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STATEMENT

by Mr. Nikolay V. CHULKOV,

**Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations,
at the informal meeting of the plenary of the 59th session of the UN General Assembly
on the Millennium Project Report**

February 11, 2005

Mr. President,

The Russian Delegation is grateful to you for organizing the second round of consultations on the Millennium Project Report.

First of all we would like to reaffirm our main fundamental approaches to the report, which we already stated during the consultations on the 25th of January. We expect that they will be duly taken into account in the preparation of the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General.

Today we would like to highlight the following issues related to the main recommendations of the Report.

We support the importance of putting the MDGs at the core of national development strategies. The proposal for the interested countries to undertake needs assessments in the context of the MDGs also deserves attention. At the same time, practical modalities of conducting such needs assessments and strategies require further examination.

The matter of principle here is to ensure the leading role of the governments at all stages of preparation of these documents and, in particular, in identifying the role and parameters of the involvement of the civil society in this work.

We sympathize with the practical orientation of a number of recommendations of the report. Identification of the seven priority investment clusters is well justified. We support the emphasis on the importance of basic infrastructure development for poverty reduction.

We support the need to develop a set of practical actions – so called “Quick Wins”. The implementation of these projects could be entrusted with the UN funds, programmes and specialised agencies in accordance with their respective mandates.

Regional cooperation is of great importance. The UN support to various regional associations should be enhanced.

We reaffirm our disagreement with the proposed division of countries into those who are worthy of receiving massive international assistance as a matter of priority, and those who are not worthy of such assistance in the context of achieving good governance.

We are far from being convinced of the existence of objective and impartial indicators of good governance. Some of the sources of such data, referred to in the report, cannot be considered as neutral.

Moreover, such a division is not consistent with the principles of universality, neutrality, and non-political nature of the UN activities in the field of development. In this regard we are not sure that the recommendation to identify fast-track MDG countries is in line with these principles and can be a relevant concept within the UN.

Lack of financial resources, no doubt, must be considered as one of the major obstacles to the eradication of poverty.

We support the necessity to focus on the mobilization of countries' domestic resources.

It is of no less importance to complement national efforts with an adequate international assistance, including financial, as well as to strengthen partnership relations between developed and developing countries. In that sense the Report's logic, which is based on the Monterrey Consensus, is clear to us.

We believe, however, that the official development assistance cannot substitute for the incentives to growth that the developed countries could provide by liberalizing their trade policies.

We consider trade as an important source of financial resources for development. In our view the main objective here remains the achievement of stable, predictable and non-discriminatory conditions of access to the world commodity and services markets for all countries. At the same time special and differential trade regime should be granted depending on the level of development of specific countries. On its part, the Russian Federation has been already applying special preferential treatment with regard to the import from many developing countries, in particular LDCs.

At the same time there is a need to take into account the specificities of the countries that are still in the process of or have just acceded to the WTO, as well as all the concessions that have been made by such countries during the accession process.

The Russian Federation attaches great importance to the alleviation of the debt burden of the most disadvantaged developing countries, in particular LDCs. In this connection we have taken a number of important actions, resulting in the cancellation of the poorest countries' debt in the amount of 40 billion dollars.

At the same time, measures proposed in the Report in our view do not take into account the whole range of issues related to the problem of indebtedness and require additional serious discussion.

We note with satisfaction the balanced approach of the Report towards the issue of front-loading development assistance. At the same time we are hesitant to share the Report's assessment of the effectiveness of the International Finance Facility.

We agree with the authors of the Report that ensuring sustainable development beyond 2015 is a no less important and difficult task. By ignoring the necessity to continue to provide assistance we are not doing justice to the enormity of the problem.

At the same time the proposed frontloading mechanisms in effect presume that the bulk of the development challenges will have been met by 2015 and the development assistance can therefore decline in subsequent years. It is difficult for us to share such optimism. As we see it, massive mobilization of resources in the short-term might negatively affect the allocation of the necessary development financing at a later stage when countries would have to pay the bill for frontloading.

We share the appeal of Prof. Sachs to strengthen the coordination of the UN agencies, funds and programmes in support of the MDGs. Common approach of Member-States to the priorities of the reform of the UN operational sector is reflected in the outcomes of the triennial comprehensive policy review of the operational activities. The TCPR results should be the basis of further reform steps.

In this context we would like to stress such issues of principle importance to us as the leading role of the governments in defining the priorities and modalities of countries' cooperation with the UN, necessity for the funds and programmes to strictly respect their mandates while preserving their organizational identity, and voluntary nature of the UN operational activities.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we would like to point out the following. In the course of our today's discussion on the Report, which will constitute one of the major inputs to the preparation of the High-Level Plenary meeting the UN General Assembly, we must not forget that the development agenda of the UN is broader than the Millennium Development Goals. We expect that such approach will be reflected in the comprehensive report of the Secretary General.

Thank you.