



**Statement by Mr. Salil Shetty
Amnesty International Secretary General**

**High-level Plenary Meeting of the Sixty-fifth session of the UN General
Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals**

**Roundtable 6: Widening and Strengthening Partnerships
22 September 2010**

Distinguished co-Chairs and delegates,

Amnesty International recognizes that development assistance, both technical and financial, and accountability, have a crucial role to play in tackling poverty and achieving the MDGs.

Human rights law requires Member States to seek and provide international assistance where necessary to ensure at least minimum essential levels of economic, social and cultural rights for all – such as minimum levels of food, clean water, housing and health-care. It also requires that development assistance be used to promote non-discrimination and advance equality – including gender equality – and to prioritize the most marginalized. It further requires mechanisms for local communities, civil society, parliaments and other institutions to participate effectively in the use and monitoring of donor assistance.

Finally, development assistance must do no harm. Assistance aimed at upgrading slums (MDG 7) cannot be used to support forced evictions. Nor can assistance aimed at improving maternal health (MDG 5) be used to criminalize abortion services.

[In short, development assistance must be given and used in a manner that, at a minimum, respects human rights. The MDGs themselves cover areas where Member States have legal obligations – including the right to food, the right to education, the right to health, the right to work, the right to non-discrimination and gender equality, the right to be free from violence, the right to housing, the right to water, the right to participation, the right to information and the right to an effective remedy.

In meeting the MDGs, human rights law requires Member States to combat discrimination and exclusion, focus on the situation of the most marginalized and impoverished groups, and empower people living in poverty to participate effectively in designing, implementing and evaluating poverty reduction programs.

To ensure the MDG process respects these rights, Amnesty International urges Member States to set up systems of accountability that are transparent and accessible to all.]

Everybody is talking about “accountability” – but their meanings are murky. So let us be clear: the human rights framework is an essential means of accountability.

There are two elements. The first relates to whether people can claim their rights: Are the tools and systems in place that allow individuals and groups to make demands on the state in pursuit of their rights? The second relates to legal enforcement and justiciability: Do people within a State have real access to justice to claim their rights and seek an effective remedy for violations?

[People living in poverty must have effective means to hold their governments to account.] Bodies such as parliaments, truly independent National Human Rights Institutions, and ombudsperson and regulatory bodies must also play a role. Just as importantly, the right to information – which is critical to accountability – must be respected.

The Summit Outcome document (A/64/L.72) points to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the General Assembly, as international mechanisms for monitoring MDG commitments. These mechanisms alone are inadequate to monitor Member States’ human rights obligations in their efforts to meet the MDGs. They must be strengthened [to ensure review of the consistency between MDG efforts and Member States’ existing human rights obligations.] Amnesty International also urges all governments to report on implementation of the MDGs as part of the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council; and to international human rights treaty monitoring bodies.

We also urge states to ratify, as Ecuador, Mongolia and Spain have done, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Distinguished co-Chairs,

[The need for international cooperation and assistance to tackle poverty and achieve the MDGs is obvious. It is also clear that Member States must ensure that their development policies and programmes are consistent with their commitments on “gender equality, human rights, disability and environmental sustainability”, as agreed in the Accra Agenda for Action (13.c).

Human rights standards provide a legal and policy framework that should underpin the analysis of the problem, the process for addressing the problem and the intended outcomes of development assistance.]

This is about putting human rights at the heart of the MDGs. Alas, world leaders have failed to do just that at this summit. And as always, it is people living in poverty who will pay the price.

Leaders can still take action to keep the promise they have made to the world’s poorest in the Millennium Declaration. Amnesty International urges all Member States at the very least to:

1. Make existing and planned laws, policies and programmes linked to the MDGs - consistent with international human rights standards;
2. Identify and eliminate discrimination – including gender discrimination – in all efforts across all MDGs;
- [3. Set and implement national targets to realize all economic, social and cultural rights, in particular minimum essential levels, in the shortest possible time;]
4. Make sure that people living in poverty are able to participate meaningfully in MDG planning and implementation, and can hold governments to account;
- [5. Ensure that national and international mechanisms hold Member States to account for their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights in pursuing MDG initiatives.]

Distinguished co-Chairs and delegates,

We, the Amnesty International movement of 2.8 million people, remain a ready partner in the global struggle to improve the lives of people living in poverty.

Thank you.