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Role of UN advocacy group vital to achieving anti-poverty targets, Ban says



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (centre, seated) attends MDG Advocacy Group luncheon in Madrid

16 July 2010 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today underscored the vital role played by the group of current and former political leaders, businesspeople and thinkers he set up last month to spur action on the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)), stating that the time has come to turn commitments into action.

“Around the world, people support the goals and the values embedded in the MDGs,” he [said](#) at the first meeting of the MDG Advocacy Group in Madrid, Spain.

But, he added, more must be done to educate and inform about the Goals, which include targets for slashing poverty, boosting school enrolment rates, improving maternal health and increasing access to clean water and decent sanitation – all by 2015.

That is where the MDG Advocacy Group comes in, he told the gathering.

“This Group will identify strategic opportunities. You will help build awareness. You will help translate the rhetoric of good intentions into results – real results for real people.

“That is why we are here – to build a global network, a movement, a team, to score the goals and triumph – like Spain – in our great common challenge,” the Secretary-General said, referring to Spain’s recent victory at the 2010 World Cup.

Co-chaired by Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and Rwandan President Paul Kagame, the Advocacy Group includes well-known figures such as Nobel Peace Prize laureates Muhammad Yunus and Wangari Maathai, as well as former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet and entrepreneur and philanthropist Bill Gates.

Today's meeting comes ahead of the high-level MDG Summit that will take place at UN Headquarters in New York in September, which is expected to result in concrete national action plans for realizing the Goals.

"Your role will be critical," Mr. Ban told the advocates. "We need you to help mobilize and galvanize. We need you to help make the Summit a turning point... Help us adopt the strongest possible action plan for the next five years. Help us score the goals by 2015.

"Now is the time for you to act."

While in the Spanish capital, the Secretary-General also met separately with Mr. Zapatero and Mr. Kagame.

In addition to discussing the work of the MDG Advocacy Group and its first meeting, Mr. Ban and Mr. Kagame talked about recent developments in Rwanda.

"The Secretary-General also noted the upcoming elections in Rwanda and expressed concern about recent incidents causing political tensions," UN spokesperson Farhan Haq told reporters.

Mr. Ban encouraged Rwandan authorities to take immediate action, including a thorough investigation into the latest incident in which an opposition leader was found murdered, and to bring the perpetrators to justice, added Mr. Haq.

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