



REMARKS BY MR. NIRUPAM SEN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, DURING THE
INFORMAL THEMATIC DEBATE ON 'RECOGNIZING THE ACHIEVEMENTS,
ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES AND GETTING BACK ON TRACK TO ACHIEVE THE
MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS BY 2015 AT THE 62ND SESSION OF THE UNITED
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON APRIL 02, 2008

Mr. President,

I thank you for organizing this debate, for the comprehensive background papers and, while recognizing the achievements, for correctly focusing on addressing challenges in order to get back on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

A heroic figure from Latin America, Jose Marti, summed up the MDGs in a single phrase: "All the world's glory fits in a kernel of corn". Indeed the MDGs are both a quantifiable vision of human dignity and an instrument for mobilizing international action. Here MDG 8 is pivotal, though the event's focus on poverty and hunger, education and health is right in itself and reinforces MDG inter-linkages. Global partnership cannot be implemented through discussions alone but in action and implementation has to be monitored. Efforts to redefine the MDG framework by selectively including commitments from the World Summit Outcome and to dilute MDG 8 by transferring targets from MDG 8 to MDG 1 are a matter of concern. I hope the Secretariat would bear this in mind because changing goalposts can only undermine the legitimacy of the MDG framework. This is ultimately also not in the interest of the developed countries because, in Ruskin's phrase, the coloured 'tide that eddies by their doorstep is full of floating corpses' and a way to save rather than just bury these is through a meticulous implementation of MDG 8, the path to 'an unencumbered shore'.

The Human Development Report of 2003 on MDGs had already suggested solutions. The problem is that these have not been adequately implemented. The Report states that we "cannot halve hunger and poverty without restructuring trade and agriculture; the fight against HIV and malaria will be lost without affordable medicines to the poor; fiscal planning is impossible without debt relief" and technology for poverty reduction, public health (and now for addressing climate change) will not be available without addressing the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) regime. The UN will become progressively less relevant unless it moves from words to action, unless the word is made flesh and the UN's formidable convening power is harnessed to

difficult action: a periodic audit of the IMF; establishing a debt relief mechanism, such as an International Debt Commission; agreeing on some vital exceptions to the IPR regime.

Several economists have estimated that the protectionism of the developed costs developing countries \$ 700 billion a year in export income, fourteen times what they receive as ODA. Subsidies have been increasing in some sectors. As our Commerce Minister said, "We can deal with a flood of imports but not with a flood of subsidies". The problem is not lack of resources. The problem is that there seems to be little stomach for structural change. We need what Nietzsche called "the capital of spirit and will".

MDGs are a mitigation of present deprivation but can create a more just world only if combined with removing the institutional and economic causes of poverty. Bretton Woods Institutions need fundamental reform. MDGs are now virtually international customary law. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has criticized World Bank PRSPs for advocating prioritization alone rather than participation. The participation of the poor in poverty reduction and decisions affecting their lives is as important as the end result and indeed necessary for achieving the end result.

Many of the poorest developing countries remain caught in the trap of an agricultural and raw materials economy with minimal industry. That is why, as several economists have noted, they are offered debt cancellation instead of economic development enabling debt servicing; mosquito nets instead of eradication of malaria. Unless therefore the UN and its institutions go beyond MDGs, poverty and hunger cannot be eliminated in an enduring way. MDGs would then run the danger of becoming a kind of permanent disaster relief and even what one economist has called "welfare colonialism". India is conscious of these considerations in its economic interaction with Africa. Hence the emphasis on the dedicated satellite and fiber optics connectivity mission, IT centres, Indian companies in Africa procuring supplies locally, setting up manufacturing plants and exporting capital goods that enable Africa to process and add value for its exports to the EU and US markets.

The destiny of debt relief shows what happens in the absence of an industrial policy. In 2003, eight out of eighteen HIPC countries graduated and half of these again relapsed: their debt service became 150 percent of GDP, unsustainable in terms of the HIPC initiative definition. It is worth noting that between 1980 and 2006, \$ 675 billion in debt service flowed out of Africa, more than the debt of the whole developing world in 1979. Half the annual average of \$ 25 billion, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, would be enough to eradicate hunger. Incidentally, India quite sometime ago cancelled the debts owed to it by eighteen HIPC countries.

India practices at home what it practices abroad: it has waived all outstanding loans to all small and marginal farmers in India. MDGs cannot be achieved under the grim shadow of rural debt overhang. Similarly, India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, guaranteeing hundred days paid employment to every rural household is unprecedented and makes the right to work legally enforceable. It is neither a dole

nor a digging of Keynesian holes in the ground but public investment in durable rural assets. Since Panchayats or elected local councils implement this, the scheme represents the achievement of MDGs through a movement in favour of the rural poor. Madame Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson of India's United Progressive Alliance, who called it a revolutionary measure, emphasized the need for popular mobilization.

The answer therefore to questions posed in the background papers is that economic growth by itself is not sufficient and that separate action is required on poverty and hunger, education, employment and health, science and technology, free from external conditionalities or prescriptive advice. For interested delegations, we are circulating a one page statistical annex on India's fiscal and programme support to MDG related activities. Above all, popular participation is essential. Then only would MDGs be achieved in a society, rich, as the great Caribbean poet Aime Cesaire says, with the productive power of modern times, warm with the fraternity of olden days.

I thank you Mr. President.

ANNEX

Government of India's fiscal and programme support to MDG related activities **(all financial figures in Indian Rupees unless otherwise specified)**

FASTER AND MORE INCLUSIVE GROWTH – ACCELERATED HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

- Agricultural credit poised to reach 2,400,000 million by March 2008
- The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme will cover all 596 rural districts in India with spending rising to 160,000 million in 2008-09
- Complete waiver of all outstanding loans as of February 2008-2009 for all small and marginal farmers. Between 25-75 per cent relief to all other farmers depending on income status and vulnerability. Total expenditure estimated at 600,000 million in FY 2008-09
- Rural Infrastructure Development Fund to have a corpus of 140,000 million in 2008-09 with a separate window for rural roads
- Over 250,000 million to be spent on creating additional irrigation
- US \$378 million to be spent on renovating and restoring water bodies in southern India in 2008-09. A similar amount is expected to be sanctioned for Eastern and Northern areas during the course of the year

- North East India will secure 165,000 million of targeted development spending in FY 2008-09 to overcome geographical and locational impediments
- 340,000 million will be spent on schemes directly targeted at women
- Bharat Nirman provides progress that can be measured in days not months: 290 households provided with safe drinking water, 42 villages electrified, 52 villages connected by telephone and 4113 rural houses completed -each day!
- 114 million children covered in the midday meal scheme, the largest school lunch in the world. In 2008-09 the total coverage will increase to 139 million children in primary school.
- Health sector allocations to be increased by 11 per cent in FY 2008-09. Key highlights include enhanced spending on the National AIDS Control programme, upgradation of district hospitals and village sanitation projects. In the urban areas Health cover of Rs.30,000 to be provided to every worker in the unorganized sector. The scheme will commence in Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan from April 1, 2008 and will be rolled out to all States as intergovernmental fiscal responsibilities are agreed
- 100,000 higher education scholarships to be provided in FY 2008-09, with additional allocations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Minorities.

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