

SPECIAL ISSUE N.E. – AUGUST 2010

# The Courier

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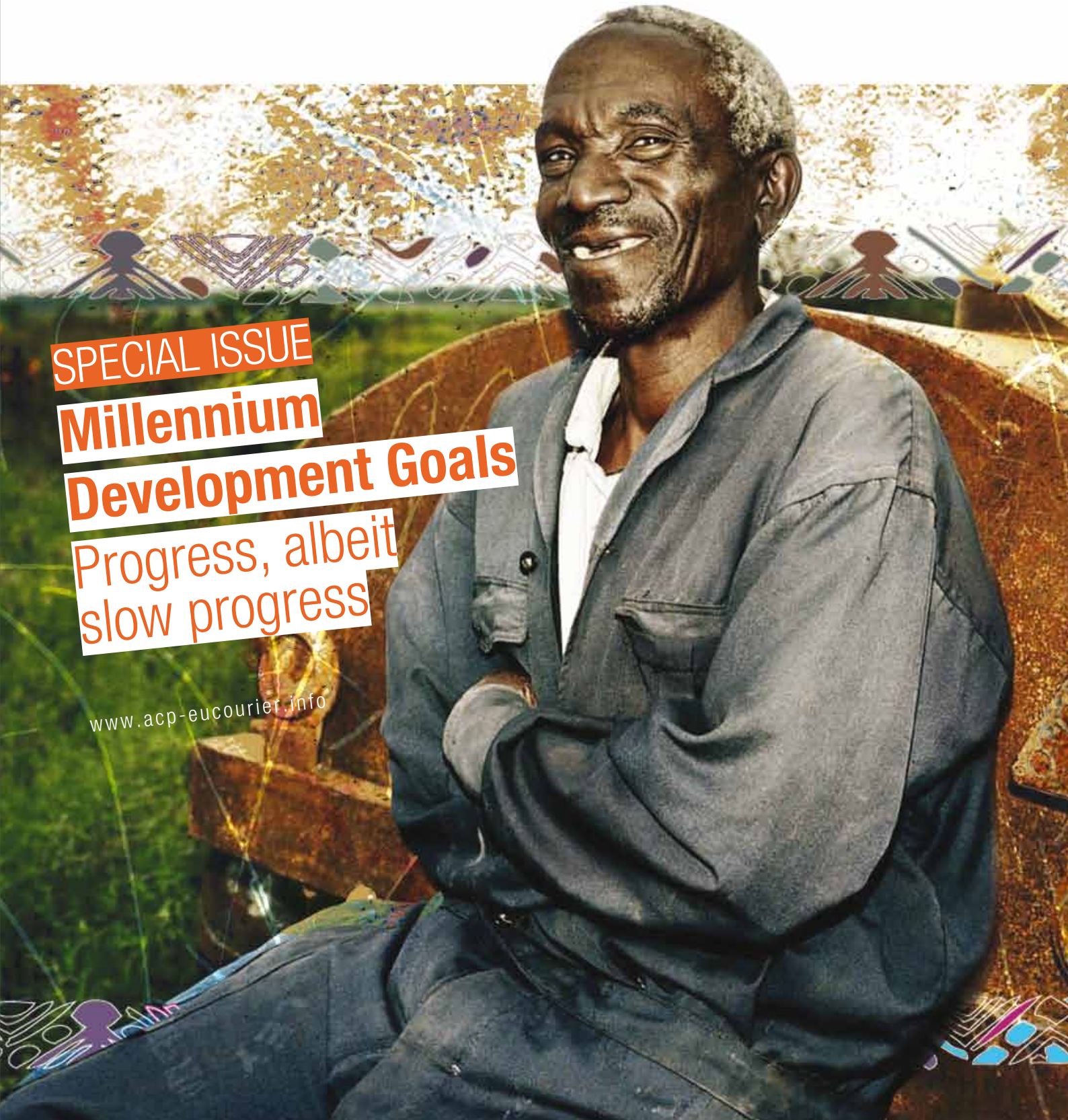
SPECIAL ISSUE

Millennium

Development Goals

Progress, albeit  
slow progress

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## Millennium Development Goals

# An ethical rendezvous



**T**he Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) very quickly achieved at least one goal by becoming the UN initiative of which people worldwide are most aware. This in itself helps the organisation to be recognised for its desire to deal with the concerns of men and women everywhere rather than remaining a place for sublime confrontation between the powerful. Recent UN secretary generals and Kofi Annan in particular, have demonstrated a desire to tackle development issues on a human scale, including by promoting development strategies in the face of much criticism.

Even before the initial assessments of progress towards the stated aims, the MDGs received a chorus of praise identifying them as a Copernican Revolution in the global strategy of combating poverty. On the other hand, they have drawn the sharpest of criticisms. These criticisms often don't concern the goals themselves but the perceived reluctance of economic actors to take them seriously and the supposed inability of very poor countries to achieve them, particularly in Africa.

### Neither too much honour nor too much indignity

In addition to the broad criticism that the practices of controlling the global economy applied by the powerful are incompatible with the MDGs and serve to prevent the poor from acquiring the essentials with which to rid themselves of extreme poverty, many specific weaknesses have been condemned. Firstly, the goals are deemed insufficient. An extreme poverty threshold set at a dollar a day seems a downgraded target coming shortly after the United Nations itself had assessed it at double that amount. Generally speaking, those who denigrate the MDGs judge them to be insufficient and abstract. Someone in the Cameroon forest could, if need be, do without his

dollar a day if his rights to his environment were respected and if he could continue to take from it what is needed for food and shelter. Others see the MDGs as new instruments in subjecting the poor countries to the global economy as their indicators are based on numbers and don't include the rights of the individual and his participation in the decisions that concern him, in the absence of which any development is illusory. They also stand accused of being too technocratic to be humanist.

### Talk and tools

These are the views of many development NGOs in the developed and developing world. But for the first time there is a real difference of opinion among civil society players. There are just as many in the developed world as in the developing countries that welcome the MDGs, seeing them as a crucial tool and important barometer of progress, useful for knowing where we are heading\*. Also, if nothing else, they are "a strong ethical rendezvous set by the countries of the developed world", to quote Francisco Hernandez, secretary general of the Latin America section of the major NGO Caritas that helps some of the most destitute people on the planet. It is no longer words and promises on the one hand and tools and means of pressure on the other that are helping us to take steps along the road to freeing the world of extreme poverty. It is the coming together of talk and tools. On that, everybody seems agreed.

**Hegel Goutier,**  
*Editor in chief*

\* The EU is one of the staunchest supporters of the MDGs. European Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs frequently re-asserts this commitment stating in his interview with this magazine in May/June of this year that "Europe must respect its commitments".



A viewpoint of the ACP Group\*

The ACP emphasises shared view with EU on MDGs

# Urgent to achieve progress



Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Guyana and President of the ACP Council. © ACP Secretariat

**W**ith five years to go before the agreed 2015 deadline for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group will reinvigorate concerted efforts to address all MDG targets in a comprehensive manner. The ACP is particularly mindful of those countries and targets most off track and shall be paying particular attention to those communities most vulnerable and marginalised.

Based on very recent data available, many ACP countries are not on track to reach the MDGs by 2015, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) as well as in

countries in situations of conflict and fragility. Certain MDG targets such as hunger, child and maternal mortality and access to sanitation, are particularly off track and require specific attention and actions.

The ACP countries consider they share the same concern with the EU on matters such as the lack of empowerment of women and girls as well as gender-based inequalities in terms of access to financial resources, unequal power relations, discrimination and stigma, gender stereotypes and violence are deep structural and cross-cutting challenges holding back progress in all MDG-related areas. At the last ACP-EU joint council of Ministers in Ouagadougou in June 2010 both of the

parties agreed on that as well as on the fact that the global financial and economic crisis, combined with the recent food and fuel shocks as well as the effects of climate change, threaten to slow down future MDG progress and could seriously undermine past achievements.

The ACP and the EU want to strengthen national leadership and broad-based inclusive ownership, notably through mainstreaming the MDGs into national and regional development strategies. Improving data collection and monitoring capacities, are critical to achieve the MDGs. They also stress the importance of mobilisation of domestic resources for the provision of public goods, to reinforce policy ownership and enable the redistribution of wealth and accountability of government towards its citizens. There should also be fair, effective and efficient tax systems, with adequate policy instruments to overcome tax evasion.

Regional integration and trade are considered as crucial for attaining significant development benefits, by generating growth, jobs and resources to sustain progress towards the MDGs. The EU and the ACP also want to pursue their partnership in support of ACP regional integration processes, including through the agreement and implementation of regional Aid for Trade programmes and to support the development of a vibrant private sector and sound business environment in ACP countries, as for example via the ACP Investment Facility and the Africa-EU Infrastructure Trust Fund.

In the joint declaration issued in Ouagadougou, the ACP and the EU recalled that Official Development Assistance (ODA) is an indispensable element of a meaningful global development partnership, and key to leveraging other financial resources such as foreign investments, public-private partnerships and various avenues of private financing.

Through this declaration, the EU remains committed to its collective target of 0.7 per cent of GNI as ODA by 2015, and international donors – including new and emerging partners – are called upon to increase their ODA efforts to the same level.

\* This text is a communication by the ACP Group.

# MDGs: The shortfall can and must be met

Interview with Helen Clarke

Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme UNDP  
former Prime Minister of New Zealand

Hegel Goutier

**A**s head of the UNDP\*, Helen Clarke is scorekeeper of the MDGs. She remains realistic in light of the slow pace of achievement of the goals to date. Like the UN's Secretary General, she is urging countries to achieve by 2015 not all the goals but the maximum possible. She underlines the goal on development aid in particular: "The shortfall between the development assistance projected for 2010 and what was promised at the G8 meeting in Gleneagles in 2005 amounts to around 0.05 per cent of the combined 2010 Gross National Income of developed countries. This gap can and must be filled, even in these challenging times. Some countries are living up to their commitments, but others are not."

**HG - Was the international community's commitment to the MDGs in 2000 a seminal moment in global development policy?**

**HC -** I was one of the heads of government who came to New York in 2000 to sign the Millennium Declaration. It was an historic moment. 189 nations came together for the first time to agree on a global commitment to reduce poverty significantly. The MDGs were then and still are the most broadly supported comprehensive and specific development goals the world has ever agreed upon.

It is important to remember that for those living in poverty, the MDGs have never been just goals or targets. They have offered a pathway to a better life.

**On which MDGs has there been particular progress to date?**

The world is within reach of a number of the MDGs at the global level. When large countries like China and Brazil are on



Helen Clark addresses the 16th session of the High-Level Committee for South-South Cooperation.  
© UN Photo/Evan Schneider

track to reach them that helps lift global achievement a lot. The poverty reduction goal is thus within reach, as are the goals concerning universal primary education, HIV/AIDS and malaria, and gender parity in education – if we can maintain a strong focus on them. We also see individual countries achieving striking results – for example, Tanzania has been able to increase its primary school enrolment rate by well over ninety per cent since 1991; South Africa has cut in half the proportion of people without access to clean drinking water; and poverty rates in Egypt have fallen by half since 1999.

Because countries around the world, including some of the poorest, are making incredible progress on the MDGs, we know that they are capable of being achieved.

**Which MDGs do you feel are lagging behind?**

The MDG on which there has been the least headway to date is that on maternal health, which aims to reduce the number of maternal deaths by three quarters between the 1990 figure and 2015, and provide universal access to sexual and reproductive health services.

We also see gaps in the delivery of MDGs to strengthen the global partnership for development. The G8 commitment from

the Gleneagles Summit five years ago to double aid to Africa by 2010 will fall well short of that target.

**Have the global financial policies and agricultural policies any bearing on attainment of the MDGs?**

They certainly do! A fair distribution of income, assets and opportunities is important. The current gridlock in the trade negotiations does nothing for development.

Two and a half billion people in the developing world depend on agriculture for their living. Farmers need to increase production and access markets.

This is where we believe Europe's Policy Coherence for Development comes into its own. If Europe were able in September to indicate its intentions on further reform to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to shape a policy more supportive of the world's poor, or give pointers as to how the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth can generate opportunities for third countries, it would signal strong commitment to policy coherence to support development.

\* United Nations Development Programme:  
<http://www.undp.org/mdg/>





Classroom of nomad children in the Zagora region, Morocco. © Sagaphoto/Reporters

# UN summit to speed up progress towards meeting the Millennium Goals

Anne-Marie Mouradian

European aid is likely to reach 0.46 per cent of the EU's gross domestic product (GDP) by 2010. This is a long way short of the 0.56 per cent intermediate target set for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The EU is therefore going to have to step on the accelerator if it is to honour its pledge, restated on 17 June, to increase its aid to 0.7 per cent of GDP by 2015. It will be repeating this commitment at September's UN summit in New York where, as the world's biggest donor, it plans to bring its full weight to bear on the international community to persuade it to increase its efforts.

Five years to the deadline and results are mixed. There is progress in the primary education sector, with schools now accessible to almost 90 per cent of the world's children. But there are also dramatic shortfalls, such as in health. To combat maternal and infant deaths, the goal for 2010 was to have "21 million additional births attended by skilled health professionals". We are a long way from that. Also, according to the report of the UN Development Programme, 1.2 million people are still suffering from malnutrition and more than a billion have no access to decent sanitary facilities.

"Even though the global recession, the food and energy crises, the challenges of global warming and natural disasters have complicated the path to the MDGs,

we must keep our promises”, stresses the European Commission, adding that “the world can no longer create lost generations”. This is the kind of statement that leaves development NGOs sceptical. They believe Europe is progressively losing its international credibility.

### The ‘world aid champions’

To prove they are serious in their attempts, Oxfam believes the 27 EU states should have adopted the proposals of European Development Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs. He wanted the Member States to make the goal of allocating 0.7 per cent of GDP to development aid binding, by laying it down in national legislation. Belgium is one of the few countries to have used this mechanism, passing a law to this effect. This year it looks set to join the select club of ‘world aid champions’ alongside five countries: four EU members (Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden) plus Norway\*. This is proof that, despite the crisis, it is

ultimately down to political will. Great Britain, for its part, clearly increased its development aid in 2009 while Germany, Ireland, Austria and Italy reduced it ([http://ec.europa.eu/development/services/dev-policy-proposals\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/development/services/dev-policy-proposals_en.cfm)). The European Council of 17 June invited Member States that are “clearly lagging behind” to make the necessary efforts “through realistic and verifiable actions” to reach the required aid level by 2015.

*While public aid for development remains fundamental, recourse to innovative and additional sources of financing has become essential*

At the September summit, the EU will appeal to the international community’s collective responsibility. The message? It will not be easy to achieve the goals set but the MDGs remain within reach if all the partners – both donor countries and developing nations – join forces and

accelerate the pace. It will also repeat that while public aid for development remains fundamental, recourse to innovative and additional sources of financing has become essential. Encouraged by Germany and France, creating taxes on financial transactions remains an option. NGOs see their introduction as a matter of urgency. The EU is also set to call for a strengthening of fiscal capacities of developing countries and a stepping up of the fight against the fraud that every year is estimated to cost them 10 times the aid provided by the rich countries! \*\* 2015 is fast approaching. After the Copenhagen summit on climate change last December, the anti-poverty summit in September in New York cannot end in another failure.

\* The only countries to have already met or exceeded the 0.7 per cent of GDP goal.

\*\* European Parliament report – March 2010.

## The EU aims to make a difference at the New York summit

A.M.M.

The European Union intends to take up the role of chief whip to encourage the international community to make up lost ground on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The position it will set out at the United Nations summit in New York is outlined in the ambitious twelve-point action plan adopted at the European Council in June.

### An action plan to get back on track

On the one hand, the plan aims to target fragile, crisis-hit states, whose vulnerability presents a significant challenge in terms of achieving the MDGs and on the other, the goals most neglected and behind schedule. In particular, it sets out new measures to speed up efforts focusing on gender equality, health, education and food security. Efforts to combat mater-

nal and infant mortality, which remain amongst the most mediocre in terms of performance, will become a top priority for the EU.

While being the most generous funding provider, at €49bn the level of EU aid fell slightly in 2009. The 27 Member States have been asked to publish their first national plans prior to the UN Summit in September. To achieve the 0.7 per cent of GNI target, the EU will have to contribute an additional €9bn overall each year until 2015. At the same time, it is understood that this aid will not be sufficient for the future. New funding sources are required.

*The EU believes the MDGs are achievable provided the costs are shared fairly with other aid providers at the international level*

The plan aims to boost the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of European aid

through better division of workload and coordination of the national aid programmes of the 27 Member States. The Commission estimates this measure will enable an annual saving of between €3bn-€6bn to be achieved. It also foresees an increase in the national resources of developing countries by establishing more stringent tax regimes and combating tax evasion. The EU will help countries which require it by providing them with techni-

cal support and tax experts. In addition to the action plan, the Commission proposes means of encouraging good fiscal governance in developing countries and obliging multinational companies operating there to provide financial and accounting data.

Other points focus on coherence between other European policies – security, trade, immigration and climate change – and means of helping countries in the south

to increase their standing with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

The European Commission will publish a new Eurobarometer survey on 'Europeans and the MDGs' in September which will be available for the high level event in New York. Web link [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm)

## The Millennium Development Goals

Since the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted in 2000 at the United Nations, significant progress has been made in the fight against poverty. However, this progress has been very patchy and the economic crisis has given rise to new threats. Less than five years from the target date of 2015, there is still much to do if the goals are to be achieved.

### **MDG 1: Halve the proportion of people suffering from poverty and hunger.**

Since 1990, the number of people living below the poverty threshold (on less than \$US1.2 a day) has fallen from 1.8 to 1.4 billion. The goal (920 million by 2015) can still be achieved, but progress is essentially due to improvements in East Asia. In addition, since the 2008 food crisis, hunger has increased again and currently affects a sixth of the world's population. To reduce its impact, the EU has launched a special €1bn programme from which around 40 vulnerable countries will benefit. In 2010, it adopted a new strategy to aid developing countries by enhancing their food security.

### **MDG 2: Ensure that all children worldwide are able to complete a full course of primary schooling.**

With almost 90 per cent of children receiving schooling, progress is encouraging. However, 75 million children still do not attend school. Thirty-eight million of these are African and the majority are girls.

Various ACP countries have launched 'high-quality primary education for all' programmes supported by the European Development Fund.

### **MDG 3: Eliminate gender inequalities.**

Two-thirds of those who are illiterate worldwide are female. However, the number of girls in primary education is increasing. It remains lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa where 10 per cent of girls have never been to school. While female access to the labour market has improved, it often remains restricted to casual or unpaid work. Their political representation is increasing slowly. Women only occupy 18 per cent of parliamentary seats worldwide. The EU is funding initiatives in all of these fields, including the fight against sexual violence.

### **MDG 4: Reduce the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds**

Child mortality has fallen below the 10 million threshold, but remains some way off the target. Children born in developing countries are 13 times more at risk of not reaching their 5th birthday than those born in industrialised countries. The EU helps ACP countries to consolidate their healthcare systems, to make primary healthcare more accessible and to address the serious lack of healthcare professionals. It is one of the main contributors to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation, which helps save millions of lives.

### **MDG 5: Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio.**

Of all the goals, this one is still most shockingly behind schedule. On average, 1,500 women die every day of complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. 95 per cent of these deaths occur in Africa or in Asia. "No other mortality ratio is as large in terms of the disparity between poor and developed countries as that of women dying during pregnancy or childbirth", the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has revealed. The EU helps developing countries to increase the proportion of childbirths assisted by qualified medical staff and to improve and increase accessibility to all sexual health and reproductive services. In particular, it supports the African Union's action plan in this field.

### **MDG 6: Combat the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.**

Around 33 million people still have HIV. Malaria continues to kill almost a million people a year, most of them children. In the regions affected by AIDS infection, the number of new cases of tuberculosis is on the rise. The EU contributes to the supply of essential medicines, the construction of clinics and the training of healthcare staff. The Europe-Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership plays a key role in developing research capacities for new medicines and vaccines in Africa.





Young women covered in traditional Muslim dress walk home from school in Hargeisa, Somalia.  
© Reporters / Associated Press

**MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability.**

This involves incorporating sustainable development into the policies of developing countries and preventing the exhaustion of their natural resources. The goal also aims to halve the number of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. In ACP countries, ACP-EU facilities help to improve people's access to clean water and electricity. Despite huge obstacles, the goal for

drinking-water is in the process of being achieved. By contrast, to attain the basic sanitation goal, another 1.4 billion people must have access to toilets and waste disposal and sewage systems by 2015.

**MDG 8: Establish a global development partnership.**

The developed countries have undertaken to contribute 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) to development aid. They are still a long way off this target.

The global development partnership aims to address the needs of the least developed countries, landlocked nations and small island states to improve the poor countries' access to global markets, to reduce their debt burden, to provide access to affordable essential drugs and to put new information and communication technologies (mobile telephony, Internet) within everyone's reach.

## African, Caribbean Pacific Countries

# Progress, albeit slow progress



Mali. © Reporters / Photononstop

The United Nations New York Summit of September 2010, devoted to the Millennium Development Goals, will be the occasion for the international community to assess the progress made over the past decade. Five years before the 2015 deadline, the results are mixed. While there has been real progress in some fields, such as education, much remains to be done, especially in meeting the goals linked to health and combating poverty, and in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries in particular.

Seydou Sarr\*

“The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are achievable, and failure is not acceptable. So little time is left before the 2015 deadline for the MDGs. Much more needs to be done”, declared Ali Treki, President of the UN General Assembly, in New York in June. He was underlining the international organisation’s concern just a few days prior to the publication of the 2010 report on the MDGs.

The report, published on 23 June 2010 ([www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)), stresses

the joint efforts made in seeking to reach the MDGs that have brought satisfactory results in many fields, including reducing poverty. “The developing world as a whole remains on track to achieve the poverty reduction target by 2015. The overall poverty rate is still expected to fall by 15 per cent by 2015, which translates to around 920 million people living under the international poverty line – half the number in 1990”, states the report.

Another goal for which the UN notes significant progress is in primary education. In this area, sub-Saharan Africa, which includes most of the ACP countries, seems to have made the most rapid progress, from 58 per cent attending school in 1999 to 76 per cent in 2008.

In the health field, the indicators are encouraging according to the report, with a notable improvement in combating malaria and AIDS and in measles immunisation. These actions have brought a drop in infant mortality from 12.6 million deaths in 1990 to 8.8 million in 2008, according to the report’s figures.

## Slow progress, especially in Africa

Despite the major progress recorded, most of the ACP countries, especially in Africa, still have a long way to go before they achieve the goals set in the 2000 Millennium Declaration. In the 2010 African Economic Outlook report ([www.africaneconomicoutlook.org](http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org)) presented at the end of May 2010 in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, the African Development Bank (AfDB) notes that “The latest global financial and economic crisis broke the growth cycle that Africa experienced between 2000 and 2008. This situation, coupled with other factors, has called into question these countries’ aspirations to achieve the MDGs”. The AfDB also estimates that “an additional US\$50M will be needed every year for Africa to reach the level of growth in its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) essential to achieving the goal of reducing poverty by one half by 2015”.

Despite the undertakings given at the various summits of ACP leaders on providing better quality health care at affordable prices, “hundreds of thousands of women and girls die every year during pregnancy or childbirth, and between 10 and 15 million others suffer long illnesses or handicaps caused by complications linked to pregnancy, when the means and the knowledge to save them exist”, as UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon pointed out in April when launching an action plan\*\* for maternal and infant health. The Secretary General also stressed the role of women as a motor for progress in the world’s poor societies in the sense that they look after children, gather crops and bring cohesion to families and communities. “Healthy mothers raise healthy children. And these healthy children will help build prosperous societies”, he pointed out, highlighting the close link in poor countries between the strengthened role of women and improvements in living conditions, health and education of children.

## More solidarity and more effective aid

Many developed countries have given commitments to increase the level of public aid for development, in accordance

with the Accra Agenda for Action adopted in September 2008, which followed the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness. Adopted by OECD member countries in 2005, this declaration is based on the principles of developing countries taking ownership and setting and managing their own strategies, aid that is aligned with policies defined by the beneficiary countries, the harmonisation of the actions of donor countries, the management of results and mutual accountability.

The emphasis is placed on the need to speed up progress towards realising the MDGs and the fight against poverty while not forgetting the needs for reconstruction following armed conflicts or natural disasters.

To meet the many challenges facing countries with a fragile economy, they must no doubt be helped to acquire additional capacities. Science, technology and innovation are certainly among the strengths that, more than ever, must be placed at the heart of development policy.

\* Journalist, Infosud Brussels.

\*\* <http://www.who.int/pmnch/activities/jointactionplan/en/index.html>



UN symbol. © Reporters

### Pacific, irregular progress

"There is still a long way to go before the Pacific region achieves its Millennium Development Goals," declared Peter Wise, Fiji's National Planning Minister, a year ago. Since then, there has been little change. The Pacific countries will not achieve all the MDGs in 2015, the deadline set by the United Nations.

There are some positive points, nonetheless. The countries of the region have managed to bring tuberculosis under control and to reverse trends in the spread of disease (Goal 6 of the MDGs). They have also achieved one of the four targets of the 7th MDG (ensuring environmental sustainability) by creating biodiversity reserves. However, admitted Peter Wise, the challenges remain enormous in the fields of combating poverty and malnutrition, improving maternal health and access to drinking water.

### Caribbean perspective: Data dearth

Trinidad and Tobago (T & T), a Middle Income Country in the South-Eastern Caribbean has already surpassed many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), says Marcia de Castro, Resident Representative, of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the country. The former government of Patrick Manning incorporated many of the MDGs in his Vision 2020 to make T & T a developed country by 2020. However, Marcia de Castro makes a point that is relevant to many countries in measuring how far they have come in achieving the MDGs; a lack of reliable data.

For example, one of the big concerns ex-

pressed by donors in Trinidad and Tobago is assessing just how many people live below the poverty line and in particular, those still without access to clean running water. The European Union's (EU's) 2002 study on the number below the poverty line estimated this figure to be around 17-20 per cent. Nearly a decade on, it is still the reference document on poverty statistics for the country, says Marcia de Castro. The EU's Chargé d'Affaires in T & T, Stelios Christopoulos, indicates that ten per cent of Trinbagonians\* still have no access to clean running water. "Data is power", says Marcia de Castro.

\*A national of Trinidad and Tobago



# Africa's vast potential for the emerging countries

Even though huge social and economic disparities and inequalities remain within their borders, the so-called emerging countries are today among the leaders in combating world poverty. Following their strong economic performances of recent decades, Africa today offers vast potential for China, India and Brazil.

has led to it forging economic relations with Nigeria, Libya, Sudan and Angola in particular as a means of diversifying its energy resource supplies. The India-Africa summit of April 2008 in New Delhi affirmed this new partnership approach.

India now also offers Africa economic aid and assistance in combating poverty. In this it is drawing on the dynamism of its private sector, especially a pharmaceutical sector with cheap generic medicines that has made it the pharmacy for the developing countries. Although it denies it, India is now engaged in genuine competition with China in winning African markets.

## Brazil joins in

Brazil, another emerging country that does not want to be left out of the picture, has recently launched a charm offensive aimed at Africa. The many initiatives promised personally by President Lula, who has made many trips to the continent, include the decision to strengthen the economic partnership between Brazil and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), announced at a summit in Cape Verde on 3 July. The two parties pledged to explore new investment opportunities in the fields of biofuels and sustainable energy, the processing of agricultural products and infrastructure improvements, with the emphasis on private sector partnership and the involvement of businessmen. Central to the summit discussions were the fight against poverty, food insecurity and an improved capacity to tackle development problems.

S.S.

US\$30M over three years to the poorest countries.

## China discovers Africa

China's raw material needs are at the basis of an accelerated increase in cooperation with Africa. In his UN address in September 2008, the Chinese prime minister made a series of promises regarding Africa's agriculture sector and food security. This was in addition to cancelling interest-free loans to the least developed countries that expired at the end of 2008 and granting tax exemption on 95 per cent of the products that originate in African countries. The promises were acted on in March 2009 with the signing of a series of agreements between China and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the granting of a donation of

China understands the vast potential of the African continent as a market for its manufactured products, textiles and domestic electrical appliances that are flooding the continent. China is also active in major infrastructure works. This is all a very long way from the Chinese missionary who arrived with the Little Red Book to convert the African masses to the communist ideology. Today the attraction is economic.

## India looks to Africa

Until recently, India had failed to capitalise on the presence of its Diaspora in Africa, principally Kenya and South Africa. But the strong growth of past years



The bund Shanghai; commuters in Mumbai; stock exchange in Sao Paulo. © Reporters



# EU States must up their game to score MDGs

More and better EU aid can score Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), says the annual report of AidWatch, published by the European Confederation for Relief and Development NGOs (CONCORD) which represents over 1,600 European Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

Debra Percival

For four years, *AidWatch* has been tracking the ups and downs in both the quality and quantity of Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments across the 27 member states. Its newly published report, *Penalty Against Poverty*, says that EU member states pledged €49bn, averaging 0.42 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) which is €1bn less than 2008 levels.

***“In Malawi aid is lifting agricultural production of smallholders and is bringing down the spread of AIDS in Uganda and Kenya”***

Estimates for 2010 put EU aid at 0.46 per cent of GNI, short of the EU’s collective 0.56 per cent target agreed by Member States back in 2005. “On the amount of aid, I am determined that Member States agree to prepare concrete and credible yearly action plans to meet our 2015 target of 0.7 per cent of GNI. This will be key if we are to call upon our international partners to match EU’s level of ambition”, said EU Development Commissioner Andris

Piebalgs responding to the report.

“Commitments are way off what is needed to keep Europe on track for the MDGs”, Javier Pereira, author of the *AidWatch* report, told journalists. He predicts a shortfall of €11bn for 2010 or even €19bn if “inflated” aid is excluded from the figures, drawing attention to the funding of debt cancellation, student bursaries and for refugees which boosts figures. Pereira

said that the missed EU target will be largely due to Italy, Germany and France failing to fulfil commitments.

“The litmus test of the EU’s ambitions on the MDGs will come at the UN Summit to review the MDGs in September”, Elise Ford, Head of EU Advocacy for Oxfam International told journalists. She said political commitment in the EU to increased ODA had been shown last year in the aid increases of Belgium, the United Kingdom and Slovenia, which upped its ODA budget by €51M in 2009.

To view the full report see: <http://www.concord-europe.org>

To view the 12 point plan of Commissioner Piebalgs on MDGs see: [http://ec.europa.eu/development/how/achieving\\_mdg\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/development/how/achieving_mdg_en.cfm)

## Action on aid

“In Malawi aid is lifting agricultural production of smallholders and is bringing down the spread of AIDS in Uganda and Kenya”, said Hussaini Abdu, Country Director of ActionAid Nigeria interviewed by *The Courier*. Abdu voiced a CONCORD call for civil society and parliaments in developing countries to be fully involved in planning aid and for a financial transaction tax in the EU. “A tiny tax would raise billions in the EU—for issues such as poverty relief and climate change”, he said. In the report, CONCORD also calls for more coheren-

ce between EU development policy and others, such as trade. CONCORD also endorses the European Commission’s call for a ‘peer review mechanism’, whereby one EU Member State monitors aid development commitments of a fellow Member State, including an ‘overseer’ role for the European Parliament, and wants Member States to respect their commitments under the Paris (2005) and Accra international agreements on aid effectiveness. CONCORD is also pushing for talks to exclude EU spending on security and migration projects from ODA funds.

Europe questioned by UN agencies, NGOs and the European Parliament

# More financing needed

The visionary Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will not be attained if international actors fail to take a series of measures to unbridle restrictions on development. These include fulfilment of commitments on rich countries' development aid and clamping down on illicit financial transactions and tax evasion. A number of associations and institutions regret the fact that the European Union (EU) is not showing sufficient leadership on such issues.

H.G.

**T**he European Parliament considers the risky financial transactions which led to the global financial and economic crises to be a straitjacket stifling the attainment of the MDGs. It also regrets that the international authorities did not look far enough for other means of financing that would have allowed the agreed objectives to be fulfilled. At their plenary session in June 2010, MEPs adopted a resolution stipulating that the European Union must fight for ambitious methods to ensure the attainment of the MDGs, including new financial mechanisms such

as a tax on financial transactions. On the subject of financing of development, the proposer of the resolution, Michael Cashman, stood firm when addressing the gallery: "What I want to see is leadership from the EU, not the minimum set that they can agree on, but a commitment to that 0.7 per cent of national income, a commitment to additional financing."

The other measures advocated by the European Parliament include a more substantial easing of poor countries' debts, a strengthening of the fight against tax evasion and illicit financial transactions, and a reduction in taxation on remittances sent back by migrants from poor countries.

## Africa: at the top of the list for MDGs

The countries which have made the greatest progress as regards the Millennium Development Goals are the poorest ones, and this group is dominated by Africa, which numbers 11 countries out of the top 20. Moreover, half of the countries on the continent are now in a position to attain the most important goal, namely that of reducing poverty by half. This is the main point made in a preliminary report compiled by Overseas Development Institutes (ODI) and the UN Millennium Campaign and made public last June at the meeting of the leaders of the G8 and G20 in Toronto.

Countries of low and average income have registered progress in terms of the most important development indicators. For the authors of the study, this fact provides a refutation of claims that Africa will miss the boat as regards the MDGs, and highlights the effectiveness in Africa of the process of cooperation between governments and citizens financed by donor states, which should convince the latter that the aid provided is indeed a profitable investment.

The study evaluated 'relative' and 'absolute' progress, the first of which did not take account of achievements in comparison with 1990, the base year, or 2000, the year when the MDGs were adopted. The twenty countries which top the list in terms of 'absolute' progress are, in descending order: Benin, Bangladesh, Mali, Honduras, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Gambia, Ghana, Malawi, China, Vietnam, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Rwanda, Nepal, Nicaragua, India, Guatemala, Cambodia, and Togo.

The study also makes it clear that a country makes all the more progress when it enjoys the advantages of a stable government, a public sector which works on behalf of citizens, and a significant level of decentralisation.



© European Parliament





Timor-Leste farmer carries away crops destroyed by heavy rains. © UN Photo/Martine Perret

From another angle, the OECD's view was expressed by the director of the Development Assistance Committee, Eckhard Deutscher, who made the point that "the biggest challenge the EU's development aspirations are facing is the lack of policy coherence... Trade, development, agriculture and environment policies are simply out of sync with regard to developing countries."\*

The End Poverty 2015 Millennium Campaign, a UN inter-agency organisation set up by the former general secretary,

Kofi Annan, points out that EU countries have not respected their commitments as regards the provision of development aid amounting to 0.7 per cent of GDP, and have not changed their commercial and agricultural policies to a sufficient extent to render them compatible with the development needs of the countries of the South. The Campaign also criticises the subsidies to European farming which are, moreover, 'unsustainable', as well as the failure to open up the European market.

The Millennium Campaign does, on the other hand, express its support for the European Commission, which proposed measures designed to ensure that member states complied with the 0.7 per cent target and a peer review mechanism to guarantee their implementation. European states have not, however, fulfilled their obligations in this respect.

\* See [www.endpoverty2015.org/en/node/803](http://www.endpoverty2015.org/en/node/803)

### Indigenous and tribal peoples, neglected by the MDGs

The indicators of MDG achievements are not designed to take into account groups such as indigenous or tribal communities. A study carried out in 2006 by the International Labour Organization (ILO) on a section of the Baka\* population in Cameroon maintains, together with similar research in Bolivia, Cambodia, Guatemala and Nepal, that it is impossible to evaluate the level of achievement of MDGs for these peoples.

The study on 'Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and the Millennium Development Goals' in Cameroon claims that indigenous and tribal peoples (ITP) are excluded from the definition of the objectives, and

that, worse still, "the strategies for their implementation even could contribute to the worsening of the poverty, marginalisation and exclusion of which ITP are victims". The study quotes an assessment carried out by the UN Inter-Agency Support Group, according to which "MDGs are not usually focused on the questions which are of vital importance for indigenous and tribal peoples, that is, land rights, the management of natural resources, and participation in the definition of political, cultural and human rights, as well as questions relating to marginalised groups".

The lack of relevance of poverty indicators is considered to be a clear example of this. The definitions of poverty in official reports would seem to be diametrically

opposed to those of the Baka people. On one hand, it is defined as a lack of the material and financial resources required to satisfy their basic needs, whereas on the other it is the lack of control over the forest resources that provide the majority of their livelihoods, the lack of access to basic services, and non-representation at a political level. The measures taken by the state to increase their purchasing power, such as new infrastructure or the creation of designated areas in order to facilitate economic exchange, which are then often confiscated by others, often actually work to the detriment of hunter-gatherers like the Baka.

\* The Baka number 40,000 individuals, and live within an area of some 75,000 km<sup>2</sup>.



Outdoor class run by the local community for the children of squatters in Negril, Jamaica. © UN Photo/Milton Grant

## Is primary education for all within reach?

A.M.M.

According to the United Nations' 2010 Report, Millennium Development Goal No. 2 – ensuring primary education for all – is the one which has achieved the best results. Today, more than 88 per cent of children in the world receive schooling (compared to 81 per cent in 1990).

However, there is still a long way to go to ensure universal provision by 2015. There are still 75 million children who

do not attend school, including 38 million Africans, who represent 45 per cent of the world's population of children without schooling. In spite of efforts to reduce gender inequality, the majority (55 per cent) of those left without an education are young girls. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) estimates that 44 countries, 23 of which are in Sub-Saharan Africa, have practically no chance of achieving MDG 2.

However, while the rate of education is lowest in Africa, it has nevertheless increased from 58 per cent to 76 per cent

between 1999 and 2008, with incredible progress in some cases. The improvements are clearly evident in the countries which have introduced free primary education. In Burundi, for example, this decision has resulted in a threefold increase since 1999 in the number of children receiving an education, with an attendance rate of 99 per cent in 2008\*. In Tanzania, the number of children enrolled in primary schools has doubled in four years. Other countries, including Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and Benin, have also adopted 'education for all' programmes with the support of the European Development Fund (EDF).

### A critical shortage of teachers

Teaching quality is still an issue. The increase in enrolments after the abolition of fees presents huge challenges. This is due to the lack of teachers, which has become critical since most countries froze civil service recruitment after the introduction, in the 1990s, of structural adjustment plans required by the funding providers. To make up the critical shortfall of teachers, communities have attempted to organise themselves by recruiting and paying for 'community' school teachers themselves.

According to forecasts by UNESCO's Institute for Statistics, 1,159 million additional positions need to be created by 2015 in Sub-Saharan Africa, but if departures (retirement, resignations and deaths) are also taken into account, the number of teachers which need to be recruited rises to more than 2.3 million, for which the states lack the necessary financial resources. Kevin Watkins, UNESCO's Director of the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report, has sounded the alarm: "There has been a worrying decline in international aid for education." According to the OECD's figures, the amount of international aid for primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa fell from US\$1.72bn in 2007 to US\$1.65bn in 2008. "In view of the increase in primary education enrolments, aid per pupil has fallen by 7 per cent", said a UNESCO spokesperson.

\* Source: United Nations (Millennium Goals): <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>



# Sierra Leone acts on maternal and infant mortality

## Government initiative for free health care

Sierra Leone has some of the highest rates in the world for both maternal and infant mortality. We report from the field on how a new free government health policy could save the lives of many women and children.

Mariama Khai Fornah

**M**ariama Limba has benefited from the new free health programme in Pujehun, Southern Sierra Leone. A resident of the Galiness Perre chiefdom, she is over fifteen miles away from a referral hospital. She has just given birth to twins, both boys. All of her previous six babies were delivered at home with assistance from a birthing attendant but three died before their first birthday simply because at the time, she had no medical health care.

Her new twins were delivered in a hospital. She says she would have lost both her own life and the lives of her twins were it not for the new free medical service. She was bleeding in her own village and was rushed to the health centre in a nearby village. She was then referred to the government hospital in Pujehun where she was diagnosed with eclampsia and admitted for over two months. She eventually gave birth by a caesarean section operation in the hospital.

### Grim statistics

Mariama is one of the lucky ones. According to an Amnesty International 2009 report, in Sierra Leone, one in eight women risk losing their lives during pregnancy or childbirth. This is one of the highest maternal death rates in the world. Thousands of women bleed to death after giving birth. Most die in their homes, some on their way to hospital. Fewer than half of the deliveries are attended by a skilled birth attendant and fewer than one in five deliveries are carried out in health facilities, Amnesty International's Secretary General Irene Khan during the launch of a campaign to reduce maternal deaths in Sierra Leone said: "these grim statistics reveal that maternal deaths are a human rights emergency in Sierra Leone".



Sierra Leonean woman and child attend the April launch of the free medical care programme, Princess Christian Maternity Hospital, Freetown. © Associated Press / Reporters

### *President Ernest Bai Koroma has launched a free health policy catering for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five*

In line with his agenda for change, President Ernest Bai Koroma launched on 27 April a free health policy catering for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five. Medical services will be delivered free of charge at the point of service to ensure a significant improvement in maternal and child health.

The free health system, encouraged by the Millennium Development Goals

(MDGs), has started to yield fruit in Pujehun. Women are now flooding into the different health centres and government hospitals to access the free medical services. Matron Susan Charles, in charge of the Pujehun government hospital, says that before free care was available, pregnant women did not go to the hospital due to fear of the expenses involved. In January this year, they received only nine admission cases but in two months following the launch of free medical services, cases had risen to 46. Matron Charles said they now believe around 95 per cent of pregnant women are now visiting a health centre more regularly.



# 'Goal' against maternal and infant deaths

Very important Millennium Development Goals for young people

H.G.

In September 2000, the United Nations (UN) adopted the most important plan in its history of combating extreme poverty in the world: the Millennium Development Goals. The word 'goal' is used in the sense of an objective but the way it is used in the language of sport is also very relevant to the situation.

At the UN, 189 countries, meaning almost every country in the world, represented directly by 147 national leaders, adopted the set of eight goals aimed at eradicating extreme poverty by 2015.

Among the eight goals to be achieved, one of the most important is to score a victory against the deaths of mothers during pregnancy or childbirth and of newborns in the world's poorest countries. For every 100 women who die in this way, 95 of them are in Africa or Asia. That is an intolerable injustice, hence the goal which aims to reduce these deaths by two-thirds. Another goal concerns young children who die before the age of five in poor countries, for whom the mortality rate is

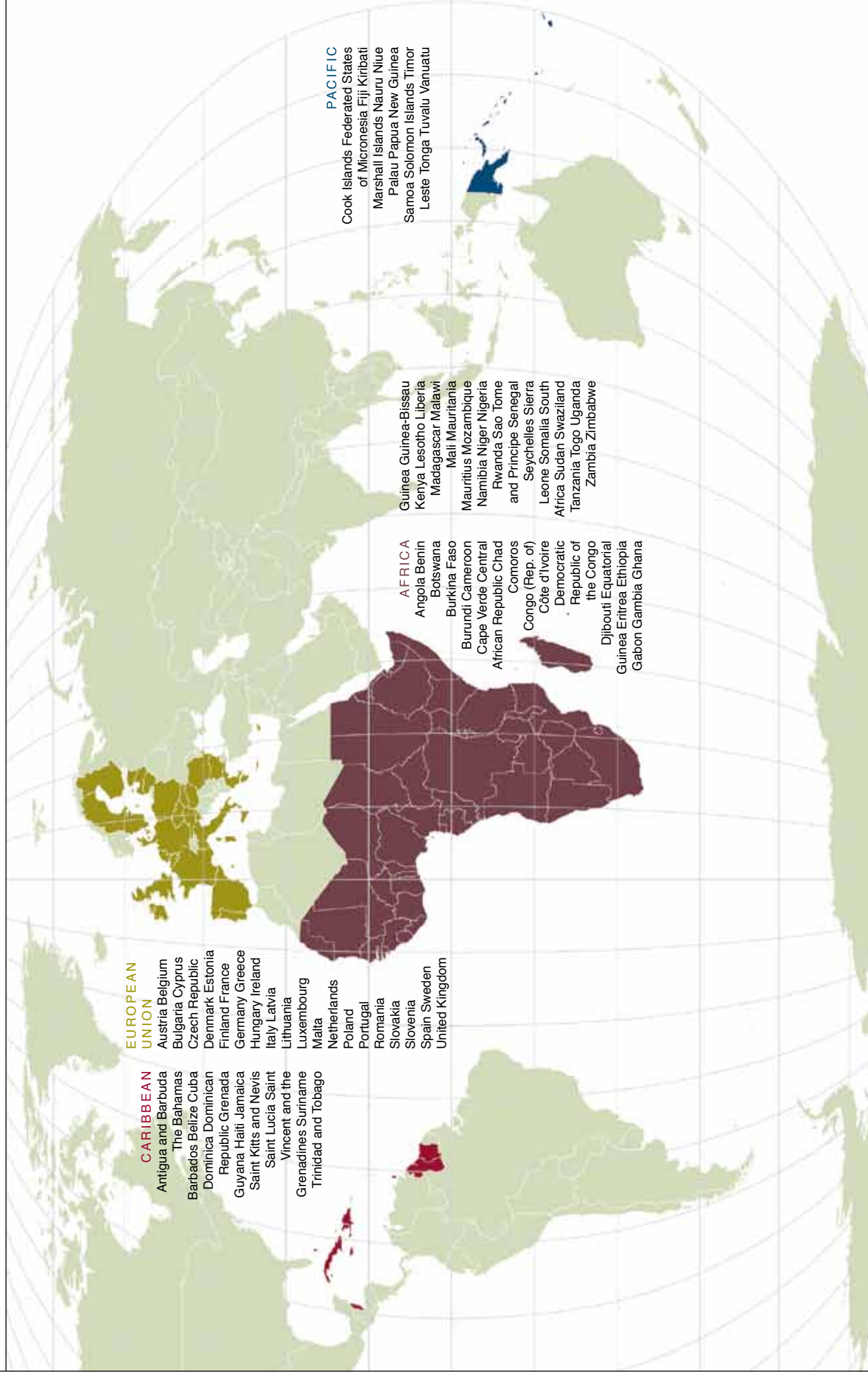
13 times higher than in rich countries. Again, this is an intolerable situation. In this case the goal is to reduce the number by three-quarters.

In September 2010 world leaders will be gathering in New York to assess the results. Just five years remain. Progress has been significant, but it has occurred too slowly. The decision made will no doubt be to speed up the work in order to achieve as many goals as possible.



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# Africa – Caribbean – Pacific and European Union countries



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