



General Assembly

Sixty-second session

90th plenary meeting

Wednesday, 2 April 2008, 6 p.m.

New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Kerim (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Reina Idiaquez (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6.10 p.m.

Thematic debate entitled “Recognizing the achievements, addressing the challenges and getting back on track to achieve the MDGs by 2015”

Agenda item 116 (continued)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): Let me begin by thanking the President of the General Assembly for organizing this thematic debate on an issue that lies at the heart of this Organization — the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We are halfway towards the year 2015, and we believe that this is a good time for stocktaking and addressing thoroughly the challenges ahead.

I would like to associate myself with the statement on sexual and reproductive health and rights made by the representative of Sweden on behalf of the five Nordic countries.

The eight MDGs are not only equally important in themselves, but are also highly related and mutually reinforcing. Emphasizing poverty, education and health will have a lasting effect on sustainable economic and social development.

We are not halfway to the goal of halving poverty and hunger. Even though progress has been considerable in some regions, progress in others is lagging seriously behind. Sustained economic growth is a necessary premise for generating resources for the fight against poverty and hunger. The current downturn in the global economy is therefore particularly worrying, but economic growth is not a sufficient precondition for poverty eradication. We need a comprehensive approach to development that will generate pro-poor growth that benefits all segments of society.

Iceland’s development policy focuses on the poorest of the poor, and the greatest part of our bilateral official development assistance (ODA) is targeted to the needs of least developed countries. Recent hikes in the prices of staple foods are particularly worrying. Food security has been an important aspect of our development cooperation, particularly as it relates to the fisheries sector. We have also increased our emphasis on food security through increased support for the World Food Programme. We will continue to maintain our policy of channelling the largest share of our development cooperation to people living in extreme poverty and hunger.

The role of education in poverty reduction is undisputed, and education is an essential part of a comprehensive approach to development. It is important in that context that we focus on both the quantity and the quality of education. Not only do we need to assist developing countries in facilitating access and enrolment at all levels; we also need to give

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sufficient attention to important education results, such as literacy and numeracy. Our firm belief that education is the key to success has been the cornerstone of our national and international development policies.

Projects in that area have taken place at various levels, ranging from primary and adult education to training and capacity-building in fisheries in the partner countries, as well as support for higher education. Iceland hosts two United Nations University training programmes: the geothermal and fisheries training programmes.

Women play a fundamental role in sustainable development, and are too often — and sadly — the poorest of the poor. Experience has shown that support for the education, health and economic activities of women not only has a significant impact on their own lives and well-being, but also has a multiplier effect for their communities. For that reason, we have increasingly directed our development cooperation at gender-specific projects. That has been done through our bilateral programmes in the partner countries and support for the work of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, as well as through other multilateral activities.

The World Food Programme's school feeding programme, one of the projects that Iceland supports, is a good example of our combined work on poverty, education and health. In 2007 and 2008, Iceland's contribution will provide 45,000 children in Malawi and Uganda with nutritious daily meals at school, making it easier for them to concentrate and learn. An equal number of children attend primary school in Iceland.

The fact that three out of the eight Millennium Development Goals focus on health exemplifies the close link between health and development and signifies the pressing need for assistance in that field. Poor health and lack of access to health facilities contribute to slow economic and social growth, as well as to sustained poverty.

For those reasons, the Icelandic International Development Agency has focused on supporting the health sector in its partner countries. In addition, Iceland has supported a number of multilateral efforts in that area, such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Iceland has also supported

the United Nations Population Fund's campaign against fistula for years.

The MDGs can be achieved only by forging a true global partnership. To conclude, I would like to highlight the importance of the upcoming meeting in Doha in November on financing for development. We will not achieve our goals without increased financing from all available sources. The Government of Iceland stands ready to shoulder its responsibility. We aim to be among the top ODA contributors, our development assistance having doubled over the past four years.

Mr. Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka): Let me join others in expressing my appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting.

We now stand just past the halfway mark we set for ourselves at the dawn of the new millennium to achieve goals that would provide sustainable prosperity to all who inhabit our planet and for generations yet unborn. This is therefore the most opportune moment to have this thematic debate in the General Assembly and to remind ourselves of the urgent need to harness the energies of all segments of our societies to work in synergy to realize those goals.

In that respect, Sri Lanka aligns itself fully with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

I also take this opportunity to reiterate Sri Lanka's firm commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The MDGs have been integrated into Sri Lanka's national development strategies, including the 10-year development framework entitled "Mahinda Chintana: 10-year horizon development framework (2007-2016)".

In areas such as universal primary school enrolment, gender equality in primary and secondary school enrolment, reducing maternal and child mortality, and several other health and social indicators, Sri Lanka is well poised to meet the MDG targets well before 2015. In recognition of those accomplishments, the United Nations country team, in its common country assessment, states that Sri Lanka needs to reset some of the MDG targets at higher levels.

Despite those achievements, and having recently made the transition from low-income to middle-income country, Sri Lanka still faces significant challenges. Eradicating poverty, achieving environmentally

sustainable development, reducing unemployment and mitigating social costs arising out of the migration of labour and brain drain are some such issues.

In addition, we consider that achieving the MDGs in a sustainable manner is inextricably linked to overcoming regional disparities in economic and social development, including uneven distribution of wealth across regions and among social groups. The destruction caused by the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 was a setback to our progress towards achieving the MDGs. The campaign of terror by a separatist terrorist group in my country is also a major challenge to our general economic and social well-being. As a result of terrorism, several conflict-affected regions have been lagging behind in economic development, and service sectors like tourism throughout the country have also suffered.

It is in that context that the Government is making every effort and working with Sri Lanka's development partners, including the United Nations system, to build national capacities to address some of the key challenges that militate against achieving the MDGs. That includes the full integration of the MDGs into national policies and plans and localizing them in a manner that reduces regional disparities and empowers the regions. Concerted action is being taken to promote equity and inclusion and to implement pro-poor policies favouring local aspirations and indigenous methods, as well as local entrepreneurship. While combating terrorism, the Government has taken several steps to ensure just and lasting peace in the North and East of the country through socio-political means.

To achieve the MDGs by 2015, Sri Lanka, like many other developing countries, needs better trading terms and market access for its products and services in our export markets. That is an essential criterion if we are to replace aid with trade. In addition, greater coherence and predictability in global financial and commodity markets are also important if developing countries like Sri Lanka are to reach MDG targets.

The MDGs are global cross-cutting goals that require the cooperative efforts of Governments, international organizations, the private sector, academia and civil society around the world. In that task, it is essential that developing countries and their development partners, working in partnership, recommit to fulfilling their obligations and

responsibilities as set out in the Millennium Declaration. Let us pledge once again, at this midpoint, that we will make every effort to make this planet a congenial place for all to live by the year 2015.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): France endorses the statement made this morning by the Slovenian presidency on behalf of the European Union.

In 2000, our heads of State and Government recalled their conviction that the major challenge ahead was to ensure that globalization became a positive force for all humankind, in particular by creating a climate conducive to development and the elimination of poverty. The definition of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) contributed to that objective by placing the individual at the heart of development policy.

Significant progress has been made, but the global assessment at the halfway mark is mixed, as was emphasized yesterday. If efforts are not stepped up now, the gaps will continue to widen between regions of the world and even within countries where improvements have been made, further marginalizing significant parts of the world's population. I believe that there is broad agreement in that respect, as was established from the outset of our debate here by the Secretary-General.

We have been asked to give joint consideration to the manner in which we can collectively meet the challenges ahead in implementing the MDGs by 2015. There is no simple answer. It goes without saying that we must all remain active in implementing the commitments undertaken since 2000. That will necessitate reaffirming the global partnership for development involving all actors — State and non-governmental, civil society, non-governmental organizations and local actors — and making use of all tools available to the international community, including budgetary support, private investment and innovative financing.

My delegation wishes to stress three interdependent elements necessary to progress in combating poverty, promoting sustainable and shared economic growth, and fostering globalization that is more humane, more equitable and more responsible.

First, the MDGs will be achieved not through a uniform strategy, but rather through action responsive to the specific development needs of each region of the

world, exploiting all the tools available to us. In particular, we must give priority to including in national strategies proactive measures that benefit the most vulnerable among us. In that regard, France reaffirms its resolve to assist, in its national capacity and within the European Union, the efforts of the developing countries themselves in that area.

Secondly, we must take full account of the fact that the MDGs are not factors for development per se, but rather indicators designed to guide the international community's activities. Those indicators cannot be addressed in isolation, for they are different facets of a single reality. The success of some determines that of others, requiring a comprehensive approach to development that is balanced between social and economic needs. How, for instance, can we reduce extreme poverty and combat hunger without taking into account the impact of health, family planning, water supply and the diversification of the economy? There can be no singling out of any specific MDG.

Moreover, achieving the MDGs is a long-term effort. It is the quality of the action undertaken to do so that will determine their sustainability, and that quality is inextricably linked to a systemic approach to development. How can we ensure that the results achieved in the implementation of the MDGs on infant mortality, maternal health and the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria are sustainable unless they are based on effective and comprehensive health-care systems?

That leads me to my third comment. The MDGs can be achieved only if the broader conditions for sustainable development are met. There is a need to ensure equitable and shared economic growth and good governance, including in particular the promotion of human rights and the establishment of the rule of law and gender equality. Without sustained economic growth and good governance, it will not be possible to create the conditions for a virtuous cycle that will allow us to entrench the results of projects and initiatives implemented. That is why the President of the French Republic recalled in Cape Town that France would maintain its financial commitment to the implementation of the MDGs, although in a more targeted fashion so as to promote the effective acceleration of economic growth.

Finally, the objective of sustainable and shared growth can be achieved only if we focus through

mitigation and adaptation on the growing problem of climate change, the devastating effects of which have at last been recognized. Implementing the MDGs and meeting the great environmental challenges are two struggles that are closely linked and must be vigorously maintained.

Inaction is not an option. France will work intensively with all its partners to meet the looming deadlines in all the key areas of development, with an eye to the Accra forum on aid effectiveness, the Doha event on financing for development, the promotion of innovative financing, and the high-level meeting in September on Africa's specific development needs. We shall also work towards the full review of the MDGs scheduled for September. At stake is not only our common future, but also the credibility of our Organization.

Mrs. Asmady (Indonesia): I would like to join previous delegations in thanking the President for convening this important thematic debate to assess international efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This review is particularly relevant because we are at the midpoint of the time frame for the implementation of the MDGs.

Let me begin by aligning my delegation with the statement delivered at the 88th meeting by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Attaining the MDGs is vital for all nations, because poverty and hunger do not respect national boundaries. Some regions have made good progress in realizing that global social contract. However, the inability of others to achieve the MDGs means that we should redouble our efforts. Such intensity is imperative at a time when climate change is threatening to reverse development gains everywhere. Strategies must now be refined and strengthened to ensure the achievement of the MDGs.

First of all, countries should adopt a pro-growth, pro-poor and pro-job development strategy. That will require policies that promote good governance, legal protection for investors, sound economic practices and the growth of infrastructure. Those are prerequisites for the achievement of the MDGs.

Developed countries should support national efforts by being reliable development partners. They can do so through free and fair trade, by increasing and

ensuring official development assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment and by sharing technology and benefits with developing countries in a way that strikes a balance between social responsibility and respect for intellectual property rights. In addition, comprehensive reform of the international financial, monetary and trading systems should be undertaken and accomplished within a specific time frame.

Secondly, social development goals should be placed on an equal footing with economic objectives and pursued with the same vigour. As a people-oriented process, development should result in well-educated and healthy people who can in turn contribute to national progress. In order to help developing countries mobilize adequate funds for those goals, developed countries must earnestly address the issues of debt relief and aid effectiveness. It is certainly true that many developing countries fail to fund education and health programmes because their budgets are being drained of resources by debt servicing. Emphasis should therefore be given to debt relief for education and health sector swaps.

Thirdly, the private sector should be encouraged to participate in cross-sector partnerships. With the help of the private sector, all children should complete a full course of primary education by 2015. By then, too, the number of people living under extreme poverty and hunger should — 4 billion — be reduced by half.

Fourthly, there is need for a new Marshall Plan to ensure economic stability and poverty reduction in developing countries. That new Marshall Plan should be financed by the 0.7 per cent ODA commitment. In addition, the new Jubilee 2000 campaign should be extended to cancel the debts of poor countries, to help them finance primary education for all. Indonesia also endorses international efforts to invest more on health systems and to increase the predictability of aid in the health sector.

Finally, the international community needs to fully implement the development resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Those two bodies should sharpen their focus on the implementation of the MDGs.

At the national level, Indonesia is pursuing the MDGs on the basis of economic growth with social equity. As a result, economic growth last year was 6.3 per cent. We are aiming for 6.8 per cent this year. With improved finances, we are spending more than

ever on education and health. Our goal is to ensure that at least 95 per cent of all children aged 7 to 15 years, especially female and poor children, obtain a sound basic education by 2009. To ensure quality education and high student-to-teacher ratios, we propose to increase South-South cooperation in the area of education. That is in keeping with a recommendation made by the seventh ministerial meeting of the Nine High-Population Developing Countries, which Indonesia hosted last month.

In the area of health, access and quality service for poor communities are being continuously improved. That is being done primarily through our programme of health insurance for the poor and by reducing the price of medicine, especially generic medicines.

In the past few months, we have witnessed and experienced high food and energy prices, which have been spiralling rapidly upwards. Faced with those trends, Indonesia, like so many other countries, finds itself struggling to cope with the enormous pressures being exerted by those changes. Governments everywhere are now being compelled to revise their budgets and make arrangements to widen social safety nets. We fear that the long-term impacts of those trends will severely limit the capability to achieve the MDGs by 2015, especially for developing countries. There will almost certainly be more poverty, increasing conflict and greater instability in many regions as a result of those unrelenting economic pressures.

In response to that challenge, effective global partnerships must become the norm. Weaker nations must be able to draw on the strength of more advanced nations. There must be closer collaboration between national and international decision-makers. Together, they must engage in vigorous collective action for the common good. That is the only way forward.

Mr. Majoer (Netherlands): The year 2015 is coming closer, and we all know we are behind schedule. Millennium Development Goal 5 — to improve maternal health — is especially off-track. I would like to focus on that Goal, as progress on MDG 5 is crucial to achieving the other Millennium Development Goals.

A woman still dies from pregnancy-related causes every minute — more than 536,000 per year, 99 per cent of them in the poorest countries. Worldwide, about 13 per cent of maternal mortality is due to unsafe

abortions. In some countries it may even be more than 30 per cent. The financial loss to families, communities and countries has been estimated at more than \$15 billion per year in, for example, foregone income and additional medical costs.

Maternal mortality could be cut by nearly three quarters by improving women's access to comprehensive reproductive health services, which includes preventing or managing abortion-related complications. Global recognition of the problem is growing. At the World Summit in 2005, the international community agreed that universal access to reproductive health should be achieved by 2015. The recent inclusion of this target in the MDG monitoring framework was long overdue, but it signifies a very important recognition of this important issue.

The issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights is a delicate matter, often surrounded by stigma and taboos. That might explain the lack of political will in some countries to really tackle the issue, as well as the fact that funding is still lagging far behind what is needed.

The main responsibility for achieving the MDGs lies at the country level. An excellent example of clear political will and concrete action is the Maputo Plan of Action. It provides a policy framework for sexual and reproductive health and rights for the African continent, in which African leaders committed to specific actions needed to achieve universal access to reproductive health. It would be interesting to hear from African colleagues as to where we are with the implementation of this plan.

International aid should support national efforts. Development assistance for maternal and newborn health was estimated at only \$530 million in 2004. To get to the additional \$5.5 billion needed to achieve MDGs 4 and 5 by 2015, donor funding will need to increase to more than ten times its 2004 level. While the gap in investment needed for maternal health may seem large, it represents a small fraction of global gross national product (GNP) and total development aid. The \$5.5 billion annual shortfall is only 0.016 per cent of global GNP. Providing this small proportion of GNP annually by 2015 should be well within our grasp.

The Netherlands has declared equal rights and opportunities for women and girls, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights, top priorities in its development cooperation framework. The Netherlands

has allocated an additional \$200 million to MDGs 3 and 5.

To achieve the MDGs we need innovative approaches. Governments cannot do it alone. Particularly for MDGs 3 and 5, the commitment of society as a whole is of crucial importance — government, civil society organizations, the private sector, institutions of knowledge, religious institutions, labour unions and private persons.

The Netherlands' Minister for Development Cooperation signed almost 40 alliances with public and private partners. One example is an alliance for the production and marketing of a cheaper female condom. There is also a public-private partnership on MDG 5, signed by a group of 20 organizations like Flying Doctors, pharmaceutical companies and medical professional groups. Partners work together in smaller groups to develop concrete activities that lead to improved maternal and women's health.

To achieve this crucial MDG — and I refer here also to the statement at the 88th meeting by the Minister of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union, a statement which we, of course, fully support — we need further recognition of the issues, political will and action, at both the global and national levels, scaling up of aid efforts and an innovative approach involving new partners in development cooperation.

The General Assembly meeting on Africa's development needs on 22 September and the MDG event organized by the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General on 25 September will be two additional occasions to rally global support to achieve this critical goal of improving maternal health.

Mr. Fluss (Israel): I wish to congratulate the President on his leadership of the Assembly and thank him for convening this important high-level thematic debate on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his message, as well as the chairs and panellists who participated in the informative and enlightening panels.

Over the past two days we have heard different approaches to assessing achievement of the MDGs. But as the President remarked, "The question is not whether the glass is half full or half empty. The issue is, how quickly are we going to fill it up?" Much emphasis has been placed on negatives, failures, and

inadequacies. But we have much to learn from the success stories and from countries that are clearly on track. Those examples should give us strength and the confidence that we can achieve our goals.

Allow me to reiterate that Israel is fully committed to achieving the MDGs. We believe there is no single approach to overcoming the hurdles and there is surely no monopoly on good ideas. The way forward must include an increased effort in a variety of areas, including agriculture, food production, increasing efficiency, technology, capacity-building and training.

Much like the challenges they aim to overcome, solutions do not exist in a vacuum. The MDGs are not isolated variables but interconnected pieces of the same puzzle. Improvement in one area has direct benefit for others. Food production, for example, may address not only hunger, but also poverty, as an economic good and as a source of income, and health, as a source of nourishment. Awareness of the interlinkages among development activities will strengthen and increase the degree of their implementation and achievement.

For its part, Israel is exploring ways in which it can accelerate global development through its main development agency MASHAV — the Centre for International Cooperation — and through our engagement with partners and Member States at the United Nations.

During the recent main session of the General Assembly, Israel, along with like-minded States, introduced a draft resolution on “Agricultural Technology for Development” (resolution 62/190), which called on States to share information and know-how in this area. Those technologies could prove beneficial to regions suffering from climate change and other harsh conditions. As a hub of excellence in agriculture and water technologies, Israel will continue to promote implementation of this initiative.

Israel also recently signed a memorandum of agreement with the United Nations Environment Programme and is in discussions with UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme for similar partnerships in Africa and Latin America to advance the achievement of the MDGs and the betterment of our world.

As an innovator in combating desertification, Israel hopes to help with the effects of desertification, which adversely impact poverty and hunger. This past

December, Israel, in cooperation with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, hosted a week-long workshop for policymakers on desertification and land management.

Those activities are part of Israel’s contribution towards addressing the threats posed by climate change — a challenge that unites us all.

Lastly, capacity-building can be a key factor in improving health and education services. Training, creating and strengthening extension services, and increased collaboration among government, the private sector, civil society and non-governmental organizations as well as academia are the way forward.

Israel’s exemplary programme *Tipat Chalav* — literally “a drop of milk” — is a national concept based on simple public health, family orientation and clinics on the community level. It has proven success in strengthening preventative care. Similarly, empowering resident doctors with additional skills, training and technology, where relevant, can help them provide better health care. Simple solutions are often the most effective ones.

Israel only recently transitioned from a developing nation to a developed one, giving us real experience and knowledge and placing us in a unique position to identify with the process of developing nations. We also affirm the importance of intergovernmental discussions and international development policies but remain committed to ensuring that these are translated into actual effective actions and measures that will elevate the standard of living of the poor on the ground.

To that end, Israel recently joined the Development Centre of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Our accession as a member will take place later this year. These efforts reinforce Israel’s commitment to taking the initiative at the halfway point to redouble our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in the areas of poverty and hunger, health and education.

Development is a partnership that entails obligations and responsibilities for all. Israel supports the call to meet commitments on official development assistance and donor assistance, as well as to promote the importance of, and the need for, aid effectiveness, good governance, ownership, accountability, human

rights and gender equality. Economic growth and economic policies are part and parcel of development.

It is no coincidence that the Hebrew word for charity, *tsdaka*, is also the word for justice. Caring and giving is our obligation and duty. Through it we affirm the bonds of our common humanity. Through it we promote peace and equality. Indeed, the ultimate goal of development is to bring about justice and create equality for all. That is Israel's approach to development and achieving the MDGs. We look forward to continuing to work together through that partnership.

Mr. Al-Najem (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to begin by underscoring the importance of this debate and the crucial role of the United Nations in highlighting and addressing the issues and challenges of the day as part of ongoing international efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, especially given that we have passed the midpoint for the attainment of the Goals.

The United Nations Millennium Declaration and the adoption of the MDGs were a milestone in the history of the United Nations. The adoption of the MDGs constituted an unprecedented pledge by world leaders to address the issues of peace, security, development, human rights and fundamental freedoms in a comprehensive package. Unfortunately, over half of the world's population continues to suffer from poverty, hunger and disease, surviving on less than \$2 per day. That situation requires a serious approach and a frank assessment of the obstacles confronting development in the developing world. We should also take into account new challenges, such as the serious rise in the cost of basic goods and food, and the challenges posed by climate change, with the increased risk of drought, floods and desertification. Given the important role of the agricultural sector in the economies of most developing countries, we must make additional efforts to highlight and develop it, especially in villages and rural areas, where most impoverished people who depend on agriculture for their livelihoods live.

Other areas too require greater attention, especially those relating to international trade — in particular in the age of globalization and increased competition between States to enter global markets and promote their products and exports. That requires further efforts to develop the commercial capacity of

developing countries through technical assistance and support. There are indications that developing countries that have made tangible progress in combating poverty and in improving standards of living are the same ones that have increased their capacity to enter global markets successfully.

It is now time to enhance the way in which we deal with those challenges and to meet the commitments to which we have pledged ourselves. In reviewing the efforts made and the achievements attained, we can identify a great need for further financial resources to support and finance projects and programmes needed to achieve our goals. This requires expediting fulfilment of financial pledges by all donors, as well as further efforts by developed countries to allocate no less than 0.7 per cent of their gross national product (GNP) to official development assistance (ODA). That would enhance the chances for success in the face of all those challenges, including by providing the necessary financing.

Furthermore, past experience in combating poverty and hunger shows that achievements in one area have positive effects on other MDGs. For example, success in providing drinking water and improving health and education has a positive, concrete impact on reducing poverty and hunger. Yesterday's discussions on poverty and hunger and education and health therefore rightly pointed to the importance and positive aspects of linkages between those areas.

The State of Kuwait has made much progress in translating the commitments and decisions agreed at the 2005 World Summit into reality. We are in a position to achieve most of the MDGs by the deadline that has been set. In fact, several years before 2015, we have already attained some of the Goals, including those relating to the elimination of extreme poverty and hunger, universal primary education and the sub-goal of gender equality at all educational levels, reducing infant and child mortality, improving maternal health and combating AIDS, malaria and infectious disease.

The State of Kuwait fully realizes that development partnerships constitute both an important development and a Goal to be achieved. The State of Kuwait is doing its utmost to achieve and support that Goal, especially by providing assistance on concessional terms through the Kuwait Development Fund, which

was established 46 years ago to finance projects in the areas of agriculture, energy, water, transportation, communications, education and health. In addition, Kuwait provides over \$14 billion in support for social funds and national development banks. More than 100 developing countries have already benefited from that assistance. Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, in 2000, the Fund has stepped up its efforts to finance projects that contribute to the implementation of the MDGs, including in the areas of education, health and the protection of the environment. The Fund also contributes to reducing the debt burden of heavily indebted poor countries through the framework launched by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in 1996, which was enhanced in 1999. That is in addition to the grants and technical assistance provided by the State of Kuwait directly to developing countries, as well as to its contributions to regional and international development institutions. As a percentage of our gross domestic product, the total ODA provided by the State of Kuwait to developing countries has reached a level twice that of the 0.7 per cent target set by the United Nations.

The State of Kuwait is also committed to providing annual voluntary contributions to many specialized international organizations and agencies. Last year, we provided \$300 million to the Islamic Development Bank for the elimination of poverty in Africa.

In order to help achieve sustainable development, the State of Kuwait pays close attention to environmental protection in general and to issues related to climate change in particular. We have thus endeavoured to implement a number of projects to limit emissions and mitigate their effects locally. We have also allocated \$150 million to support research on the environment and energy sources, within the framework of the fund established at the recent Riyadh summit of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm the commitment of the State of Kuwait to continue to make every possible effort to assist in the achievement of the important objectives of achieving sustainable development, eliminating poverty and hunger and guaranteeing a life of security, stability and prosperity.

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me at the outset to associate myself with the

statements made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group. My delegation congratulates the President of the General Assembly on having convened this important debate on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are a matter of priority for Ecuador.

In 2000, the heads of State of 189 countries adopted the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), which set forth an ambitious agenda aimed at reducing poverty, its causes and its manifestations. In that agreement, humanity pledged to attain a number of goals to that end by 2015.

In 2008, the efforts made by some States have produced results that are not very encouraging and raise doubts that all countries will achieve the much-sought MDGs by 2015. The reason is that the developed countries' commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance has not been met.

Moreover, the asymmetries among States are increasing daily, and the gap between poor and rich countries is widening. All of this results from adverse terms of trade in goods and services, from constraints on our development and from a lack of political will on the part of many States to ensure that the Doha Round negotiations achieve the hoped-for results.

Ecuador is currently undergoing a citizen revolution that involves profound changes in its democratic institutions, its political principles and its objectives. To that end, we are engaged in a constituent process that will create a new legal and institutional structure, which in turn will deepen democracy and benefit the great majority of people. We are building new strategies to ensure that our priority — guaranteeing the right of every human being to enjoy a dignified life — is made a reality.

That is why our Government has formulated a national development plan for 2007-2010, which has goals that go beyond the minimum objectives set out in the MDGs. This plan is the result of a democratic process involving the participation of all citizens in the fundamental decisions of society.

Our national development plan establishes a road map that changes the historical patterns of development and democracy in Ecuador. We do not

intend only to achieve the MDGs; we have set much more ambitious goals for ourselves, such as the creation of a more equitable society that will guarantee stable, just and dignified employment and reliable access to water, clean air and land — in short, to a healthy and sustainable environment; the promotion of a supportive and sustainable economic system; and the affirmation of national identity and strengthening diversity of identity and inter-culturalism.

In scarcely a year, Ecuador has been able to establish institutional coordination mechanisms to articulate policies and programmes of economic and social inclusion. A fundamental component of that effort is the establishment of productive micro-units within the framework of a public purchasing system. In 2007, for the first time in our history, social investment in Ecuador exceeded debt-service payments, rising 32 per cent over the corresponding level in 2006. Various measures were taken to achieve that, including channelling surplus oil earnings from the rise in international prices into productive credit, doubling human development benefits, increasing housing benefits and substantially increasing investment in education and health, which are priority areas for our development efforts.

That is why we can say that Ecuador's vision of development is different from the criteria of consumption and of economic liberalization processes. Our concept of development seeks to ensure a good life for all men and women, in peace and in harmony with nature, and the indefinite survival of human cultures. To that end, our national plan has included sustainability and inter-culturalism as cross-cutting areas for governmental action.

Ecuador believes that climate change has become a decisive factor that is hampering the development of our peoples and making it impossible to achieve the MDGs. Thus, several months ago, our country, mindful of its shared but differentiated responsibility, proposed the implementation of the Yasuní-ITT initiative, which involves the commitment not to develop our largest oil deposit and not to extract 920 million barrels of oil, in order to prevent more than 100 million tons of carbon emissions resulting from the burning of fossil fuels. Therefore, our country will fail to receive approximately \$720 million per year over the next 25 years.

We are prepared to make that sacrifice, but we demand shared responsibility on the part of the international community and a minimal compensation for the environmental benefits we are generating. That would be an extraordinary example of the global commitment to reduce global warming, to mitigate the effects of climate change and to help countries achieve development based on the use of clean energy.

Increased international cooperation, fulfilment of the Monterrey commitments, the strengthening of South-South and triangular cooperation systems and greater participation in the international arena by middle-income countries would be the best ways for all countries to achieve not the minimum goals for survival set out in the MDGs, but the maximum goals for well-being.

Ecuador not only reaffirms the commitment it made in 2000 to achieve the MDGs, but also pledges to be a pioneer in implementing a new development model whose priority is not the market, which leads to overconsumption and accumulation, but a good life for human beings, based on respect for their rights and their dignity and on a more respectful and balanced relationship between nature and society.

Mr. Ney (Germany): Germany fully aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union. I wish only to supplement that statement and to emphasize Germany's vigorous and determined commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Germany is committed to supporting the fight against poverty throughout the world and, in that context, remains committed to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the other internationally agreed development goals. We welcome the opportunity at this midterm event to take stock of achievements, identify gaps, reinforce commitments and redouble efforts to reach the MDGs.

The EU is not only by far the biggest donor of official development assistance (ODA); it also has set concrete ODA targets, which have been translated into the EU Barcelona commitments. Germany has fulfilled those commitments in the past and will continue to work towards reaching 0.51 per cent in 2010 and 0.7 per cent in 2015 through budget resources, debt relief and innovative financing mechanisms.

Within the Group of Eight (G-8), Germany is an engine for development. It was on the initiative of the German Government that in 1999 at the G-8 summit meeting in Cologne, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative to reduce the debt burden on highly-indebted poor countries was extended, becoming the enhanced HIPC Initiative or HIPC II.

More recently, the G-8 summit in Heiligendamm rallied support for the achievement of the MDGs, with a special focus on Africa. Facing the global nature of the most pressing challenges, the G-8 has invited emerging major economies to cooperate more closely on solutions, including explicitly the achievement of MDGs in Africa. We are confident that the coming G-8 presidencies will continue on this path. Japan, as the present presidency, has already defined the achievement of the MDGs as one of the main themes of this year's G-8 summit. Germany pledges its full support.

Our debate in the General Assembly has made clear that all actors need to work together in order to achieve the MDGs: national Governments from both donor and recipient countries, multilateral institutions, civil society and the private sector. It has also shown that the MDGs are inextricably interlinked. The goal on education, for example, cannot be achieved when you deny girls and women their rights. On the contrary, we strongly believe that gender equality and the political and economic empowerment of women, or Goal 3, are essential contributions to enhancing the effectiveness of aid and realizing poverty reduction and inclusive growth. Against this background, Germany actively supports the global call to action on MDG 3, and the German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, has joined the MDG 3 Champion Network.

One of the focal issues of this thematic debate is poverty and hunger. Reducing poverty worldwide will remain one of the guiding principles of German development policy. In fact, it is its overarching task. We are fully aware that efforts at both national and multilateral levels must be strengthened to reach the goal of substantial poverty reduction.

The second theme here — education — is high on Germany's development agenda as well. We are fully committed to MDG 2 and are involved in the Fast Track Initiative. For Germany, this includes not only a focus on promoting primary education; it also

encompasses the development of vocational training and higher education as part of the overall education for sustainable development. Within the framework of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2005 to 2014, the UNESCO world conference on that subject will be held in spring 2009 in Germany.

Thirdly, with regard to health, just as an example of our engagement I would like to point to the highly successful replenishment meeting of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which Germany hosted in September 2007. Germany doubled its contributions to the Global Fund and pledged \$850 million. Furthermore, Germany and the Fund conceived the Debt2Health initiative. Under a Debt2Health agreement, creditors forgo repayment of a portion of their sovereign debts on the condition that the beneficiary country invests an agreed upon amount in health through a Global Fund-approved programme.

Having said all this, I want to reiterate that Germany fully shares what has been expressed already in the EU statement. Volume and quality of ODA are important factors in our support to partners in achieving the MDGs. The partnership principles of the Paris Declaration, such as ownership, alignment, harmonization, management for results and mutual accountability, are equally essential for the achievement of the MDGs. They are fundamental to German and EU development policy.

Mr. Punkrasin (Thailand): My delegation welcomes the opportunity to take part in this debate and associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Allow me to share what Thailand has achieved in regard to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Thailand has taken its commitments under the Millennium Declaration very seriously and has incorporated all of the Millennium Development Goals into our national development agenda. Thailand has made remarkable progress in meeting most, if not all, of the MDGs well in advance of the 2015 deadline, while introducing a set of MDG-Plus targets that go well beyond the internationally agreed MDGs.

On poverty alleviation, Thailand has been successful in reducing income poverty incidence from 42.2 per cent in 1990 to 9.6 per cent in 2006. The proportion of the population under the food poverty

line declined from 6.9 per cent to 2.2 per cent in 2002. The prevalence of underweight children under 5 years of age also dropped from 18.6 per cent in the early 1990s to 8.5 per cent in the early 2000s.

On achieving universal primary education, Thailand has made good progress on both school enrolment and retention at the primary level. In addition, the Royal Thai Government has placed great importance on improving the quality and relevance of the education curriculum as well as promoting information technology in schools. This is all taking place within the context of gender equality, as Thai girls and boys are accorded equal opportunity at every level. In fact, in higher level education, data show that girls outnumber boys in continuing their further studies.

On health care and major diseases, new infections have dropped by over 80 per cent since 1991. Thailand is well on target relating to malaria. With regard to HIV/AIDS, Thailand has succeeded in reducing a great number of new infections. We are reaching out to share our expertise with other countries in Asia and the Pacific and in other regions where cooperation and support are needed.

Regarding the goal on child mortality and maternal health, universal health care coverage plays an important role towards the achievement of health-related goals. During the last decade, health care coverage for the Thai population increased rapidly. The establishment of the social security scheme in 1990 was followed by the first demonstration model of primary care in a province near Bangkok in 1992. Through the standardization of benefit packages under different health insurance schemes, universal health care coverage covers more than 75 per cent of the total population.

On environmental sustainability, Thailand has placed great importance on the environment and natural resources in the current national economic and social development plan and has included them in the plan's driving strategy. Last year, the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning, in partnership with United Nations Development Programme, launched the MDG Carbon Facility. The Facility will allow the Thai private sector and entrepreneurs to play a direct role in addressing one of the most complex challenges in the achievement of the MDGs, that is, the challenge of climate change. The

Carbon Facility will provide access to resources for investment in technologies that cut carbon emissions.

Currently, as I am speaking, the international community is meeting in Bangkok at the United Nations climate change talks, and we are hoping that success will pave the way towards addressing this challenge.

Let me also describe the path that Thailand has been taking to achieving the MDGs. To reduce poverty, it is crucial to broaden the participation in the development process of communities and their people at the grass-root level. Microcredit facilities, such as village funds to support One Village, One Product schemes in rural and agricultural areas, small and medium enterprises (SME) banks and people's banks, have helped promote small businesses. This creates more jobs and decent incomes for the poor.

His Majesty the King of Thailand's concept of sufficiency economy will play a key role in poverty eradication. Since the economic crisis in 1997, this philosophy has led the way to a recovery based on a more resilient and sustainable economy. "Sufficiency" means moderation, reasonableness and the need for self-immunity for protection from the impact and challenges arising from extensive and rapid socio-economic, environmental and cultural changes in the world: the phenomena of globalization. This is a philosophy which allows us to adjust our old model for economic development based on growth in gross domestic product. It will be the philosophy that helps us set our path and our own speed to development based on quality of life, social equality and community strength. We believe this philosophy is at the heart of sustainable patterns of production and consumption.

Thailand reaffirms its strong commitment to the global campaign to achieve the MDGs by 2015, not only within its own borders, but around the globe. Thailand, as a middle-income developing country, has played an increasingly active role in contributing to the global partnership for development called for in the eighth MDG. It helps promote the attainment of and progress towards the MDGs in its neighbouring least developed countries (LDCs), through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Thailand has provided significant development assistance to its neighbouring LDCs. About 93 per cent of Thailand's official development assistance, amounting to 0.13 per cent of gross national income, went to these countries.

Thailand had opened up its market to primary products from LDCs and imports from LDCs on a quota-free and duty-free basis, especially from members of the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS). As for foreign direct investment, Thailand is also a major investor in the field of basic infrastructure in neighbouring LDCs. We believe that capacity-building is a prerequisite for income generation and employment creation, as well as for the attainment of the MDG targets.

The relationship between Thailand and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) also reflects the spirit of global partnership. Thailand and UNDP are partners for human development based on a two-way exchange of knowledge and expertise, in both national and international dimensions.

The partnership framework with UNDP focuses on further strengthening Thailand in the areas of governance, environment and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, while utilizing Thailand's capacities for an expanded international partnership aimed at promoting South-South cooperation. With UNDP's technical cooperation, the partnership would help enhance Thailand's international cooperation programmes by opening up new opportunities for Thailand to share its experience, expertise, lessons learned and best practices in various development fields with other developing countries.

However, determination alone will not bring about success if resources are scarce. We are exploring ways to step ahead into the area of triangular cooperation and wish to invite other development partners, South or North, to join us in this endeavour. A request has also been made to relevant United Nations agencies to enhance our efforts by, inter alia, matchmaking demand with supplies of resources and technical assistance.

In the era of globalization, when no single country can live and excel independently, cooperation at all levels between all countries is the road to fulfilling the MDGs. The Millennium Development Goals are fundamentally related to the basic need of people to attain a normal life.

Beyond the MDGs, Thailand is now pursuing more ambitious MDG-Plus development targets, which focus more on people at the local level. We do not want a world where survival is only for the fittest or the

strongest. We want a global village where everyone joins hands in making it a better place. This is truly in line with and complements the Thai Government's foreign policy, as Thailand attaches high priority to global peace and prosperity for all.

The United Nations has a vital role to play at all levels — global, regional and country — in harmonizing and coordinating our efforts. We have a lot to deliver, and it is only when we do it together that we can, in fact, deliver.

Mr. Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, our delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, which reflects the common view of the developing countries on the issue we are addressing. Nonetheless, we would like, in our national capacity, to set out some elements that we regard it necessary to highlight.

Beyond the good intentions that gave rise to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we cannot lose sight of the general development situation of the so-called third world countries. A simple analysis of the modest MDGs will lead to us to quite interesting findings as to why we are now debating how to meet these Goals.

If the number of people living in extreme poverty and suffering from hunger were finally reduced by half by 2015, there would still be approximately 500 million human beings trapped in that scourge. The irony here is that enough food for everyone is currently being produced in the world.

It is not necessary to wait until 2015 to provide all boys and girls with access to elementary education. Today's children could make do with a small fraction of the resources that are annually drained from the South to pay the shameful external debt, whose total has been covered several times over.

Why should we wait until 2015 to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases? It would suffice to reallocate a tiny fraction of the trillion dollars now squandered annually on weapons, and for the big pharmaceutical corporations to renounce greed as their working premise.

There is a desire to ensure environmental sustainability by 2015. However, what we need today is to change the senseless and unsustainable production and consumption patterns of the industrialized nations,

which are responsible for 76 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions and other ecological disasters.

It is curious how the panels stressed recommendations for the Governments of developing countries on how to address the issue of meeting the MDGs. But how can it be that a serious debate on MDG 8, regarding the global partnership for development, was not encouraged?

Time and again, we see all sorts of solutions for our countries being promoted, while at the same time those responsible for the current unjust international economic order — and who are its main beneficiaries — avoid at all costs talking about their own commitments.

Just to mention one case, official development assistance — which has been shrinking in recent years and is far from the target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national income of developed countries — should be freed from the elements that mark it as a foreign policy instrument of donors, with the aim of guaranteeing greater effectiveness.

If the developed countries really had the political will to meet their commitments and honour their historical responsibility, they could eliminate their protectionist policies and the corresponding subsidies for agricultural, fish and forest products. This would benefit poor countries and would amount to five or six times the amount granted to them as official development assistance.

For the Cuban revolution, achieving the well-being of all the Republic's citizens has been the guiding principle behind the Government's efforts since 1 January 1959, when Cuba achieved genuine independence. The political will of our officials to roll back the social ills inherited from neocolonialism has not been broken, despite the almost 50 years of economic and financial blockade, all sorts of acts of aggression against our country and the constant slander and demonization of the revolutionary process.

In 2007, Cuba's infant mortality rate was 5.3 per 1,000 live births and its maternal mortality rate 31.1 per 100,000 live births. Virtually all children attend primary school, and numerous programmes are in place to ensure that children with disabilities receive a quality education. Art education for children and young people is also promoted on a wide scale. It is with wholesome pride that we show our progress, which we have achieved without resorting to shock

therapies or neo-liberal recipes, which have only served to make the poor poorer and the rich richer.

Moreover, none of what we have achieved has been to the detriment of our fundamental duty stand in solidarity with our brother peoples of the South. Today, 47,000 Cuban men and women are providing specialized technical services in 96 countries. Since 1961, 50,000 young people from 129 countries and four overseas territories have graduated from our universities — among them, more than 30,000 from sub-Saharan Africa and 10,000 from Latin America. There are currently 31,814 foreign students from 123 countries and five overseas territories in Cuba — 24,848 of them, or 78 per cent, are studying to become doctors. All of this is taking place in the absence of shameful demands for conditionalities.

Although the Millennium Development Goals were designed to promote the development agenda of the United Nations, they must not become a straitjacket in the advancement of developing countries in the economic and social fields. We are convinced that not only MDGs but the entire United Nations development agenda can be achieved well before 2015, if only selfishness and the all-out pursuit of profits by the few who control the wealth of the world were put aside.

Mr. Christian (Ghana): My delegation wishes to commend the President of the General Assembly for organizing this debate on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We also applaud the Secretary-General for his commitment to the United Nations development agenda.

Ghana aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Antigua and Barbuda at the 88th meeting and the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the 89th meeting on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the African Group, respectively.

Through the adoption of the Millennium Declaration in 2000, world leaders assured humankind, in particular in the developing world, that in a prosperous twenty-first century no human being should die of malnutrition or preventable disease or be deprived of education or access to basic health care.

In the past few years, we have experienced a decline in the absolute number of people in poverty, accelerated growth in most developing countries and deepening globalization. Undoubtedly there has been progress. Debt cancellation and aid increases have

helped to put over 20 million more African children into schools. For instance, Ghana's economy is benefiting from increased growth, underpinned by anti-inflationary monetary policy and fiscal consolidation. The business environment has improved, and Ghana was recently rated by the World Bank as among the top 10 reformers in facilitating business. That has increased investor confidence in the economy. The prospects of attaining our long-term goal of becoming a middle-income country are gradually but steadily becoming brighter.

Despite that dramatic progress, the end of poverty is not imminent. In Africa and in developing countries elsewhere with extreme poverty and low-income and in countries in conflict, only modest gains are expected. Indications are that by 2015 some 720 million people will still remain on the threshold of extreme poverty, subsisting on less than \$1 a day.

Ghana recognizes that each country has the primary responsibility for its own development. We believe that promoting good governance and pursuing sound economic policies are crucial to creating a business-friendly environment attractive to both domestic and external private investment. But we are also not oblivious to the fact that in our globalized and interdependent world, external conditions and policies have a direct bearing on the effectiveness and policy space available for designing a country's development strategies. That makes MDG 8 more relevant and urgent than ever. We need a strong global partnership for development to complement national efforts, for we will not reach our objectives unless we act together.

Fortunately, the Monterrey Consensus and the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits provide effective multi-stakeholder mechanisms to foster rapid and substantial progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals. It has been estimated that a mere 1 per cent to 2 per cent increase in developing countries' share of world exports would lift more than 120 million people out of poverty. But the current global trading system discriminates against developing countries, hinders their participation in the global economy and damages the earning opportunities of farmers in rural communities in poor countries. As we speak, there is still uncertainty about achieving an equitable and development-oriented trading system in the Doha negotiations.

The achievements made by several developing countries indicate that progress towards the MDGs is possible when national efforts aimed at poverty reduction are complemented by adequate financial and technical support from the international community. For the international community, clear priorities for action should include ensuring that low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere fully participate in, and benefit from, globalization.

Later this month, during the twelfth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, to be held in Accra, we will have another opportunity to seek appropriate policy responses to our development challenges. As suggested by the theme of the Conference — "Addressing the opportunities and challenges of globalization for development" — we need to focus our deliberations on how to spread the benefits of globalization more equitably so that no countries or peoples are left behind.

We also believe that the international financial markets and the global aid architecture require attention. We hope that participants will use the Accra conference on aid effectiveness to be held in September of this year to take up the promise of the Paris Declaration more seriously, to really ensure greater aid effectiveness that will put aid recipients in control of their development strategy and related development spending.

The synthesis of what has been learned over the past 50 years is that development strategies and poverty reduction programmes should be country-specific, less dogmatic and less driven by successive donor-imposed conditionalities. Embracing that reality and adopting the appropriate tools hold the promise for overcoming the errors of the past and making development policies much more effective in tackling poverty.

Let us focus on making the Doha Round deliver the promised benefits for development. Rich countries must deliver on the MDG 8 commitments well in advance of 2015 if poor countries are to have any chance of meeting the other Goals. Similarly, we believe that national Governments have the responsibility to provide a supportive environment through sound governance and economic policies. We must hold Governments in both the North and the South to their Millennium pledges. We must resolve

now to refuse to miss this historic opportunity to put an end to poverty.

Mr. Çorman (Turkey): As my delegation has aligned itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union, I will try to be brief and touch on just a few issues from our national perspective.

Globally, our performance report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is so far mixed. There is no doubt that we clearly lag behind in a number of Goals. In particular, least developed countries face formidable challenges in meeting the MDGs. However, there is also encouraging progress in many parts of the world in confronting the challenges of eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality and combating diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria.

As for Turkey, although in general we are making good progress towards achieving the MDGs by 2015, there are some areas that still need particular attention. To that end, we have already adjusted our national development plan for the period 2007 to 2013 in line with the requirements of the MDGs. However, when it comes to the Millennium Development Goals, one cannot be satisfied with progress on the national level alone. The Goals should be pursued and achieved on a global scale. For that purpose, we need concerted actions through which Governments, the business community and civil society organizations in both developed and developing countries can unite their forces. Accordingly, although Turkey is a developing country itself, we firmly believe that we should also do our part to help others in their quest to attain the MDGs.

With that goal in mind, we participate actively in almost every international effort aimed at achieving the MDGs. We consider development assistance to be one of the main tools at our disposal, and we have therefore steadily increased our official development assistance (ODA) in recent years. Indeed, Turkey's ODA has risen from \$601 million in 2005 to \$715 million in 2006, which corresponds to 0.18 per cent of its gross national income. Moreover, Turkey's total assistance for 2006, including the funds funnelled by the Turkish private sector, reached \$1.7 billion. Although we do not have all the data yet, we now estimate that we have managed to further increase that amount by almost 50 per cent in 2007. It is also worth noting that almost half of

Turkey's assistance is specifically geared towards attaining the MDGs.

The Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TICA) is currently carrying out numerous projects in countries throughout the world, from Central Asia to the Balkans, from the Middle East to Africa and from the Asia-Pacific region to Latin America and the Caribbean. With 22 field offices — the last three of which opened in Ethiopia, Senegal and the Sudan — it contributes to the development of many countries in various regions. In order to give the Assembly a better understanding of TICA's outreach, allow me to briefly cite some of the most recent programmes pursued by the agency.

For instance, a fund of \$15 million was allocated for TICA's implementation of projects in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Additionally, during the ministerial conference on the theme "Making globalization work for the least developed countries", which was held in Istanbul in July 2007, we pledged \$5 million to finance small- and medium-scale regional development projects in least developed countries. Moreover, Turkey very recently launched a new initiative and decided to allocate an additional \$50 million to African countries for their projects in health, education and economic development over a five-year period. Let me add that we will continue to support and fund the projects of developing countries in as many regions as possible.

The economic outlook for least developed countries as a whole has special importance in terms of achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. We must bear in mind that improving the living conditions of the over 600 million people residing in least developed countries represents a litmus test for our efforts to consign poverty to history. In line with that thought, and as I have already mentioned, we channel our development funds through an approach focused on least developed countries. Beyond actively assisting the development efforts of least developed countries, we also do our utmost to make their voices widely heard. As a manifestation of our continuing support to the cause of least developed countries, it is a great pleasure for me to declare our willingness to host the fourth United Nations conference on least developed countries, which is to be held before the end of the decade.

Achieving the MDGs requires a multifaceted and comprehensive approach. Given the time constraint, I would like to give just one example of what I mean. About two months ago, we were discussing here the negative impacts of climate change and our United Nations-led global response to the daunting challenge that it poses. Beyond the traditionally held categorization of climate change as an environmental issue, it is also clearly part and parcel of sustainable development and poverty reduction. As the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report 2007-2008* rightly warns, we should focus on the wide-ranging negative implications of climate change for the overarching endeavour to attain the Millennium Development Goals.

We pursue a common vision that envisages building a better world for our children, where they can be raised in a safer, healthier and more prosperous environment, with equal opportunities. The stakes are so high that we dare not even think about losing the race against time. I sincerely believe that the momentum generated by this thematic debate will further encourage us in fulfilling our commitments to meet the Millennium Development Goals. For its part, Turkey will do its utmost to continue to contribute to that process.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): At the midpoint to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it is important to take stock of the progress made and to identify the priority areas for the years ahead. Extreme poverty is declining in East and South Asia. Notable progress has been made in areas such as primary education enrolment and access to HIV/AIDS treatment. However, there is some distance to go as regards other goals, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The bottom billion, who still live on less than \$1 a day, must be helped to escape the cycle of poverty and conflict through the empowerment of the individual and the consolidation of peace. In our effort to achieve the MDGs, we need to embrace the concept of human security by protecting and empowering every individual and by building safe and healthy communities. Progress must be measured by the extent to which individuals are able to realize their full potential.

In the areas of health, water and education, Japan is promoting, first, a comprehensive approach; secondly, a multisectoral approach; and, thirdly, a participatory approach.

Together with the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, this May Japan will host the fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV), which is held every five years, and in it over 40 African leaders are expected to participate. In July, Japan will host the Group of Eight (G-8) Hokkaido-Toyako Summit. Through these initiatives, Japan will take up development issues, in particular health, water and education, from the standpoint of human security. The outcomes of the two conferences will provide important input during the United Nations high-level meeting on the MDGs in September.

Significant efforts and advances have been made to achieve the health-related MDGs. However, under-five and maternal mortality rates remain unacceptably high, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The prevalence of infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria continues to remain a serious threat.

Japan will promote a comprehensive approach in global health based on its own historical experience. Strengthening health systems and retaining trained personnel are the key to effectively addressing health challenges as a whole. Efforts to control certain infectious diseases should go hand in hand with maternal, newborn and child health programmes and reproductive health. These efforts cannot be shouldered by the public sector alone. Japan is working to formulate a framework for action with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector.

Water is the basis of all life and an indispensable resource for human life. It is also related to conflict, poverty, health and gender. As a nation that has made strides in water management and flood control over the past few centuries, Japan has played a leading role in international efforts to expand access to clean water and sanitation.

The year 2008 has been designated the International Year of Sanitation. Japan calls on the international community to take comprehensive action on water and sanitation and to promote conservation and recycling of water by sharing technology and know-how. For effective water management, cooperation between central and local governments and public-private partnerships are indispensable.

Education provides the basis for a society to develop its human resources and for individuals to

realize their full capacities and potential. In Japan, a high literacy rate has been the driving force behind the economic and social development that we have achieved since the mid-nineteenth century.

In order to achieve Education for All, Japan will continue to make efforts to expand high-quality basic education. It will also make technical and vocational education and secondary and higher education available to people with high aspirations. A multisectoral approach is important to maximize the overarching impact of investment in education on every aspect of social and national development.

Japan is committed to achieving the MDGs. We must mobilize all possible resources in order to attain the goals, particularly in the areas of health, water and education.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Nicaragua associates itself with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and with the statement made by Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group.

Today we stand halfway along the path leading from the Millennium Declaration to the completion of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In spite of the fact that some progress has been achieved towards those objectives, much still remains to be done. In most of our countries, levels of extreme poverty are still disquieting, children are suffering from malnutrition, maternal and child death rates have not been significantly reduced and full access to education and health are still a goal and not a reality.

At this halfway stage, we must ask ourselves what we have achieved, how have we achieved it, where have we failed, why have we failed and which parties have not assumed their responsibilities? It has been proved that neo-liberal policies have not achieved effective results in reducing poverty; on the contrary, they have widened even further the social gaps in our countries.

Nicaragua's Government, headed by President Daniel Ortega Saavedra, is of the view that the MDGs are merely the minimum goals to which any people wishing to live in dignity must aspire. For this reason, we have undertaken effective work to achieve and go beyond those objectives. We are striving to overcome decades of neglect, gradually resolving the problems inherited from the past and working on a national

development plan grounded in our people's human, social, educational, economic and cultural needs.

We are working to promote direct democracy, in order to build a grass-roots democracy facilitated by a Government that becomes a citizen-based power, with participation for the excluded and the building of capacity to defend society's interests and its positions. This democracy will be based on instruments and mechanisms that enable the people to exercise political power in a direct fashion. It will be a citizen-based democracy in which the people genuinely participate in decision-making, management and evaluation in the context of national, regional, departmental and local policies, plans and programmes, as well as in problem-solving or responding to opportunities at the neighbourhood, community, district or municipality level in a form of self-management or joint management together with government structures.

The timing of this debate fits perfectly with our Government's own internal assessment. At present, the staff of the social cabinet are reaching out to all municipalities and departmental capitals in order to establish sectoral offices and be informed at the local level of the assessments which the leaders of the citizen-based power make in terms of the fulfilment of our plan and its weaknesses and deficiencies. They can at the same time present adjustments and fresh proposals. We do this because it is only possible to make progress if there are close bonds between the Government and the people. We must have an organized people in order to reach our goals. The Millennium Development Goals will continue to be the framework for our poverty reduction strategy, but in a more direct and intense fashion, and with greater commitment on the part of the Nicaraguan people.

As regards our poverty reduction programmes, we are generating employment in keeping with our actual state of affairs as an essentially agricultural country. We are working on programmes and policies that will develop the countryside, from which we feed ourselves and through which we can guarantee a better future. I should mention two specific programmes: the zero-interest loans programme for the start-up of small businesses, which at the end of 2008 will have helped more than 40,000 women who are heads of households, benefiting more than 200,000 people; and the zero-hunger programme, which by the end of 2008 will have handed out more than 47,000 meal vouchers, benefiting more than 235,000 Nicaraguans.

In the area of education, the Government of Reconciliation and National Unity has begun the rescue of the educational system, in the recognition that investment in the training of human beings is the driving force behind the economic and social development of the country. We have declared education free of charge and hope to increase the net primary school enrolment rate from 86 per cent to 92.6 per cent by the end of 2010.

Furthermore, the Government is implementing a mass literacy programme. Its objective is to reduce the illiteracy rate to 7.2 per cent by 2010, with the cooperation of voluntary organizations and the international community, in particular the fraternal Governments of Cuba and Venezuela. It should be pointed out that our capital, Managua, has been declared illiteracy-free.

In the health sector, the objective is to increase the quality and coverage of public services provided throughout the national territory. The Government has launched a programme ensuring that the services provided in the public health system are free. In the same way, greater resources are being allocated to fund a programme that provides medicines, replacement medical equipment and the human resources and non-medical supplies required to meet the demands of outpatient and hospital care.

Also in this sector, it is citizen participation that makes the development of programmes possible. Currently, 300 young doctors are beginning their specialist studies in the specialist training programme. In a year's time, they will be serving our people at no cost to our population. We are also mobilizing 35,000 health brigades for mass immunization campaigns and to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Our President has made a striking proposal for the benefit of our people: he has offered medical equipment and the refurbishment of our hospital network in exchange for the weapons left over from the war imposed on us in the 1980s.

In the area of gender equity, we are working to transform the culture of the Nicaraguan people — ethics, values, human and spiritual principles — to ensure gender equity among individuals, within households and in society at large. We are striving to do all that by implementing an educational programme and conducting publicity campaigns about the social and economic consequences of gender inequalities and

the advantages of equality of opportunity between women and men; by revising and strengthening the gender perspective mainstreamed into school curricula and textbooks; and by promoting the creation and dissemination of knowledge concerning the rights and contributions of women, to ensure that they are recognized as agents of change and of the transformation of development.

With regard to drinking water and sanitation, our Government has declared that access to water is a human right and therefore that it cannot be privatized, in a clear change of vision and management concerning that resource.

I have described some of the initiatives that Nicaragua is implementing at the national level. However, we all know that achieving the proposed goals will require efforts by all — not only national Governments, but also the developed countries. As the Secretary-General rightly points out in one of his reports, the lack of a significant increase in official development assistance makes it impossible to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

On the other hand, we cannot escape the fact that the supposed rules of the free market have entrenched and intensified a system of unequal and unjust economic trade, in which the great Powers have continued to subsidize their farmers, rendering fallacious the very premises that support globalization, in which products have freedom of movement and the poor have the freedom to die.

Furthermore, it is inconceivable that in 2008, 36 years after it was first proposed in the General Assembly that 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product be allocated to official development assistance, the developed countries have still not fulfilled their historical duty to provide financing for development.

That is why there is an urgent and unavoidable need to establish a compulsory monitoring mechanism to guarantee that we can make effective and real progress in achieving these goals. Otherwise, they will continue to be a sad and unattainable illusion.

Mr. Guillén Beker (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like at the outset to state that my delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals to overcome poverty and bring about social inclusion is an objective that Peru supports as a top priority. At the same time, we are aware that our achievement of the Goals will depend to a great extent on our efforts. That is why we have been working in the conviction that what is required, above all, is to create sufficient resources so that we can launch effective and sustainable policies to overcome poverty.

In that spirit, Peru has been striving to promote the growth of its economy. The results are encouraging: over the past six years, we have achieved sustained annual economic growth rates of more than 5 per cent, reflected in a 23 per cent increase in gross domestic product per capita during the same period. The favourable external context, characterized by high prices for our main export products, have contributed significantly to that result, together with a considerable increase in and diversification of exports, particularly in agriculture and in the textile and chemical industries.

As one can see, we have taken the first big step in the right direction. But we are also aware that these greater resources will not in themselves guarantee poverty reduction or greater social inclusion. In fact, these positive results have not been reflected in an equivalent reduction in inequality. Therefore, we also believe that the State has a fundamental role to play in channelling potential and distributing the benefits of growth in order to enhance social programmes and promote greater socio-economic inclusion.

The State's actions in this direction cannot be taken indiscriminately and in an unplanned manner, lest the resources achieved through such efforts be squandered. The Peruvian State is very mindful of its role in overcoming poverty. That is why it has adopted effective policies and programmes to achieve greater impact through social spending, which grew significantly over the past decade. We have also placed priority on the appropriate coordination of specific and short-term actions to alleviate abject poverty and of medium- and long-term programmes to ensure equality of opportunity and social inclusion. Finally, with regard to the tools necessary to assess the effectiveness of spending, we have adopted a public budget with result indicators and goals for the period until 2011.

All of that is in addition to the main task that the State must accomplish if it wishes to substantially

reduce poverty. I am referring to the implementation of general policies to create jobs in sufficient numbers and of sufficient quality, as the main mechanism for achieving the social integration and economic autonomy of individuals.

In that regard, we can say that the country's growth has caused an increase in employment. Companies with 10 or more workers — which provide employment for 1.5 million Peruvians — have grown by 9 per cent, and 600,000 jobs have been created, leading to an 8.9 per cent increase in gross domestic product (GDP) and a 7 per cent increase in GDP per capita in 2007. For its part, the State is striving to ensure that these jobs are of the highest quality. That is why it has proposed a social compact that promotes a democratic labour relations system and has adopted a new general labour law by consensus.

Other necessary steps have also been taken to help reduce disparities. For example, we have devised a national climate change strategy in order to, among other goals, make the population aware of the risks of climate change and ensure that the country improves its competitiveness in its responsible handling of its resources and greenhouse gas emissions without compromising sustainable development. Moreover, we have set 11 priority objectives in the area of the protection of minors, including eradicating infant malnutrition, preventing maternal and child mortality and guaranteeing access for children to basic medicines.

Finally, allow me to refer once again to the fact that, as I have noted, growth in itself does not lead to an equivalent reduction in inequalities. Unfortunately, multilateral development assistance has been focused chiefly on global growth and not on the specific reduction of inequalities. Thus, countries such as Peru, whose macroeconomic indicators qualify it as a middle-income country, have been affected by a reduction in foreign resources for social development. That will have an impact on our progress and the consolidation of our achievements.

For that reason, I wish to conclude by calling on the international community to reflect on that situation. I would recall that, in order to be successful, national efforts require the right international context and cooperation to enable them to achieve, as soon as possible, the goals of improving the living conditions of their inhabitants and paying due attention to social

emergencies. In that regard, international support is now more decisive than ever as a complement to national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Amin-Mansour (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I would like to associate myself with the statement made this morning by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

2008 is the midpoint between the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and 2015 — the target date. Therefore, at this stage, taking stock of the progress made in achieving the envisaged goals and reviewing the causes of our successes and failures is imperative in order to expedite our collective efforts to reach the targets as scheduled. Although the MDGs are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, I will, on the basis of the President's recommendation, focus on the three Goals dealing with poverty and hunger, health and education.

First, regarding the eradication of poverty and hunger, according to the reports, sustained and rapid economic growth in many developing countries created 45 million new jobs in 2007 and thus empowered many people to tackle the challenge of poverty and hunger. The proportion of children under 5 who are underweight has fallen slightly, from 32 per cent in 1990 to 27 per cent in 2004. It is anticipated that global poverty will fall to 721 million by 2017, if the existing trends continue. Those are positive signs.

However, it is a source of major concern that, according to the reports, 143 million children under age 5 in developing countries, particularly in South Asia, are suffering from malnutrition. The gap between rich and poor is widening, the proportion of working poor in sub-Saharan Africa is on the rise, and the rate of unemployment in the Middle East has remained high. Existing trends have worsened inequalities, as millions of people still find it difficult to disengage themselves from the poverty trap. Social justice, equality and better living standards for all people also remain elusive. Those are just some of the factors that hinder the efforts of developing countries to alleviate poverty and eradicate hunger. It is also alarming that, in such circumstances, only 58 countries in East Asia, the Pacific and Eastern Europe are on track to achieve the MDGs.

In order to meet the target on reducing hunger, in our view, Governments should adopt and implement appropriate policies and measures at the national and international levels in order to increase food security and accessibility, particularly for poor people. Those policies could include a reduction in agricultural waste; launching research activities on agricultural products in the context of adaptation; improving irrigation systems; controlling food prices; sustaining fisheries; allocating additional resources to the agricultural sector; technology transfers; and the sustainable use of natural resources.

The Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its commitment to eradicating poverty and hunger at the national and global levels. In that framework, the Government, among other efforts, has subsidized several foodstuffs, such as bread, and has guaranteed the purchase of certain agricultural products from farmers at reasonable prices. It is also worth mentioning that during the 32nd annual meeting of the Board of Governors of the Islamic Development Bank, held in 2007 in Dakar, my Government pledged \$100 million to the Organization of the Islamic Conference Poverty Alleviation Fund. My country also contributes to the development activities of developing countries through the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries Fund for education.

My country is very likely to achieve full primary enrolment by 2015, given its high 97 per cent net enrolment rate in primary education. In addition, bridging the gender gap in primary, secondary and even higher levels of education by 2015 seems quite attainable in Iran. Nonetheless, there remain some challenges ahead of us in that regard, such as identifying the illiterate and encouraging their attendance at training classes; overcoming geographical difficulties as regards some remote and rural areas; and improving the weak economic conditions of children's families in certain rural areas. Based on my country's experiences, strengthening the role and expanding the involvement of the private sector in establishing and managing education systems, including non-profit schools and universities, will help the Government to promote education at all levels.

At the global level, much remains to be done in increasing the number of students in primary and secondary schools and improving the quality of education. According to the figures, several measures, including abolishing school user fees and supporting

families in some countries, have helped more students to be enrolled in primary schools, and gender parity has already been achieved at the primary level in 118 countries.

Nonetheless, one cannot fail to express concern over that fact that approximately 72 million primary-school-age children are not yet enrolled in schools and more than half of the world's out-of-school children are girls, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia. The projection that, without further acceleration, 58 of the 86 countries that have not yet achieved universal primary education will not be able to achieve the education goals deserves adequate attention. In our view, emphasis should be placed on higher school enrolment among both girls and boys and on improving the quality of education. The education of refugees in host countries and countries in emergency, conflict or post-conflict situations should also receive adequate support from the international community.

With regard to health, my country is on track to reducing under-five and maternal mortality rates, controlling communicable diseases and providing minimum health-care services for the vast majority of the population. However, diseases such as HIV/AIDS are increasingly raising concern in our country, although the current rate of HIV/AIDS prevalence is rather low.

At the global level, progress has fortunately been made in many regions with regard to achieving the goals related to health. Nonetheless, child and maternal mortality continue to claim the lives of many people, in particular in remote and rural areas. The high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and the impact of conflict have slowed progress towards achieving Goal 5. Malaria continues to affect the poor disproportionately. There is a need to address the issue of providing adequate health services for refugees, internally displaced persons, populations affected by natural disasters and people in emergency, conflict and post-conflict situations.

Ensuring a favourable international environment, promoting sound macroeconomic policies, improving the internal and international trade systems, promoting rural development, building necessary infrastructure, improving market access for the export of agricultural products from developing countries, fostering the transfer of technology, mobilizing adequate financial

resources and launching pro-poor policies and enabling activities will considerably help developing countries to meet the targets and goals by 2015. In view of the strong economic growth achieved by some countries in the past few years, measures should be taken to maintain that growth rate in the coming years in order to achieve the MDGs.

Official development assistance is one of the main components of financing for development. Developed countries should allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national product at the earliest possible date, based on their long-standing commitments, which were also reiterated in Monterrey.

Last but not least, South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation — in particular in the areas of development, trade and investment — remain crucial and will enable developing countries to achieve the MDGs. In the same vein, stronger political will on the part of Governments and the assistance of the United Nations system are required to expedite the process of preparing and implementing national strategies to achieve the MDGs.

Mr. Løvold (Norway): Many parts of the developing world, in particular in Asia but also in sub-Saharan Africa, have experienced high rates of economic growth. That should make us optimistic, but not complacent. Despite some positive developments, overall progress in the fight against hunger has been moderate. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are the two regions where, at the current rate, many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will not be achieved.

National efforts supported by international cooperation work, but need to be scaled up. Development assistance will have to be doubled, but aid alone will not be enough. A conducive international framework and improved national governance are crucial.

Achieving the MDGs on health by 2015 will be difficult but possible. The Norwegian Government, with the personal commitment of Prime Minister Stoltenberg, has placed special priority on achieving MDGs 4 and 5.

Last September here in New York, with the support of a number of heads of State and Government, the Global Campaign for the Health Millennium Development Goals was launched. The Campaign is a

compelling call for stronger concerted action and new financing. Above all, the Campaign is focused on results, on getting better value for money and on leadership through a network of global leaders. More than 40 countries, funds and international agencies have so far joined the effort. Norway is committed to increasing its financial support to pursue the Millennium Goals on child and maternal health, with an additional amount of \$1 billion over 10 years. I am pleased to announce that we are today releasing the Global Campaign's progress report.

Another key challenge is to ensure education for all. According to the World Bank's *Global Monitoring Report*, support for education for all appears to be losing momentum, given the decreasing level of external financing for education. A renewed global effort to ensure the fulfilment of MDGs 2 and 3 is needed. We would like to see the meeting of the High-Level Group on Education for All to be held in Oslo in December of this year serve as an arena for deciding on specific deliverables and making progress on the education for all agenda.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women is another of the areas given particular priority in Norway's development policy. In order to eradicate extreme poverty, it is vital to ensure the realization of the rights of women. Without strengthening their role and participation and realizing their rights, the MDGs will not be met.

National commitments to reduce poverty and hunger need to be even more prominent in national development and poverty reduction strategies. Increased efforts from the international community must also be provided, if our joint efforts to fight poverty and achieve the MDGs are to succeed.

Despite the commitments made in the Monterrey Consensus, it is not encouraging to see that currently only five countries have reached the target of devoting 0.7 per cent of gross national income to official development assistance, although many countries have set timetables to reach that goal by 2015.

Finally, Norway attaches great importance to reinforcing the role of the United Nations system in the area of development. It is crucial that United Nations agencies, together and individually, be efficient and competent organizations that carry out their core mandates and contribute to concerted efforts to realize the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Normandin (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, first of all, to thank the President for having convened this thematic debate. Canada believes that the time is ripe for the United Nations to underscore the progress made, to face the challenges to be overcome and to get back on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The Goals provide the international community with solid objectives to which to aspire. Our progress must be measured in terms of concrete results, not only in terms of money spent. And reaching the Goals is only part of the equation: it is equally important to ensure the sustainability and the effectiveness of the results.

Canada has taken significant steps to reduce global poverty, by simultaneously increasing both the volume and the effectiveness of its aid. By 2010-2011 the Government of Canada will double its international assistance from 2001-2002 levels and is also committed to making our existing aid resources work more effectively by enhancing the focus, efficiency and accountability of our international assistance efforts.

Along with increasing resources, we must all step up our efforts to ensure improved efficiency and effectiveness in development programmes. This is why we support efforts to reform the United Nations development system. Several recommendations of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence should help increase the effectiveness of development assistance.

As Member States agreed in the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development in 2002, resulting in the Monterrey Consensus, each country has the primary responsibility for its own economic and social development. We acknowledge that the mobilization of domestic resources for development, the creation of an enabling environment to attract foreign direct investment, ensuring aid effectiveness, using international trade as an engine for development and addressing the problem of external debt are key to achieving the MDGs.

Over the past few years, we have witnessed record economic growth in much of the developing world. Indeed, economic growth has been the key element that has allowed some countries to make significant progress towards reducing poverty, and it should help them successfully meet the MDGs.

(spoke in English)

Innovative mechanisms are required to make the rapid advances needed to achieve development goals. To that end, Canada is dedicating an initial \$50 million over the next two years to a new Development Innovation Fund to create breakthrough discoveries with the potential to significantly improve the lives of millions in the developing world.

To accelerate progress on development goals, all development actors need to be part of the discussion. Worldwide, civil society contributes more than \$40 billion in aid every year. It is an important pillar of sound accountability and an innovative partner in development, and it can demonstrate concrete results. Canada strongly supports civil society engagement in an open dialogue — internationally, but more important, at the country level — in achievement of results.

The engagement of women is also critical. Not only are equality between women and men and boys and girls and the empowerment of women specific development goals in their own right; they are also essential for the achievement of all internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. This is one reason why Canada supports the creation of a strong and coherent gender entity within the United Nations system, to support women's empowerment, as recommended by the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence.

Also, democratic governance and peace and security are essential for countries to make development progress and to ensure they do not lose what has already been achieved. Countries affected by conflict have lost much of the gains of development. Canada's focus on Haiti and Afghanistan serves to restore the fabric of society and the credible institutions necessary to get back on the road to sustainable development outcomes.

As has been noted, sub-Saharan Africa has the farthest to go to reach the MDGs. Canada will meet its commitment to double aid to Africa in 2008-2009, compared with 2003-2004 levels. Canada is helping to achieve significant results in Africa in areas such as health and education. For instance, through the African Health Systems Initiative, Canada and its partners are helping to strengthen national-level health strategies and systems.

Canada is also meeting its commitment to increase bilateral support for basic education from \$100 million to \$150 million annually by 2010. Thanks to the collaboration between Canada and African Governments and partners, over 4.5 million more girls attended school in 2005-2006 than in 2000 in eight African countries.

Those are the kinds of concrete results that all of us need to be able to demonstrate. Our developing country partners are counting on us to fulfil our commitments, and our own citizens are expecting to see their taxpayer dollars deliver results.

Canada looks forward to continuing to play an active and constructive role in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Mohamad (Sudan): My delegation would like to express its appreciation to Mr. Srgjan Kerim for having placed particular importance on the issue of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a priority for the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. We would like also to commend the Secretary-General for paying particular attention to the special needs of Africa and for having established the MDG Africa Steering Group.

My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on behalf of the Group of African State and of Bangladesh on behalf of the least developed countries.

At the midpoint of the time frame for achieving the MDGs, our gathering today is indeed timely and crucial, and it should allow us to take stock of what has been achieved and the challenges that still remain. It should also allow us to map out how to move forward in a concerted and collaborative manner.

The MDGs reflect the consensus that development is a shared responsibility and are ultimately about reducing human poverty in all its forms. We assert that their achievement depends on a confluence of basic factors, in particular, a stronger global partnership.

While it is heartening to note that some progress has been made in meeting some of the Goals in some developing countries, the situation for many countries, particularly in Africa — the only continent not on track to meet the MDGs — warrants the international community's attention and focus.

As the background paper for this debate states, despite recent positive rising per capita growth in some African countries, the absolute number of the poor is still rising and is still projected to stand at 360 million in 2015.

Furthermore, in his report on the work of the Organization (A/62/1), the Secretary-General notes that despite encouraging progress in the areas of governance and economic management and the rise in economic growth, the magnitude of the special needs of Africa remains daunting. Extreme poverty, lack of health care and sanitation, environmental degradation and conflicts continue to blight the lives of millions of people around the continent. Additionally, diseases such as malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis are responsible for the death of more than 4 million people a year.

Sudan is committed to the achievement of the MDGs, which are central to the country's national development plans. That objective is incorporated into its constitution, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the ongoing process of developing the country's five-year national strategic plan. Sudan issued its first interim unified MDG report in December 2004 and is currently working on a follow-up report to be issued in May 2009.

Sudan has made remarkable efforts to secure a domestic environment conducive to economic and social development. The most important of these has been our effort to achieve peace as a prerequisite for development. Solid rules and guidance for home-grown governance and political, social and economic reforms have been laid down. Following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the Government has been striving hard to reinforce the peace and development process in the country.

These reforms are carefully designed to attain a high sustained economic growth rate with gradual poverty reduction and to address regional needs through decentralization and federalism. Economic transformation is envisioned in the quarter-century strategy for 2007-2031 and in the medium-term programme for 2007-2011. Sound economic management and prudent macroeconomic policies, in addition to oil revenues, have contributed to double-digit economic growth in 2008 and to a substantial flow of foreign direct investment. However, fiscal efforts are still far from meeting the huge expenditure

arising out of the obligation to implement the peace agreements, which have resulted in a rising resource gap at both domestic and foreign levels.

The financial obligations imposed by the three agreements the country has signed — the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the Darfur Peace Agreement and the Eastern Peace Agreement — are substantial. All the agreements set out wealth-sharing arrangements necessary for confidence-building, which will require substantial infrastructure and development projects that are beyond the country's fiscal capacity, despite Sudan's positive overall economic outlook. This has been aggravated by an external debt overhang that stands at \$27 billion in nominal terms — an increase of approximately \$9 billion since the end of 2000 — of which \$24 billion constitutes arrears. That external debt and the discrimination faced in the implementation of debt relief initiatives have prevented the country from gaining access to concessional financing, which could have assisted the Sudan in its efforts to achieve the MDGs.

In order to meet the poverty eradication target, we have undertaken a number of pro-poor policies and programmes such as national budget social support funds. We have also established the Sudanese Savings Bank for Social Development, the Zakat Fund, microfinance enterprises, community development funds, financial subsidies for food security activities related to agriculture, health insurance and free admission to Government-owned hospitals. However, those measures fall short of meeting the MDG targets.

In the area of education, the country has made progress in achieving universal primary education for girls and boys. While the gross enrolment ratio was 62 per cent in 2004, the net enrolment ratio was 48.3 per cent. Adult literacy has also seen progress, increasing from approximately 45.8 per cent in 1990 to 60 per cent in 2004. Youth literacy improved over the past decade, reaching 78 per cent in 2004, which indicates a marked expansion in primary education.

With regard to health, available statistics reveal that the majority of morbidity and mortality among those under 5 years old is due to diseases such as malaria, which remains a major threat, making more than 7 million people ill and killing approximately 35,000 people annually.

We must review progress in achieving the MDGs in a holistic and integrated manner. Progress in the

global partnership for development will determine the achievement of other MDGs. The following measures are critically important if we are to achieve the MDGs in a timely manner.

First, we must meet the internationally agreed target of allocating 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries to official development assistance. Secondly, we must resolve the issue of external debt and debt servicing obligations, within the framework of international initiatives for debt cancellation without discrimination. Thirdly, we must address the adverse impacts of climate change, by calling on developed countries to honour their commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and by assisting developing countries in their adaptation and mitigation efforts. Fourthly, we must promote capacity-building and technology transfer and must support the productive capacity of developing countries, especially in the area of agricultural infrastructure. Fifthly, developed countries must show greater political resolve and a genuine willingness to help developing countries improve their competitiveness in the international market and to provide market access. Sixthly, we must increase the voice and the participation of developing countries in the international financial institutions.

If we are to create an international environment conducive to social development for all it is also important to end economic sanctions and unilateral economic coercive measures, which contravene international law as well as the United Nations Charter, and which hit hard the very people whom we are striving to serve.

The President of the General Assembly has made the implementation of the MDGs the subject of an important thematic debate for the Assembly at its sixty-second session. We look forward to continuing the debate on the implementation of the other internationally agreed development goals and commitments, and we look forward to gathering again on 22 September to discuss Africa's development needs in a more focused manner.

In conclusion, I would like to state that, although they are a lofty objective, the MDGs are only part of the internationally agreed development agendas and commitments of the United Nations. We look forward to a greater role by the United Nations in that direction.

Mr. Zainuddin (Malaysia): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the Minister of State of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

As has been widely acknowledged, despite some of the progress made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), halfway through, we still fall short of many of the targets that we have set. In fact, the gravity of the overall situation facing us is all too well known, as reflected in the background papers that have been circulated. Respecting the time that the presidency has given to us, I do not wish to dwell on those shortfalls, but rather to concentrate on addressing the challenges and getting back on track.

Malaysia believes that, in order to get back on track to achieve the MDGs by 2015, the international community — rich and poor countries alike — must recognize and address deficits in terms of implementation, coherence and consistency.

The facts regarding the implementation deficit are beyond dispute. Developed countries have yet to meet the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance (ODA). But the implementation deficit goes beyond the fulfilment of the ODA target; it includes issues as diverse as market access and access to generic drugs, to name only two.

The core issue related to the implementation deficit is simply a lack of political will. Could this lack of political will be merely an expression of a crude power calculus in which the powerful will assist the weak only to the extent that the latter provide them with open markets, plenty of surplus labour and a means of placating their consciences?

At the same time, efforts to achieve the MDGs also currently suffer from a coherence deficit resulting from the following factors: first, a plethora of rules, policies and approaches; secondly, conflicting socio-economic goals, such as the conflict that exists between growth, on the one hand, and distributional justice and environmental protection, on the other; and thirdly, a volatile external economic situation, which forces Governments to respond by adopting numerous policies and measures. The adoption of so many of these inevitably results in greater incoherence.

The consistency deficit arises from a discrepancy between what is expected of the developing world and

what is expected of the developed. Developing countries are expected to open their markets in order to attract investment. Using industrial policies to build indigenous industries is passé and inefficient, it is claimed, as is protecting the financial sector in order to create a firm domestic financial base. The trouble is, history teaches us that at one point or another, all countries, including those that are currently wealthy, adopted similar policies in the past. Present experience indicates that when financial institutions from the North require injections of capital, funds from sovereign wealth funds of the South are subject to regulations that only a few years ago were deemed to be protectionist. What is good for the goose must at least be good for the gander.

As the background paper mentions, efforts at achieving the MDGs are constrained by an increasingly competitive and volatile economic environment. Malaysia believes that, in such a scenario, the factors that should support the achievement of the Goals do not achieve their full potential and are often fleeting. A clear example is the recent increase in the prices of commodities, upon which so many developing countries are staking their futures. However, although prices are rising, producers are not gaining as much, while transnational companies are enjoying the lion's share of the profits.

While realizing the MDGs is predicated on resolving structural issues such as those, not much by way of concrete action has been undertaken. Again, by way of example, we note that there has been no concrete international action aimed at building and improving infrastructure in the poorest countries. Without roads, ports and airports, the poorest countries will never maximize the potential of the burgeoning prices of commodities to achieve the MDGs. The lack of infrastructure merely strengthens the hands of the middlemen — often transnational corporations based in the North.

At the most fundamental level, sustained economic growth, which is the basis of socio-economic improvement, is about breaking the vicious circles of underdevelopment and transforming them into virtuous circles of progress. Experience proves that achieving that requires direct intervention by Governments, assisted by the international community and facilitated by an enabling international environment. That in turn implies that free-market approaches are not sufficient in the absence of government action and that the

international community must, subject to the principle of national ownership, be fully engaged. Only by addressing those issues can we get our efforts to achieve the MDGs back on track.

Mr. Aslov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to express the gratitude of my delegation to the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for having convened today's debate, which is most timely and of the greatest importance.

My delegation shares the view that the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is an objective that can be achieved, despite the unequal situations in various regions of the globe and despite the presence of both encouraging trends and lags. That will require joint and coordinated efforts by the entire international community.

In particular, it will require an increase in official development assistance; an improvement of the trade system, through the holding of a successful round of trade negotiations designed to ensure the stability of world financial markets; a decrease in countries' debt burden; and taking into account the interests of countries in special situations. Here, my delegation endorses the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Mali, who spoke on behalf of the group of landlocked developing countries.

The Government of Tajikistan is fully aware of its great responsibility with regard to achieving the MDGs and is making all possible efforts for their timely and comprehensive achievement. To that end, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan initiated in 2005 the development of a long-term socio-economic programme, the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan through 2015, aimed at systematizing the country's long-term development process in accordance with the MDGs. The National Development Strategy, which is our primary strategic document, defines priorities and general areas of State policy and is aimed at reducing poverty and achieving stable economic growth and easy access by the population to basic social services.

The document represents a fundamentally new approach to ensuring development, taking into account global experiences in development, the implementation of similar strategic documents and programmes, the lessons learned from the stages of development the

country has passed through and the prospects for development.

In addition, the Strategy is the basis for all existing and developing State, regional and provincial concepts, strategies and plans for the development of the country, and the activities of all State management organs, including the Government's medium-term poverty reduction strategy for 2007 to 2009.

At present, approximately half of the State budget is oriented towards the social sector, primarily towards education and health care. In education, Government efforts are aimed at reforming the education system and enhancing educational quality. In particular, a national educational development strategy 2006-2015 has been drafted, as has a medium-term plan of action for the development of the education system for 2006 to 2010, in order to achieve the MDGs in the area of education.

I would also like to note that the potential for State financing of the country's social sector is limited by the scale of economic growth. We support the idea that ensuring productive economic growth can strengthen the country's potential to finance the social sector, expand access to basic social services and help achieve the MDGs.

Tajikistan's capabilities and capacities, if used effectively, could serve as a solid basis for further development. They include substantial reserves of hydro-energy resources and freshwater; a variety of minerals; favourable conditions for the development of tourism; raw materials and agricultural resources for industrial use; and favourable conditions for producing ecologically pure food products.

At the same time, we should note that climate change and rising food and energy prices are seriously undermining our efforts not only to achieve the MDGs aimed at reducing poverty but also to ensure high-quality education and health care and to achieve other goals. An example here is the unforeseen harsh winter weather that occurred this year in my country. My country experienced an energy crisis for nearly three months, and damage totalled more than \$850 million. That situation had a negative impact on the

implementation of the National Development Strategy and created additional socio-economic problems in the country.

In addition, that situation once again reaffirmed the need for the speedy development of our country's hydro-energy sector. This could constitute a decisive factor in the implementation of the National Development Strategy objectives and effective water and energy cooperation in Central Asia. All eight MDGs are indissolubly and closely linked. I take this opportunity briefly to dwell on MDG 7 on reducing by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic health-care services by 2015.

According to UNICEF and World Health Organization (WHO) data, infections resulting from a lack of safe drinking water and poor sanitary conditions kill 4,000 children every year. It is clear that our efforts in the field of sanitation must be accompanied by appropriate steps and measures to ensure access to safe drinking water and basic health-care services. Although the number of inhabitants of our planet with access to clean drinking water has grown by 1 billion over the past 15 years, if we are to achieve MDG 7 by 2015 that number will have to rise by a further 2 billion individuals.

According to UNICEF and WHO data, a stable supply of drinking water will have great economic benefits and improve the health of the people of our world. If that objective is achieved by 2015, it will generate \$84 billion for the economies of the developing countries every year as a result of a drop in mortality rates, reduced health-care expenditures and increased labour productivity.

In that regard, and given that the General Assembly has proclaimed 2008 the International Year of Sanitation, my delegation hopes that, at the upcoming high-level meeting on the implementation of the MDGS scheduled for September, issues of access to drinking water and sanitary conditions will be given due attention.

The meeting rose at 9 p.m.