services and ensuring fiscal responsibility.

Mr. President, when I initially outlined the structure of COPDES upon its creation, together we realized the need of harnessing “all the best” that leaders throughout Dominican society have to offer. To this day, after almost 4 months of realizing that this MDG process will bring about “drastic changes” in Dominican society, the members of the Presidential Commission's Working Groups have continued, they have persevered, and have not diverged from the work at hand. These leaders, who are technical experts, have realized that the MDGs are not a peripheral set of goals, but a framework for all, which will ensure our sustainable development. Their persistence and the leadership of you Mr. President, along with your Ministers, have been vital to ensuring these changes for the benefit of the Dominican Republic.

In a recent *Time Magazine* article about Dr. Sachs recent book “The End of Poverty”, addressed the fact that “Governments need to understand development better”. Mr. President, we have been fortunate enough over these past four months to have this process led by quality information and valuable recommendations. From the recently launched “Investing in Development” report of the U.N. Millennium Project, its various Task Force Reports, to our 2004 National MDG Report, we have been able to absorb information and

adapt to the realities of the Dominican Republic—or as many leaders have stated “we have ‘platanized’ the MDGs”.

Mr. President, as you listen to the key interventions, the needs, the costs of these needs, the policy recommendations, the goals and targets we aim to set because of this MDG Needs Assessment, and the implications they present for achieving or not achieving the MDGs, we ask for your continued leadership and support.

It is, and has been, your leadership that keeps the work of this Commission going as well as the “human spirit” of the less fortunate, which Dr. Sachs spoke about in the preface of “Investing in Development”. Together, they have been a truly indomitable force. As hundreds of thousands of poor suffer in the Dominican Republic and wallow in the misery of poverty and extreme poverty, it is your leadership and our persistence that maintains their spirit, integrity, commitment, and hope for the future.

For me Mr. President, there are absolutely “no excuses” for not fulfilling the needs of the MDG Needs Assessment and achieving the MDGs in the Dominican Republic. We have the tools, the knowledge, the structure, the assistance, the leadership, and the vision. It all depends on where we go from here.

Thank you very much.