

**Address delivered by Mr. John R. Gagain Jr., Executive Director of the
Presidential Commission on the Millennium Goals and Sustainable
Development (COPDES)**

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**Launch of the Dominican Republic's First Millennium Development Goals
(MDG) Report and Formal Announcement of the Working Groups**

**National Palace, Las Cariátides Room
December 3, 1:00 pm**

His Excellency, Dr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, Constitutional President of the Republic;
His Excellency, Dr. Rafael Alburquerque, Vice President of the Republic;
Distinguished Guests, Ministers, Officials of the United Nations
Friends

Over the past 103 days of the Fernandez Administration, the Dominican Republic has made great strides with respect to the work of the Presidential Commission on the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development (COPDES).

In October of this year, we successfully launched the Presidential Commission, which is the first of its kind in the world. We have established ourselves as one of only eight priority countries within the U.N. system from within the ranks of the 192 Member States and we are the only one to be located in the Western Hemisphere. The remaining seven priority countries are located in Africa and Asia. The Head of the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP) Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean recently visited the President and expressed that the Dominican Republic is one of only three countries in Latin America to serve as part of their MDG costing analysis.

And today, thanks to the U.N. Agencies in the Dominican Republic, we launch the Dominican Republic's first ever National MDG Report, which will serve as a foundation for an inclusive and participative consultation with the various entities that encompass Dominican society, with the goal of establishing adequate public policies that favor achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

I have been told by staff at the Dominican Mission to the United Nations, that Ambassadors from other countries are beginning to refer to our work regarding the Presidential Commission here in the Dominican Republic. The Dominican Republic in just over 100 days of government is becoming a model for countries worldwide when it comes to creating mechanisms for achieving the MDGs.

My response to our President, to our Ambassadors at the U.N., and to all of you has been that I have seen nothing but extreme enthusiasm and motivation. Since the launching of the Presidential Commission on October 20, 2004, I have had meetings with several Secretaries of State, government institutions, the World Bank and U.N. Agencies where we have presented the

work of the Presidential Commission, its relationship to other institutions, and the role of its working groups. We look to you for your contribution and cooperation in ensuring that the Dominican Republic is one of the countries that fully achieves all of the MDGs in 2015.

The Presidential Commission combines the high-level support of our President with the best our government has to offer, the technical expertise of the United Nations, the efforts of civil society, the creativity and know-how of the private sector, and much more.

The role of the Presidential Commission is to serve as a catalyst. The work of the Presidential Commission is: based on shared strategic and pragmatic vision; built on existing processes and strategies; nationally owned and country driven; participatory; integrated and balanced across sectors and territories; linked to national and local priorities and actions; and, built upon existing knowledge, expertise, and capacity.

The Presidential Commission integrates all of society's efforts and aligns them with the MDGs.

But most of all, the Presidential Commission works to ensure that we set realistic, but flexible targets. The Working Groups, which the President will formally launch today will be in charge of conducting a "needs assessment", which will identify the range of interventions defined broadly as goods, services, and infrastructure required for achieving the MDGs. A needs assessment is a key input to, rather than a substitute for, a policy plan with institutional design.

The "needs assessment", to be led by government and conducted in collaboration with the U.N. and its Millennium Project, will be the first step in the planning process while our second step will be to formulate a "10 year" National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) based upon the MDGs and built from the results of the MDG needs assessment. With this 10 year plan we will work backwards from the year 2015, the deadline for achieving the MDGs, and establish a "3 year" Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), also based upon the MDGs. This implies re-formulating the content of current approaches so that they are based on MDG horizons and a transparent needs assessment. The deadline for finishing the needs assessment on a sector by sector basis is April 2005. Basing both strategies upon the results of the needs assessment allow us to maintain a cost conscious structure balanced between our inherent needs and the resources we need to seek as well as the funds available for achieving the MDGs.

A country like the Dominican Republic could not achieve the MDGs without mobilizing funds externally and internally, which is why Dr. Jeffrey Sachs and the Millennium Project suggested that the Presidential Commission create a working group entitled "Industry and Trade", which would serve as a vehicle for including donors and the private sector as well as mobilizing resources for the MDGs.

After the recommendation to create such a group, we suggested that, in accordance with our President's vision to convert the Dominican Republic into a knowledge based economy we decided to create a group on "Science, Technology, and Innovation".

We have since combined both the Industry and Trade group and the Science, Technology, and Innovation group into one group called "Economic Competitiveness of the Dominican

Republic”, which will be charged with formulating the country’s “National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS)”. This National Sustainable Development Strategy will be led by **Ing. Carlos Morales Troncoso**, Minister of Foreign Affairs. His years of experience, including his participation in the 1992 U.N. Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, when he was Vice-President of the Dominican Republic, will help to ensure the effective and inclusive formulation of a 10 year National Sustainable Development Strategy based upon the MDGs. The “Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS)”, will be led by **Vice-President Rafael Alburquerque**. Dr. Alburquerque is a champion when it comes to addressing poverty head on and making social public policy and we are pleased that he and his staff at the Social Cabinet are leading this initiative.

What is the next step? We need to collect all plans, diagnostics, surveys, and strategies that have been conducted on behalf of your sector or institution. They will serve as a foundation for the needs assessment. The Presidential Commission will be putting all documents on the Internet.

Ladies and gentleman, we are shifting the paradigm here in the Dominican Republic. The needs assessment that we will conduct will serve as the basis for President Fernandez’s speech before the U.N. General Assembly in September 2005. Next year’s General Assembly will be the 60th Anniversary of the United Nations and 5 year review of the Millennium Summit. We have the unprecedented opportunity to provide President Fernandez with important information, possibly allowing him to be one of the only Heads of State to arrive with a list of numbers and statistics that address his country’s tangible needs for achieving the MDGs.

We all have the opportunity to contribute to our national vision and we all know that if we are to create truly effective national strategies and plans, that ensure the Dominican Republic conquers the MDGs by the deadline year of 2015, we must come together, combine our efforts, and put forth the goodwill and hard work that President Fernandez mentioned in his inaugural speech 103 days ago in the National Assembly, when he referred to the “blood, sweat, and tears” of those who will work for his administration.

We all have the vision, and achieving that vision depends upon effective leadership and concerted action. We look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead.

Thank you very much.