

**Report from the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board**  
**Forty-third executive session**  
**Special address by the Secretary-General of the United Nations**  
Monday 3 March 2008

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The Secretary-General opened his address to the Trade and Development Board by speaking about his experiences and the challenges he has identified and encountered during his first year as the Secretary-General of the United Nations. He underlined that progress has been made, for example on the situation in Darfur and on climate change, and that there has been successful implementation of reforms in key areas.

The Secretary-General emphasized his experiences from field trips, meeting vulnerable people – the poorest of the poor – that UN has sworn to serve. He pointed out that this is one of the reasons why he dedicated 2008 to be the year of the “bottom billion” and that he firmly believes that the international community owes a special duty to these people. For this reason, he said, the following weeks and months he will dedicate himself to strengthening the UN’s role in development.

Regarding the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) the Secretary-General emphasized that half way to 2015 many countries have fallen behind, especially in the sub-Saharan countries. This is why the MDG African Steering group has been set up and has been tasked with identifying strategic ways in which the international community can support governments to reach the MDGs, and to come up with new mechanisms where necessary. The Secretary-General underlined the importance of cooperation between different international institutions, NGOs and particularly UN member states, in order to reach the MDGs.

The Secretary-General expressed that he expects UNCTAD XII to deal with these issues, where crucial problems are raising living standards and decent jobs. Moreover, he underscored the importance of an international economic environment that fosters development, and that UNCTAD XII can advance this aim by stimulating support for a more development-friendly global economic, trading and financial system. The Secretary-General also stressed the importance to reach consensus on how the current impasses in the Doha round negotiations can be broken in order to fulfill the development agenda – especially in sub-Saharan countries.

The UN’s own effectiveness in advancing its development priorities was underlined by the Secretary-General, who also emphasized that the UN should be measured by its result and not by the rhetoric, and that the UN cannot simply champion development, but must deliver every day on its promises.

The Secretary-General urged member states to consider the recommendations in his recent report on development. However the report should not to be seen isolated, but as a part of a broader effort to improve UN function.

Rounding up, the Secretary-General underlined the urgency of the situation regarding the MDGs. He said that a tipping point is reached, and that urgent and concerted action now can help make up for wasted time and effort, and that now is the time for UNCTAD to push us over in the right direction.