



PRESS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES,
LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

The world will not achieve the Millennium Development Goals if Africa is left behind – UN envoy

New York, Monday April 2: Speeding up the implementation of the “trinity” of the Millennium Development Goals, the Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries and the New Partnership for Africa’s development is central to ending poverty in Africa, the UN envoy for vulnerable countries has said.

Addressing the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia today, Anwarul K. Chowdhury, UN High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island States said that synergies between the three development frameworks must be identified, harnessed and operationalised to accelerate economic growth and sustainable development in Africa.

“I have underlined before that if the LDCs do not achieve the MDGs, neither will the world as whole. With two-thirds of the LDCs in Africa, we can confidently say that Africa has to achieve the MDGs for the world to have any hope of doing so,” he said.

Thirty-four of the 50 states classified as Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are found in Africa.

The UN official said that Africa needs to rein in the high rates of population growth, which are eroding the continent’s otherwise healthy economic growth. He noted that although the proportion of Africans living in extreme poverty increased by just two percentage points from 44.6 percent in 1990 to 46.4 percent in 2001, the actual number of people in extreme poverty increased by 38% from 231 million to 318 million due to population growth and its attendant social and economic costs.

He commended African countries for according more priority to investing in people through provision of free primary education, water and sanitation and health services. He urged them to do more to increase the access of marginalized groups, including women and the rural poor, to these services. He welcomed the decision in Berlin last week of the G-8 development ministers, joined by the World Bank and the African Development Bank, to step up microcredit facilities in Africa.

Mr. Chowdhury called for greater transparency and accountability in the utilization of both internal resources and foreign assistance. He supported the proposal to integrate governance and transparent use of natural resources in NEPAD’s Africa Peer Review Mechanism. This, he said, would strongly reinforce other initiatives being undertaken to ensure that Africa’s resources benefit those who need them most, the poor.

Earlier, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Abdoulie Janneh, said there was a need for urgency if Africa was to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

"We will soon run out of time to make the critical investments that we need to make in order to make the on-target achievement of these goals possible," he said.

The 40th Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development was organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. It was opened by the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, who said African can achieve the Millennium Development Goals if greater emphasis is put on exploiting internal capacities.

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