

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the most ambitious development yardsticks yet devised by the international community.

Agreed five years ago, they present a challenge to rich and poor nations alike to deal seriously with issues of poverty and lack of opportunity, and to meet challenging targets within 15 years.

Most basically, the goals tell us that by 2015 the world should be a much better place than it was in 2000. But more importantly, they tell us how much better, and in what areas.

The goals and their associated targets provide a sketch map of where the 189 signatories think the world should be heading in terms of poverty relief, education, health, gender, the environment and the broad area of “development partnerships” between developing and developed countries.

Halving poverty by 2015 is certainly a lofty aim and within goals there is inherent risk – failure will be all too apparent if they are missed – but they are a bold marker of global intent, and an open acknowledgment that the problems of the developing world are ultimately challenges for us all.

Currently progress is far from impressive; it is apparent that while some regions and countries are on track to achieving most or all of the MDGs, others are falling behind. The impact of the Asian tsunami has put further pressure on countries in the affected areas. Of particular concern to New Zealand is that the Pacific is currently one of the regions furthest away from achieving the MDGs, second only to sub-Saharan Africa.

Failure to achieve the MDGs will represent human potential unrealised – the potential for humanity as a whole to address one of the most pressing problems of our time and, more poignantly, for the very poor to be able to reach their full potential.

The primary focus of the report is on New Zealand’s Aid Policy and Programme but, reflecting the scope of the MDGs, it also deals with other New Zealand Government policies and initiatives that have a bearing on the development prospects of developing countries, and also the issue of environmental sustainability within New Zealand. A fairer international trading system, which New Zealand continues to advocate for, would make an enormous contribution to eliminating poverty in developing countries.

I am proud of what New Zealand is doing to make the MDGs a reality and the world a fairer place.



Hon Marian L Hobbs
Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade - September 2005
(ODA)

