



*Permanent Mission of the Republic of Zimbabwe
to the United Nations*

STATEMENT
BY
HIS EXCELLENCY CDE R G MUGABE
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE
TO THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY HIGH
LEVEL MEETING ON THE MILLENNIUM
DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS)

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Check against Delivery

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Your Excellencies, the President of the 65th Session of the General Assembly, Mr Joseph Deiss, and the President of the 64th Session of the General Assembly, Dr Ali Treki,
Your Majesties,
Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Your Excellency, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Comrades and Friends.

I wish to thank you, Mr. President and the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Ban Ki-moon, for convening this very important meeting.

Co-Chairs,

You will recall that we gathered in this august Assembly in the year 2000 and agreed on a set of social and humanitarian deliverables which we appropriately called the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We then set out separately and collectively as Member States to achieve our targets. We now meet, five years before the target year 2015, to review the state of implementation of those goals, to share experiences, identify obstacles and, possibly, chart a course of accelerated action to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Co-Chairs,

While there is reason to celebrate the progress attained in some areas, the challenges that remain are serious and many. The recent economic and financial crises wreaked havoc on our previously confident march towards 2015. Resources dwindled, priorities had to be re-arranged, and for many of us in the developing world, sources of support were reduced, or even lost completely.

Yet, we remain determined, even in these circumstances, to achieve the MDGs in particular, and other internationally agreed commitments in general.

Co-Chairs,

From the onset, Zimbabwe has demonstrated unwavering commitment towards the implementation of the MDGs. We set up an MDGs steering committee in 2000 to track and report progress on implementation. We initially prioritised Goals 1 – Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, 3 – Promote gender equality and empower women, and 6 – Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, which we viewed as critical to the achievement of all the other Goals. Even as our economy suffered from illegal sanctions imposed on the country by our detractors, we continued to deploy and direct much of our own resources towards the achievement of the targets we set for ourselves. Indeed, we find it very disturbing and regrettable that after we all agreed to work towards the improvement of the lives of our citizens, some countries should deliberately work to negate our efforts in that direction. I believe that as we sit here today and re-dedicate ourselves to the achievement of the MDGs in the time frame we set ourselves, this noble effort on our part will only reach fruition if all of us walk our talk.

Our MDGs steering committee has produced three reports since its formation. The reports show that we have registered mixed results. Despite our best efforts, we fell short of our targets because of the illegal and debilitating sanctions imposed on the country, and, consequently, the incidence of poverty in Zimbabwe remains high. As a result of these punitive measures and despite our turn-around economic plan, the Government of Zimbabwe has been prevented from making a positive difference in the lives of the poor, the hungry, the sick and the destitute among its citizens. This, Co-Chairs, is regrettable because Zimbabwe has a stable economic and political environment. We have the resources, and with the right kind of support from the international community, we have the potential to improve the lives of our people.

Co-Chairs,

Zimbabwe's commitment to the education of its people is well-known. Since independence in 1980 there has been a massive expansion in primary, secondary and tertiary education. A lot of investment has gone into human capital development. Relevant policies, including the Early Childhood Development Policy, have ensured that net enrolments in schools remain high. As you may be aware, Mr President, according to recent UNICEF reports, Zimbabwe has the highest literacy rate in Africa.

Co-Chairs,

I am also pleased to inform you that Zimbabwe is set to reach the gender parity target in both primary and secondary school enrolment. The country has also made strides in attaining gender parity in enrolment and completion rates at tertiary education. We have signed and ratified a number of international and regional gender instruments and promulgated national policies and laws on gender. Nevertheless, we are lagging behind in regard to gender equal participation in decision-making in all sectors by 2015. Women still lag behind. While there has been a slight increase in the number of women Parliamentarians from 14 per cent in 1990-95 to the current target of 30 per cent, we are concerned that this is still below the 2005 target of 30 per cent.

Co-Chairs,

Regarding Goal 6, my country has registered significant progress in lowering the HIV and AIDS prevalence rate. The estimated prevalence rate in adults aged 15-49 years was 23,7 per cent in 2001. This dropped to 18,1 per cent in 2005 and declined further to 14,3 percent in 2009. This decline was achieved despite lack of support from the international community, and at a time when even issues such as HIV and AIDS were politicised and mixed with agendas of regime change. My Government greatly appreciates the assistance it is now receiving from the Global Fund and other agencies. We remain concerned about the incidence of HIV and AIDS in our country and hope that it will continue to decline significantly as Government strengthens prevention efforts.

Co-Chairs,

We are worried about the limited progress we have made in the area of environmental sustainability. The impact of climate change, as evidenced by recurrent droughts, flooding, unreliable and unpredictable rainfall seasons, has wreaked havoc on the lives of our people, most of whom depend on agriculture for a living. In addition, efforts by Government to provide clean water, decent sanitation and shelter for both urban and rural dwellers, have suffered as a result of the illegal sanctions imposed by some Western countries. We applaud those in the international community who have responded to our appeal for assistance to address these urgent challenges.

Co-Chairs,

My country remains convinced that the MDG targets are achievable. What is needed is political commitment, particularly, on the part of developed countries. There is need to ensure that commitments already made are not reduced even in the light of new demands. Aid delivery and coordination mechanisms must not be hampered by political biases and preferences.

Let us keep the promise we made ten years ago. Let us all strive to make 2015 a watershed year, a year when poverty, hunger, disease and other ailments which are impediments in life can be completely prevented. Let us henceforth forge a wide-ranging global partnership to make the world a better place for all its peoples, now and in the future.

I thank you.

RGM/lmn