

**For immediate release**



## **MILLIONS OF CAMPAIGNERS DEMAND URGENT ACTION FROM WORLD LEADERS ON EVE OF UN SUMMIT**

As leaders from 175 countries arrive for the UN Summit in New York, the world's largest anti-poverty movement, the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP), is outraged at the lack of progress and political backtracking on poverty eradication. In last minute negotiations, the movement believes several governments are playing politics with the lives of tens of millions of poor people around the world.

This was the summit that was going to make poverty history. Originally billed the 'UN Millennium +5 Summit', the objective of this week's gathering of world leaders at the United Nations was to review progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Shamefully, as the negotiations stall and commitments are watered down, faceless decision makers appear oblivious to the human cost.

A mother dies every minute in childbirth, millions of women and children have no access to healthcare or life saving medicines. The world has never been richer, yet the number of people living in extreme poverty is on the increase worldwide. 70 million girls are still out of school yet negotiators will not even recognise that they have missed the first MDG, committed for 2005: equity between girls and boys in access to primary education. Central in the fight against poverty, this demonstrates the lack of political will and resources committed to addressing gender equality.

In recent days millions of men, women and children in over ninety countries have held peaceful marches, organised political concerts, rated their governments' compliance to MDG targets through shadow reports and testimonials, wrapped iconic buildings in white bands and much more to pressure their governments to take immediate action to fight global poverty. Yet their voices continue to be ignored with leaders failing to show the political will and moral courage demanded of them by their people.

"2005 was to have been a year of great opportunity," said Rasheda Choudhury, of the Global Call to Action against Poverty. "Unbelievably leaders are back-tracking on previous commitments, let alone taking the bold steps needed to eradicate extreme poverty by 2015. It is unacceptable that leaders do not acknowledge the serious danger of missing even these minimalist goals. What's more, they are not being taken to task this week for the unacceptably slow level of progress towards meeting them."

Rich countries give half as much of their income to fight poverty as they did in 1960. Despite an agreement made over 35 years ago to devote 0.7% of GNI in aid to the world's poorest countries, only 5 countries have achieved this target. Rich countries are still dragging their feet on aid, despite reconfirming their promise to the target at Monterrey in 2002. GCAP wants all developed countries to commit to a timetable to reach the 0.7% target, and this must be included in the final Summit document. Leaders must also commit to ending harmful conditions too often attached to this aid.

Poor countries remain crippled by debt. GCAP believes the debt deal made at the G8 Summit clearly is not enough. UN leaders must go further to ensure every country that needs debt cancellation to achieve the Millennium Development Goals receives it as soon as possible. This debt cancellation must not be accompanied by additional harmful conditions. Wording on 100% debt cancellation for highly indebted poor and middle-income countries without harmful conditionality must be kept in the summit document.

Trade continues to work for the rich against the poor. Trade talks have become a vehicle for forcing poor countries to open their markets at any cost, destroying the livelihoods of poor people whilst rich countries hide behind massive subsidies and dump their goods on world markets. Leaders must agree at the summit to the right of developing countries to determine their own trade policies and protect their markets and critical public services such as water. The final summit document must reflect the interests of all developing countries without discrimination and avoid pitting groups of countries against each other.

The final summit document must reconfirm and go beyond the previous commitments on women's rights and gender equality agreed over the last two decades at the United Nations, at Beijing and Cairo meetings. A reaffirmation of the centrality of gender equality to poverty eradication and development is needed now more than ever.

In the final hours before negotiations conclude, GCAP urges governments to listen to the voices of ordinary citizens who are calling for change. No more excuses will be acceptable to the tens of millions of people living in poverty around the world. The time to act is now.

ENDS

**For interviews/further info:** Ciara Gaynor 646 331 6982 ([Ciara.gaynor@undp.org](mailto:Ciara.gaynor@undp.org)), Nicky Wimble 858 205 8721 ([nwimble@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:nwimble@oxfam.org.uk)) Kate Norgrove 858 205 8734 ([knorgrove@gmfc.org](mailto:knorgrove@gmfc.org)).

1. Rasheda Choudhury is a grassroots educator from Bangladesh - Campaign for Popular Education.
2. The Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) is the world's largest anti-poverty coalition, whose organizations together represent more than 150 million people globally. The campaign is aiming to make a breakthrough on poverty in 2005 and is calling for world leaders to 'wake up' and take concrete steps at the United Nations to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and end poverty once and for all. The coalition is made up of national campaigns across 74 countries, including MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY in the UK, Ireland, Canada and Australia, 'Wakati Ni Sasa' (The time to act is now) in Kenya, Wada Na Todo Abhiyan' (Keep Your Promises) in India and 'Sin Excusas contra la Pobreza' in Paraguay amongst many more. The global symbol of the campaign is a white band. See <http://www.whiteband.org> for more information.
3. Important facts from GCAP's Millennium Development Goals report
  - If we continue as we are it will take many countries 100 years, not ten, to achieve the goals.
  - In 2005 the world will miss the first agreed MDG target of achieving equal numbers of girls as boys in primary school.

- Average life expectancy in Africa is 46 years and falling and the number of people living in extreme poverty has increased by more than 140 million in the last twenty years (UN Statistics Division, Dept of Economic and Social Affairs, <http://www.un.org/esa/>).
- A mother dies every minute as a result of problems in pregnancy and childbirth, and the MDG of reducing maternal mortality by three-quarters by 2015 will not be met on current trends.
- The MDGs could be met if rich countries delivered on the commitment they made 35 years ago, to allocate 0.7% of their Gross National Income (GNI) to aid
- On current trends and including the commitments made at the G8 in Gleneagles, the G8 countries will only be giving 0.36% of GNI and not until 2010
- To reach 0.7% of GNI in 2010 donors must increase their aid not by the \$48billion agreed in Gleneagles, but by \$170 billion.
- The world spends \$400bn per year on advertising. G8 countries between them spent over \$600bn on defence in 2004.

4. The Millennium Development Goals are eight targets agreed by over 190 governments in 2000 to help eradicate poverty through action by developed and developing countries. They focus on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other preventable diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for development. The first MDG, on getting an equal number of girls into school as boys, has already been missed this year.