

PRESS RELEASE

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY

17 October 2007

ISLAMABAD, 12 October 2007 (UN Information Centre) – On 22 December 1992, the General Assembly in its resolution 47/196, welcomed the fact that certain non-governmental organizations, on the initiative of one of them (the French-based International Movement ATD Fourth World), had, in many States, observed 17 October as World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty, declared that date the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. The observance aims to promote awareness of the need to eradicate poverty and destitution in all countries, particularly in developing countries -- a need that has become a development priority. The UN Secretary-General issued the following message on this Day:

“At the dawn of the Millennium, world leaders made bold pledges to the world’s poor.

They pledged a world where all children complete their elementary education; a world where people have access to safe drinking water, and families are protected from deadly diseases like malaria; a world where nations work together to cut greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming. Above all, our leaders promised a world where people are no longer condemned to a life of extreme and egregious poverty.

This year, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty falls just after the midpoint in the race to reach those commitments -- the Millennium Development Goals -- by the target date of 2015. The Day provides an important opportunity to take stock of our progress, and to re-energize our efforts.

Our global scorecard is mixed. The proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day has fallen, and we remain on track to meet the MDG target of halving extreme poverty. But progress has been uneven, and some regions -- particularly sub-Saharan Africa -- are not on track to redeem even a single one of our grand promises.

Today, the world must refocus its attention, and its resources, on the places and people that are being left behind. As we do, we must bear in mind that none are more committed to ending poverty than the poor themselves. Often, all they lack is the guidance, the tools, and the opportunities to win this fight.

Our task is to address these failings. As suggested by the theme for this year’s observance, we have to view people living in poverty as agents of change. This requires us to encourage national ownership of development strategies. It requires citizens to actively participate in policy-making, and Governments to become more accountable to

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their citizens in their efforts to achieve the Millennium Goals. Above all, it requires a true partnership for development -- one in which rich countries do their part in delivering resources and [productive employment opportunities](#) through market access, so as to enable the poor to take control of their lives.

Today, we join hands with the poor in a collective effort -- one which brings in civil society, the private sector, and individuals around the world. Tens of millions of people are making their voices heard by standing up against poverty -- at sports and cultural events, in universities and schools. They are sending messages or signing petitions that call on their leaders to keep their promises. They are calling for the actions of citizens to be matched by the actions of Governments, in developing and developed countries alike, in support of the Millennium Development Goals.

On this 20th International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, let us all stand up. Let us demonstrate the political will required to end the scourge of poverty once and for all.”

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