



Organization of
American States

DRAFT

Intervention by OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza
At the United Nations High-Level Plenary Meeting on the
Millennium Development Goals

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Heads of State and Government, Mr. President, Ministers, Secretary
Generals, Ladies and Gentleman. Good afternoon.

It is an honor and a pleasure to represent the Americas and the
Organization of American States (OAS) at this meeting on the Millennium
Development Goals (MDGs). As the principal political forum for the
Americas, we advocate, along with our Member states and the other
institutions in the Inter-American system, for the adoption of regional and
national public policies that will help them reach their Millennium
Development Goal targets by 2015. The people of Latin America and the
Caribbean have embraced Democracy as their chosen political system, with
the expectation and the demand that it deliver a better life for all.

With just five years left before the deadline set for the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals, I must congratulate the countries on the progress they have made so far, but also echo the demands of the peoples of our region, as well as support Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon's call for accelerated progress toward achieving these goals.

Two weeks ago, representatives of some of the UN agencies working in the region presented a report at the OAS detailing how far countries in the Americas have come toward meeting the challenges of these comprehensive goals. Overall, it appears that progress has been mixed in our region, as it has been worldwide.

Today, I will refer to the work that the OAS has done to advance the fulfillment of five of the Millennium Development Goals among our members in Latin America and the Caribbean, namely:

- Goal 1: eradication of extreme hunger and poverty;
- Goal 2: universal primary education,;
- Goal 3: promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women;
- Goal 7: environmental sustainability; and
- Goal 8: a global partnership for development.

In the eighteen years since the Millennium Development Goals were launched in 1990, the Latin America and Caribbean region has made significant strides eradicating extreme hunger and poverty. According to the latest ECLAC figures, the region as a whole has progressed 63% toward

the goal of reducing total poverty by half, and 85% toward halving extreme poverty. Brazil, Chile and Jamaica have already achieved these goals and Peru is close to doing so. However, nearly all of this progress was achieved in the six years between 2002 and 2008. As in other parts of the world, the scale of poverty differs widely between our countries. A few have lowered their poverty rates to below 6% (Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay), while the gap has widened between them and the poorest countries, with rates of extreme poverty still above 30% (Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Bolivia). Nearly 13% of the Latin American population still lives in extreme poverty, or around 71 million people. A few of the poorest countries, such as Haiti, have stagnated, and thus the gap between wealthier and poorer countries in our region has widened. The recent rise in food prices has had a significant impact on worsening poverty this past year.

Even though ours is not the poorest region in the world, we have the most unequal distribution of income of any region. This inequality is clearly an obstacle to the attainment of the goals we are discussing here today. The OAS has helped to develop innovative programs in the form of Conditional Cash Transfer Schemes to help our member states reach the target of halving, by 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day.

For example, just a year ago, in this same city, the OAS launched the Inter-American Social Protection Network. This Network seeks to strengthen the institutional capacity of national social development agencies to formulate and implement effective policies to eradicate extreme poverty, particularly

through the conditional cash transfer programs. Successful programs that helped lower poverty rates in Chile, Brazil and Mexico are now being shared and model programs launched, through this Network, with other countries in the region.

The OAS also works to improve employment opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean, which the experts agree is key to poverty reduction. Through our Inter-American Network for Labor Administration, the OAS helps strengthen the institutional and human capacities of the Ministries of Labor in our region. Our work with these Ministries seeks to advance the **achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people (target 2 of goal 1)..**

In order to advance the fight against hunger in the region and to meet the target to **halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015**, the OAS collaborates with the World Food Program to analyze the nutritional and food components of social protection networks for several of our Latin American members.

Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have also made significant progress toward achieving Millenium Development **Goal 2: universal primary education**. Regionally, access to primary education in Latin America and the Caribbean was around 88% in 1990 and stands at 95% today (UN/ ECLAC Report on Millennium Development Goals, 2010) While this is a laudable achievement, our work in this area is not complete. Unfortunately, there are still many children in our region who do not

Discrimination in the framework of Decent Work. As part of this effort, the OAS has developed indicators to help monitor the progress of the ministries in integrating the gender perspective into their operations.

The CIM is also working assiduously toward the fulfillment of the target to improve the **proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments**, through the implementation of projects to support: the effective implementation of quota laws for the participation of women in political parties and organizations at national and local levels; the ascension of greater numbers of women in leadership positions; and strengthening the capacity of governmental and nongovernmental bodies to lead the discussion, negotiation and design of gender-sensitive public policies.

Latin America and the Caribbean are committed to protecting the region's extraordinary biodiversity and as such, has been working steadily toward the fulfillment of **Goal 7: ensuring environmental sustainability.** ,

The OAS' Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN) fosters technical collaboration and coordination among countries of the Americas in collection, sharing, and use of biodiversity information relevant to decision-making on natural resources management and conservation, as well as education to promote sustainable development in the region. Through this Network, the OAS has worked with governments and institutions in the Americas to digitize data and metadata on species and

Goal 8: a global partnership for development. In fact, we are further behind in this area than when the Millennium goals were originally defined in 1990. Trade is at the heart of the interdependence that binds OAS Member States together, them with the world, and contributes significantly to economic development. According to the WTO, 85% of countries in the Americas has a trade to GDP ratio of above 50%, and since 1994, these countries have signed 65 free trade agreements with countries within the region and outside the region. However, protectionist measures by developed countries are slowing the development of the economies of developing countries. And our region's share of worldwide "Aid for Trade" flows (measured as new commitments) is only 8% (compared with 42% for Asia and 37% for Africa) –Source: ECLAC.

In order to advance toward Goal 8, the OAS believes that we must support those engaged in trade -- particularly the micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as women, indigenous people, youth and afro-descendants -- to benefit from expanding markets for their goods and services. The OAS supports these historically marginalized groups who often operate in the informal sector through our recently launched *Economic Empowerment Program*. A central element of this program is the establishment of a permanent regional dialogue of high-level authorities to facilitate the adoption of policies to promote competitiveness and greater participation in the benefits of trade.

Official development assistance is also part of the global partnership for development. Latin America and the Caribbean is suffering from the decline of official assistance from the developed world. Today remittances and foreign direct investment have surpassed official development assistance. We hope that a renewed commitment to the global partnership will restore and increase previous levels of ODA, particularly for our poorest countries.

In closing, Latin America and the Caribbean have made a tremendous effort towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Through these efforts, we have demonstrated that our region is committed to development and the fight against poverty. I commend the members of the OAS and the UN and the numerous institutions represented here today, for your dedication and your tireless work to secure a better world for all through the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Thank you.

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