

An eager wait for September...

In September 2005, the United Nations (UN) will hold a high level plenary meeting which is also referred to as a summit, to review the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (2000), and the integrated follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. Member States at the summit will also deliberate the Secretary-General's report, released in March 2005, on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and issues of peace and security, as well as UN reform.

In preparation for this high-level meeting, the Secretary-General released a report, in October 2004, on the event's modalities, format and organisation. The report recommends, among other things, a three-day event taking place at the commencement of the 60th session of the General Assembly in September 2005.

Facts in focus

The Millennium +5 Summit is expected to undertake a comprehensive review of the progress made towards the commitments articulated in the UN Millennium Declaration, including the internationally agreed development goals and the global partnership required for their achievement. Apart from that, the event will review the progress made in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes and commitments of the major United Nations conferences and summits. The summit will also draw on issues of peace and security, more specifically the findings of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, established by the Secretary-General in early 2004. The report of this panel has been released in December 2004.

Kofi Annan and UN reforms

Just six months after taking office as Secretary General in January 1997, Kofi Annan announced his plan for United Nations reform. He set out an agenda of better management and coordination across the entire UN system and stronger human rights promotion and peacekeeping operations. In 2002, Annan announced further reforms, coinciding with the beginning of his second term. These proposals took up earlier technocratic themes, including enhanced coordination of the organisations in the UN system and greater 'focus' in the UN's work.

Over the years, Annan's priorities have reflected financial and political pressure from Washington amid a deep crisis in UN funding. In such a cash-starved setting, reforms tended to rearrange resources and bleed important programmes to serve ever-new precedence. The consequences brought some modern management

into a cumbersome bureaucracy, but they also made the UN more conservative and less democratic, by shaping it to a neoliberal, security-driven US agenda.

Kofi Annan announced his plans to establish the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change in an address to the General Assembly on September 23, 2003. The panel was created to ensure that the UN remains capable of fulfilling its primary purpose as enshrined in Article I of the Charter – 'to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace'. The Panel has been instructed to recommend clear and practical measures for ensuring effectual collective responses to the common security problems and challenges facing Member States. The Panel was planned to undertake three tasks in fulfilling its mandate:

- Examine today's global threats and provide an analysis of future challenges to international peace and security, including the connections between them;
- Identify clearly the contribution that collective action can make in addressing these challenges, and assess existing approaches, instruments and mechanisms;
- Recommend the changes required to ensure effective collective action, including but not limited to a review of the principal organs of the United Nations.

On March 21, 2005, the day before the closing session of the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the UN Secretary-General released his report, entitled 'In Larger Freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all'. This report addresses the recommendations put forward in the report of the Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change – 'A More Secure World' and in the reports of the Millennium Project, in preparation for the review of the Millennium Declaration. Prior to the release of 'In Larger Freedom', UN Member States had devoted months to achieve a negotiated political declaration on the 10-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action, in which they committed themselves to integrate a gender perspective in the high-level plenary meeting on the review of the 'Millennium Declaration'. In addition, they stated that the MDGs cannot be achieved without the full implementation of the Platform for Action. With the adoption of this declaration, governments reaffirmed that women's empowerment and gender equality are cross-cutting issues to be addressed not only in the discussion on the MDGs, but also in the security, human rights and UN reform considerations on the agenda during the September Summit.

The Millennium Campaign and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

In 1995, the heads of State and Government of the world, gathered in Copenhagen at the World Summit for Social Development in the midst of the series of international conferences through which the UN renewed its global social agenda in the post-cold war era and made a solemn commitment to eradicate world poverty.

Although the UN Millennium Declaration was adopted by over 150 Heads of State at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000, many governments have not acted on their promises, and the gap between rich and poor continues to widen. While many NGOs argue that the MDGs are not ambitious enough, at the present rate of action, some observers speculate that the world will not meet the current goals in one hundred years, let alone by 2015.

The Millennium Campaign was initiated in late 2002, as part of the core MDG strategy of the UN in the attainment of the MDGs. The campaign aims to raise awareness and build political will for the achievement of the MDGs, while encouraging citizens to take action to hold their own governments to account for their Millennium pledges.

However different the backgrounds of these groups and actors may be, they are more and more uniting in the common mission of achieving the Millennium Goals. The Millennium Campaign serves as a provider of information and catalyst for networking groups that are campaigning together for the MDGs.

As the UN heads into 2005, the Campaign is gathering momentum and bringing a obvious sense of urgency to the Millennium Development Goals. Register to the Millennium Campaign Newsletter to get up-to-date information on the Campaign's activities at the local, national, regional and international levels. The Millennium Campaign website (<http://www.millenniumcampaign.org/site/pp.asp?c=grKVL2NLE&b=138312>) provides a platform for independent campaigns to inform a large audience about their work and encourage people to join them in making the millennium goals a reality. The Millennium Campaign informs, inspires and encourages people's involvement and action for the realisation of the MDGs. An initiative of the UN, the Campaign supports citizens' efforts to hold their government to account for the Millennium promise.

These goals are currently being discussed both internationally and nationally, with many organisations deliberating how to include them in the various global or national strategies. Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, civil society organisations (CSOs) have made some basic questions about the MDGs:

- Why should the public mobilise behind them when so many earlier UN goals remain unfulfilled?
- Do the MDGs apply to everyone in the global street? Do the Goals concern only aid?
- What trade-offs took place in reaching the 'Monterrey Consensus' and how fair are they?
- Do the MDGs represent a new global bargain or the old-style impositions?

Many women's organisations are also exploring how to 'engender' each MDGs goal, and are calling for a linkage, within the UN, of the Beijing ten year review and the Millennium Declaration five year review. There is enormous concern about the co-optation of



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'gender and development' and 'gender mainstreaming' in a way that would seek to engender a failed development model.

Controversial discussions took place in the Copenhagen Plus Five summit regarding the report 'A Better World For All', published by the UN Secretariat, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). NGO pressing arguments resulted in the inclusion of point 8 of the MDG.

One of the major global initiatives currently on the radar screen of the Millennium Campaign is the Action Rights Week 'New'. Organised by the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (G-CAP), the Action Rights Week is an international week of action to show global solidarity in the fight against poverty and injustice by demanding basic human rights for all. Some examples of action include holding a protest or musical performance; forming a human chain; designing a T-shirt; handing out educational pamphlets; lobbying for a newspaper supplement; creating posters, banners, stickers; and recruiting opinion formers and makers as ambassadors.

The reporting tied to the implementation of the MDGs is conducted at both international and national level. At a country-level, MDG reports provide a systematic and identifiable follow-up to the global conferences and world summits of the 1990s as well as to the MDGs. UNDP, in its capacity as chair of the UN Development Group, co-ordinates support for preparing these reports, which are submitted by individual member-states. At the global level, the Secretary-General reports annually to the General Assembly on progress towards a sub-set of the MDGs. Additional reporting exercises and country studies on the progress of implementation of the MDGs have also emerged outside these two official levels of monitoring. These reports have been produced by UN regional bodies and UN agencies and programmes.

Despite the reform initiatives taken so far, there are still huge regional disparities in terms of socio-economic development parameters. We will have to look forward for some more advanced strategies which might be taken in this Millennium +5 Summit. Let us hope for a better effective plan and strategy for a far better future. ■

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