**Welfare World**

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The United Nations is pressuring the world’s most developed countries to pony up more money to fund the world’s all-time biggest give-away wealth redistribution aid program to the developing countries — the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals, scheduled to be achieved by 2015, are eight internationally-agreed targets which aim to reduce poverty, hunger, maternal and child deaths, disease, inadequate shelter, gender inequality and environmental degradation.

At the just recently concluded summit of the leaders of the Group of 20 (G20) industrialized and developing economies in Canada, for example, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon emphasized the importance of stepping up efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals through increased development aid and investments. “Under any circumstances we must not balance budgets on the backs of the world’s poorest people,” the Secretary General told leaders of the G20.

In advance of a high-level summit at the UN Headquarters that Ban Ki-moon will convene in New York in September, 2010 to press countries to accelerate their efforts to achieve the MDGs, he has established a high-profile “MDG Advocacy Group” co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Spain, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, and the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame. Its purpose, according to the announcement of its launching, is to “support the Secretary-General in building political will and mobilizing global action to make the MDG Summit a turning point in our collective effort to achieve the Goals by the 2015 target date.”

A look at the two co-chairmen raises serious concerns. Zapatero, Spain’s Prime Minister, is a committed socialist. Indeed, he has served as the Secretary General of the Socialist Party. Kagame, Rwanda’s President, has blamed the West for Africa’s troubles, has praised China and, according to the Economist, “allows less political space and press freedom at home than Robert Mugabe does in Zimbabwe.” That’s quite a distinction.

Other prominent non-U.S. members of the 18-member MDG Advocacy Group include the former socialist president of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, and Jan Eliasson, former Swedish social democratic Minister of Foreign Affairs who participated in a demonstration during which Hezbollah flags waved in the air and an Israeli flag was set to flames. U.S. members include the progressive economist Jeffrey Sachs, Ban Ki-moon’s Special Adviser on the Millennium Development Goals, and Ted Turner, a self-described “socialist at heart.”

Not all members of the MDG Advocacy Group are leftists. Hopefully, Bill Gates, at least, will provide some balance, for example. But the mission and progressive-leaning tilt of this group ensures that the emphasis of the UN-led Millennium Development Goals agenda will continue to be reflective of the UN’s redistributionist philosophy. This is confirmed by a report issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on June 17, 2010 entitled What Will It Take To Achieve The Millennium Development Goals? An International Assessment. Buried amongst all of the rhetoric was a suggestion for an international finance tax and “imposing levies on international maritime transport and on air travel, and developing a uniform global tax on carbon dioxide emissions (with a per capita exemption for low-income countries).”

The European Union is right in sync with such proposals for global taxes. With labor unions, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and a bevy of liberal and left-wing economists reportedly pushing for a global financial tax, it won’t take much persuasion for our progressive president to go along.

Although foreign aid programs in the past have turned out to be a colossal waste due to such problems as corruption, the United Nations wants us to pour much more money down the same sinkhole. It is pushing each developed country to give away 0.7 percent of its gross national income (GNI) to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Looking ahead to 2015, the year when the Millennium Development Goals are supposed to be achieved, the United States alone would have to pay more than $100 billion for development assistance under the 0.7 percent assessment regime (as applied against the gross domestic product of the United States projected by the Congressional Budget Office for 2015). Consider that by the end of that same year – 2015 – the Congressional Budget Office projects that the total debt held by the public as a percentage of the GDP will be a whopping 65.4 percent.

Barack Obama demonstrated back in 2008, when he sponsored legislation in the Senate, that he was prepared to have the United States contribute hundreds of billions of dollars in additional aid from American taxpayers to this cause over a span of thirteen years or so. As a presidential candidate, Obama said that “I’ll double our foreign assistance to $50 billion by 2012, and use it to support a stable future in failing states, and sustainable growth in Africa; to halve global poverty and to roll back disease.” There is no indication that, despite record deficits and the skyrocketing federal debt attributable to Obama’s runaway spending programs, Obama has backed off of this commitment.

Focusing on money alone as the prime solution to the problems besetting poor countries – particularly Africa – overlooks the tribal, racial, religious and ethnic divisions that have spawned killing fields there. Real progress in meeting the basic needs of the peoples of these lands cannot happen until the slaughter stops. In addition to the direct casualties of war, the violence breaks up the social networks necessary to feed, clothe, shelter and provide health care to the people – right down to the family unit itself. Building more hospitals, for example, will do no good if their staffs and patients are forced to flee from the violence surrounding them and the vital hospital supplies are looted. Development aid and technology to protect the environment will be wasted when the ravages of war continue to destroy croplands, forests, ecosystems and other natural resources. True human development needs the nutrients of sustainable freedoms to grow and prosper, no matter how much financial help from the developed countries is forthcoming to help eradicate poverty and disease in the poorer regions of the world.

Ironically, in the UN’s own Millennium Development Goals Report, which Secretary General Ban Ki-moon released with great fanfare at a press conference at UN headquarters on June 23, 2010, the authors recognized the limitations of foreign aid in solving all development problems. For example, they stated in the section dealing with the Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education that “In many countries, educating girls is widely perceived as being of less value than educating boys.”

I asked the Secretary General what the United Nations and he personally were trying to do to change such perceptions that interfere with the achievement of this Millennium Development Goal, and with a separate goal to “promote gender equality and empower women.” He ducked the question, as did the report’s lead author, by citing statistics about improved educational opportunities for girls. Tell that to the girls denied an equal education in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Yemen, Libya and other majority Muslim countries. Cultural norms – not lack of money – are the main problem in many cases.

Simply throwing good money after bad does not solve complex social and political problems that are deeply rooted in a country’s history and demographics. So-called “Robin Hood” taxes and other redistributionist schemes will end up having the same detrimental result as we are witnessing now in left-leaning countries like Greece and Spain. Incredibly, Spain’s prime minister is now co-chairing the MDG Advocacy Group, carrying with him the same fatally flawed philosophy to champion on the world stage.

Given President Obama’s own proclivities for unrestrained social spending and wealth redistribution, we will likely be falling into this same trap.