

Statement by
His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif,
Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan,
at the Leaders' Roundtable on the Follow-Up towards the achievement
of the Millennium Development Goals

(New York - 25 September 2013)

Mr. President,

I welcome the discussion being held today to review the progress made in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to develop recommendations for the UN development agenda beyond 2015.

It is extremely important that we follow up on the MDGs. This task must not remain unfulfilled.

Thirteen years ago, at the turn of the century, the General Assembly made a compelling promise to the world that all men, women and children will be liberated from the bonds of abject poverty. This promise was inspired by the Charter of the United Nations, recognizing that we would need to work on development, peace and security, and human rights, at the same time.

The MDG have spurred our globe to reduce poverty. Significant achievements have been made in this direction. But we know that progress has been uneven among countries and within countries.

While we still strive to achieve these goals, there is global consensus that a future set of goals – sustainable development goals – should be defined that should follow MDGs between 2015 and 2030. MDGs should seamlessly merge into sustainable development. MDGs would not be abandoned; and poverty eradication should be an integral part of sustainable development goals.

After 2015, we need a new robust development agenda.

We must eradicate extreme poverty by 2030. I believe this is doable. Abject poverty is a scourge and we must coordinate our efforts to banish it.

Mr. President,

Pakistan too has made progress in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. But I must say there are many shortfalls.

Our dilemma is that the large portions of our resources have been consumed by the war against terrorism. The economy is incurring enormous direct or indirect costs which are still rising.

Despite these daunting challenges, my Government is determined to achieve MDGs through strategic planning and concerted efforts to move as close as possible to the targets.

We would further reduce the incidence of poverty and raise women's share in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector. I have decided to increase education spending from 2% of GDP to 4% and health expenditure from 1 to 2%.

As we move forward, we know that young people must receive high quality education, life skills and vocational training.

To this end, only last week I have announced new schemes for the youth of the country so as to ensure job creation and employment opportunities. This programme will be augmented and expanded in coming years.

Similarly, beyond basic health care we need to eradicate malaria, aid and tuberculosis and non-communicable diseases. We have reduced child mortality and improved maternal health but we have yet to cover considerable ground. For that we need substantial resources.

In regard to women's empowerment, we have made impressive strides, particularly in the area of their representation in national and provincial parliaments.

I can tell this assembly that we have the political will to achieve these MDGs and mobilize all our indigenous resources for that purpose.

We are in the process of taking decisions to steer our economy towards sustainable development and address the challenges posed by climate change and environmental challenges. In this regard, we particularly focus on hydro

power generation, maximize energy efficiency, develop renewable resources of energy and reinforce income support programmes for the poor.

Mr. President,

In the past 13 years, Millennium Development Goal 8 has received indifferent attention. We need renewed interest and effort to build a global partnership. We are not insisting on a narrow definition of a global partnership restricted to official development assistance.

Of course, the global partnership should fulfill the unfinished commitment of the assistance objective of 0.7% of gross national income.

But global partnership entails much more: market access, transfer of new technologies, climate finance and domestic resource mobilization.

In addition to the efforts of the Governments, I call on businesses, private foundations, international organizations, civil society and parliaments to step forward to form partnerships to implement sustainable development agenda.

I agree with the United Nations Secretary General that the United Nations, as a global beacon of solidarity, must do its part to shape a just, prosperous and sustainable world.

Pakistan is ready to play its part in this endeavour.

I thank you, Mr. President.