

## PRESS RELEASE

### AFRICA: GAINS ON ANTI-POVERTY GOALS ASSOCIATED WITH BOLD AND INNOVATIVE POLICIES

***Report lays out achievements and proposes an action agenda to boost further progress***

**New York, 21 September 2010**—Africa has made steady progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), according to a report launched today by the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

This year's annual report, *Assessing Progress in Africa Toward the Millennium Development Goals*, shows that the MDG advances went along with bold and innovative policies. The MDGs are eight internationally-agreed targets which aim to reduce poverty, hunger, maternal and child deaths, disease, inadequate shelter, gender inequality and environmental degradation by 2015.

Africa has made tremendous strides in achieving universal education with 76 percent net enrolment in primary education in 2008, up from 58 percent in 1999. There are close to 91 girls per 100 boys in schools in 2008, up from 85 in 1999. Under-five mortality rates have dropped from 184/1000 in 1990 to 144/1000 in 2008. Africa is on track to meeting the water target with 60 percent of people with access to drinking water in 2008, compared with 49 percent in 1990.

A favourable global economic context, prior to the international economic crisis, and a range of policies in African countries has played a key role in achieving this rapid progress. These measures include the adoption of new and expanded social protection programmes; better policy coordination; and the incorporation of the MDGs and performance indicators at the heart of African countries' development strategies.

"The evidence is there," said Helen Clark, the Administrator of UNDP. "When the right policies are in place, scores can be lifted out of poverty rapidly, which means quite simply better lives for millions of Africans."

#### **Significant Results**

The report points to significant development results and the policies that went along with this progress. For instance, Burkina Faso nearly doubled the number of children in primary schools, while providing daily meals for all children and take-home rations for girls. Ghana has already fulfilled its target on reducing the proportion of under-nourished, increasing agricultural productivity through fertilizer subsidies and providing nutritional supplements and school feeding programmes.

Rwanda was ranked first in the world in 2009 with over 50 percent women's representation in the national parliament, while in Angola, Burundi, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda more than a quarter of the representatives in parliament are women.

In addition Mali, Senegal and Togo are on track on the HIV and AIDS target, driven by a mix of leadership, awareness-raising and the introduction of voluntary testing and free antiretroviral therapy. In 2008, Botswana, Comoros, Mauritius, Namibia and South Africa reached over 90 percent coverage for access to safe drinking water.

## **Barriers to Overcome**

Maternal health poses a significant challenge, with the proportion of deliveries attended by skilled personnel only marginally increasing from 1990 to 2008. Sanitation represents another area of difficulty, with the number of people lacking access to improved sanitation facilities representing 50 percent of the population of the continent in 2008, down from 56 percent in 1990.

Vulnerability to external factors continues to threaten the region's ability to make progress towards the MDGs. Food price volatility is a challenge for a continent that is struggling to achieve food security for all. Uncertainty in the recovery from the global financial and economic crisis continues to impact African economies. And over the long term, the effects of climate change threaten the sustainability of the gains that have been achieved.

"We now know that Africa has been significantly affected by the recent shocks," said AUC Chairperson Jean Ping. "However, many countries have put in place measures to both counter their effects and continue to further longer-term development. The continent has the necessary resources to achieve the MDGs. It is therefore up to us to ensure that we implement the right policies to make sure that Africa escape out of poverty".

## **Action Agenda Going Forward**

To accelerate MDG progress over the next five years, the report proposes an agenda for action which includes broad interventions to create an enabling environment for inclusive growth. These include maintaining sound macroeconomic policies, promoting job rich growth and boosting agricultural productivity, as well as providing opportunities for vulnerable groups, including women.

Additionally, countries are encouraged to adopt development strategies that are based on the MDGs, enhance the efficiency of their service delivery at all levels of government, and improve their ability to monitor the goals. The report also emphasizes the need to mobilize partnerships with the private sector, civil society and development partners especially from the South.

"There are strong indications that the MDGs are achievable, provided African countries and their development partners can redouble their efforts to achieve the goals," according to Executive Secretary of the UN ECA Abdoulie Janneh.

The report also notes that while official development assistance (ODA) to Africa has been increasing in the last few years, it will fall short of the commitments that have been made. Less than half of the increase in ODA to Africa promised at Gleneagles is expected to be delivered this year. As such the report urges developed countries to scale up their development assistance to Africa.

"Given the encouraging achievements made, international support for the MDGs in Africa remains high but it must be scaled up if we are to achieve wide-ranging success," said AfDB President Donald Kaberuka.

Over the past five years, the regional MDG report has been jointly produced by AUC, United Nations ECA and the AfDB. They were joined by UNDP this year.

To download the report, please visit <http://www.undp.org/africa/mdg2010.shtml>.

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