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Statement

by

**H. E. Mr. Heinz Fischer
Federal President of the Republic of Austria**

at the

**High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly
on the Millennium Development Goals**

New York, 21 September 2010

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour to address this High-level Plenary Meeting on behalf of Austria today. It provides a unique opportunity to strengthen collective efforts and partnership to work towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals by the target date 2015. While fully aligning myself with the statement of the European Union, I would like to offer some additional reflections.

Without any doubt, the Millennium Development Goals represent the very best of United Nations ideals, ambitions and efforts to establish a fair, prosperous and secure world for all.

On the one hand, they are the most important collective promise ever made to the world's most vulnerable people.

On the other hand, they represent an internationally agreed framework of quantified and time-bound targets which are an excellent tool for addressing the most pressing issues of extreme poverty, hunger and disease, and for promoting gender equality, education and environmental sustainability.

Mr. President,

During the past decade a number of countries and regions have achieved major successes in combating extreme poverty and hunger, improving school enrolment and children's health, expanding access to clean water, access to HIV treatment and controlling malaria, tuberculosis and neglected tropical diseases. This was achieved in some of the poorest countries, demonstrating that the Millennium Development Goals are indeed achievable with the right policies, adequate levels of investment, and international support.

Still, much remains to be done. Challenges are most severe in the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries,

Small Island Developing States, countries that are vulnerable to natural hazards and in countries affected by conflicts.

The global financial and economic crisis had a negative impact on countries to various degrees. With declining resources, donors need to focus even more on goals and regions where the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals lags behind. Donors must support developing partners in elaborating national response plans to the financial and economic crisis and in reviewing their respective development co-operation programmes and activities on the basis of their partners' priorities.

Mr. President,

Until 2015, the target date for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, Austria will concentrate its efforts on the following sectors where we have gained particular expertise: energy and environment, water and sanitation, and peace and security. By focusing on these sectors we intend to contribute to the implementation of all Millennium Development Goals, especially the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger.

The current assessments of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals conclude on the need of a better inclusion of the most vulnerable into the development process. This means first of all the inclusion of women and girls, the most neglected and the first excluded population groups worldwide. Advancing gender equality and empowering women is a precondition for poverty reduction, sustainable economic growth and social development, since women are important agents of change within their societies. Empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of entire families and communities and to improved prospects for the next generation.

The fate of women affected by armed conflicts and their role in peace building processes continues to be one of the priorities of Austria's policy in development cooperation. Implementing the

objectives of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security in the daily work of the Security Council remains a priority during our membership in the Security Council. Furthermore, Austria adopted a National Action Plan for implementation of UNSCR 1325 in August 2007; this plan calls for specific measures in the framework of Austria's humanitarian, diplomatic, peacekeeping and development activities.

Mr. President,

Furthermore, allow me to highlight the needs of people with disabilities who belong to the most vulnerable in general and in development processes in particular. It is my firm belief that we need to increase our attention to this group.

One of the most persistent obstacles to development is the lack of necessary trans-boundary infrastructure in the areas of energy, water, telecommunications and transport. I should like to emphasize in particular the need to overcome extreme energy poverty. I strongly support the Secretary General's global campaign to ensure universal access to energy to all people on earth by 2030. We cannot hope to reach the Goals if 2 billion people continue to lack access to electricity or other energy services for basic needs and for productive uses.

Mr. President,

I am convinced that a collective effort on a global scale and the commitment of donors to the Millennium Development Goals together with intensified efforts of developing countries and the relevant organizations of the United Nations system and other international stakeholders will contribute to bringing developing countries back on the path of sustainable economic and human development.

Thank you for your attention.