

Ways to reach the MDs, Speech during the High-Level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals at the United Nations General Assembly

Co-Presidents,

The Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ten years ago, an assessment of the ground covered shows that although significant results have been obtained, the achievement of all the goals by the year 2015 remains uncertain. The United Nations and the African Union note that, while Africa, to mention only that continent, has made remarkable progress towards achieving the MDGs, the pace, and even the quality of the results obtained, are not such as can stir optimism; rather, at best, they are a reason for cautious satisfaction.

I would like, in this regard, to commend our Secretary-General, Mr BAN KI-MOON, for the insight afforded by the reports published by the Organization, ahead of our sitting. I avail myself of this opportunity to hail the common African position, which should remind us all that Africa is the only continent which may not achieve the MDGs on schedule.

Thus, the interesting thing about our sitting of today is that it affords the representatives of United Nations member countries the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to accelerating the achievement of the Goals by 2015.

My vision on the MDGs will centre on three aspects which I consider essential for their achievement, namely implementation of Goal No. 8: develop a global partnership for development, access to energy and job creation.

Co-Presidents,

However pertinent the complementarity between the MDGs may be, it should not make us lose sight of the fact that there is one of them on which the achievement of all the others depends, namely Goal No. 8.

Indeed, to successfully mobilize development resources, we need to develop a more equitable trading and financial system; deal comprehensively with the debt problem; provide official development assistance that is constant, predictable and effective; provide access to essential drugs; and reduce the digital divide.

If together we cope with these challenges, which constitute the targets of Goal No. 8, I believe that all the others will stand a chance of being achieved.

The second factor that I consider important for the achievement of the MDGs is access to energy. Today, there is no doubt that energy resources have a multiplier effect on the achievement of the goals relating to poverty reduction, education, health, gender and environment.

Energy resources facilitate not only increased agricultural production but also water supply and the development of income-generating activities for the poorest segments of the population, in particular, women. Experience further teaches us that access to energy leads to the institution of quality education, while facilitating the dissemination of new communication technologies. Also worth recalling is the role of energy in boosting girl child education by reducing household chores.

The benefits of access to energy are also reflected in maternal and child health through improved monitoring of pregnancies and child delivery as well as conservation of vaccines and medicines. Furthermore, the use of modern sources of energy directly impacts not only the health of women, who no longer have to inhale biomass gases, but also environmental protection in that it helps check forest destruction and desert encroachment.

Lastly, we cannot reasonably expect to achieve the MDGs without addressing the challenge of employment. Indeed, employment is more than ever before a crucial factor in alleviating poverty and fostering personal dignity, collective wellbeing, sustainable economic growth and, unquestionably, the political stability of our States. Hence, achieving the MDGs will necessarily hinge on resolving the employment crisis and, in particular, youth employment, as the youth do not only represent the bulk of our population, but also the future of our countries.

Co-Presidents,

In order to factor in the three elements I have just presented, and conscious of its responsibilities towards its people, the Government of Cameroon has prepared and is gradually implementing its Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP). This blueprint is centred on developing productive sectors and infrastructure without which improving the living conditions of our people is unthinkable.

In this light, the Government has set up an Energy Sector Development Programme. Under the components of this Programme, there is provision for upgrading existing infrastructure and building new hydroelectric dams to meet industrial and household needs. Through this programme, Cameroon should be able to double its electric energy production by 2015 and triple it by 2020, while giving a prime place to the development of renewable energies.

In the same vein, other actions are underway, including:

- adopting Cameroon's Long-Term Development Vision aimed at making Cameroon an Emerging Country by 2035;
- pursuing incentive fiscal reforms and improving the business climate, with a view to further mobilizing domestic savings and attracting Foreign Direct Investments (FDI); and lastly,
- increasing our foreign aid absorptive capacity.

Co-Presidents,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude, Cameroon wishes to affirm its faith in a united and indivisible human community, capable of acting in unison in what, in the final analysis, seems to be a global ideal, namely the wellbeing and fulfilment of all its members.

Thank you for your kind attention