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First Bangladesh 'status' report on global development goals launched today

Reaffirmation of commitment to reaching the Millennium Development Goals

DHAKA, 16 February 2005: During a colorful ceremony in the city today, senior officials, civil society, the donor community, and the United Nations reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring that Bangladesh achieves the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). "We Commit" was the slogan written across a banner that was signed by participants at the launching ceremony of three new reports assessing national progress towards achieving the MDGs.

Bangladesh is among 189 nations to have signed the 2000 Millennium Declaration, committing to a set of internationally agreed targets for reducing poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, combating HIV/AIDS and discrimination against women by 2015.

During the ceremony three reports were launched. One of these, the Bangladesh MDG Progress Report, prepared jointly by the Government of Bangladesh and the United Nations agencies in Bangladesh, represents the first attempt at a 'status report' on the nation's progress towards meeting the 2015 goals, said UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner.

"For too long it was possible to make the oft-repeated claim that 'if it cannot be measured, it cannot be done'. But now, with the MDGs at hand, a vast array of basic human

aspirations can indeed be measured – and hence more easily turned from dream into reality,” he said.

The progress report revealed that the nation was on track for meeting some of the eight goals. Bangladesh was one of only two South Asian countries to have achieved parity in school enrolment for boys and girls. This can be attributed to the use of targeted public interventions such as the Food for Education Programme, and the Female Secondary Stipend Programme. “Bangladesh’s success proves that, while funding is important for the achievement of the MDGs, the introduction of good policies is even more important,” Mr. Lissner said.

However, significant challenges still remain, particularly in the areas of reducing poverty (goal 1), decreasing child malnutrition (goal 1), improving the quality of education (goal 2), and improving maternal health (goal 5). These MDGs will only be met if concerted action is taken now and over the next 10 years, Mr. Lissner said.

After China and India, Bangladesh has the third largest number worldwide of people living below the poverty line (63 million citizens). Meanwhile, child malnutrition is among the highest in the world. Progress towards reducing poverty and child malnutrition could be achieved through consistent job creation, especially in rural areas, the report states. Overall, better governance and improved delivery of social services will be key for the nation to achieve the MDGs.

If the world achieves the MDGs, more than 500 million people will be lifted out of poverty. A further 250 million will no longer suffer from hunger. 30 million children and two million mothers who might have been expected to die will be saved.

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