

Speech on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

**by Former Federal President Horst Köhler
at the Emerging Markets Forum
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

twelve years ago world leaders assembled at the United Nations in New York for a very special gathering – the Millennium Summit. They aimed to usher in a new era in cooperation to tackle the most pressing global challenges of our time. That marked the birth of a precise and concise common agenda, an agenda they called the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, one of the founding fathers and key supporters of the MDGs, later described this gathering as a truly “historic” moment because he felt (and I quote) ‘a remarkable convergence of views’. The MDGs expressed a sense of urgency while sharing a global responsibility that united all nations.

Eight goals were combined with specific targets and a concrete time frame, among them the objective of halving extreme poverty by 2015. This concept was as innovative as it was courageous. Never before had the world voluntarily committed itself to achieving such ambitious humanitarian goals within such a short timeframe, i.e. in less than twenty years. Due to their special nature, the MDGs have structured international cooperation and strengthened accountability ever since. They have raised and channelled money for development. They have created public awareness and they have spurred innumerable international and national efforts to achieve progress in that field – including the search for specific measures to alleviate poverty. But above all they have been a source of great inspiration to all of us. Because they are evidence that history is not at an end, as Francis Fukuyama claimed, but that the world as a global community in the 21st century is not only capable of acting, but is indeed committed to act.

A good three years before the target date, we can already clearly see the impacts of the MDGs – although there is still a lot of ground to be covered. Poverty has been reduced in all regions of the world. MDG number one – halving poverty - will most likely be reached by 2015. More children than ever attend school, maternal health has been improving around the globe and steady progress is being made towards achieving gender equality. These examples demonstrate beyond any doubt that the MDGs have been a success.

But as I already pointed out, we are not yet at the end of the road. Despite all indubitable progress, these same MDGs remind us of what we have not yet been able to achieve. Some goals will not be met and human suffering remains at an unacceptable level in many parts of the world. Let me give you just three examples:

- 850 million people are still malnourished
- 780 million people still have no access to clean water
- 1 billion people are currently living in city slums.

To compound matters, more new challenges have emerged since the MDGs were adopted, and others were simply not covered by the original MDGs: worsening inequalities in the wake of globalisation, tangible climate change, unstable financial markets, demographic change and fragile statehood are just some of the problems facing us.

So, we cannot afford to relent in our efforts, because the mission is not completed. The big question is whether we need to change the format, and if so what should replace the MDGs. The world needs to come together again, to re-think the goals, to re-double the efforts and to renew the common spirit of humanity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In summer UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed a High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. I feel honoured and humbled that I am a member of this Panel. The Panel is charged with elaborating a framework for the period after 2015, when the MDGs expire.

The first meeting of the Panel took place just three weeks ago at the United Nations in New York. To be frank with you, I was deeply impressed by the expertise gathered around the table and the sheer diversity of its members. 27 people – representatives of governments, the private sector, the academic community, civil society from different walks of life, political backgrounds, continents and cultures. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and the first female President of Liberia, is co-chairing the panel together with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom and President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia.

The Secretary-General has asked the panel to prepare a report by May 2013 that is to include the following:

- Recommendations regarding the vision and shape of a post-2015 development agenda
- Key principles for reshaping the global partnership for development and for strengthening accountability mechanisms
- Recommendations on how to build and sustain broad political consensus for the major goals: economic growth, social equality and environmental sustainability.

This is quite an impressive list of expected results. We all know how important it is to manage expectations. Sir Peter Ustinov once said that it is always advisable to have more hopes and fewer expectations, since those with hopes will be less disappointed. So let me be clear on what I hope and aim for: I do not think that the High Level Panel is a silver bullet that can magically solve the world's problems in a few months. We will not be able to come up with all that is needed for a robust post-2015 framework. But what I hope for is that the members of the panel are able and prepared to think outside the box. I believe that the High Level Panel should move away from the old frontlines and long-established positions, and turn its back on the well-known marching orders for international negotiations. We should cut across the usual calculations of national quid pro quo.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our deliberations have only just begun. So, naturally I cannot report on any concrete results today. From my side I see six aspects that I strongly feel should be incorporated into the discussions:

1. A global age requires a global ethics. For me this should be guided by two principles: the principle of humanity and the principle of reciprocity – ‘Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself.’ Our moral compasses need to expand beyond national borders, religious beliefs or cultural backgrounds.

2. The global age we live in requires us to realise how intricately the various threads of our world are interwoven – how ecological issues cannot be seen independently of economic factors, for instance. The post-2015 agenda should spell out what this interconnectedness means in terms of international political relations, in terms of achieving a coherent international economic and social framework and in terms of global public goods. Let me give you just a few examples. I believe we still have some way to go before we can be confident that the stability of the international financial system is safeguarded. The pledge to create a pro-development trade regime remains a pledge. And I think it is high time that we changed the way we measure prosperity – mainly in terms of GNP-growth - to incorporate more dimensions of well-being.

3. The global age we live in requires partnership on an equal footing. And the new development agenda should also outline what has to change in the so called developed countries to support sustained growth and well-being in developing countries. The MDGs were based on a fairly clear-cut, perhaps too clear-cut, view of the world. The industrialised countries here, the developing countries there and maybe economies in transition in between. That concept has become less clear-cut, as it no longer reflects the realities of today's world with BRICS and rapidly developing economies on the one hand and failing and failed states on the other. The idea that one is a donor while the other is a recipient is not only

paternalistic, but obsolescent from both a macroeconomic stance and from a political perspective. We have industrialised countries with currently big economic problems and emerging economies with vast prospects but also new problems. We see countries aging and we see countries with a robust and demanding young generation. We are living in a world which has become much more diverse and complex. The new set of goals will have to take that into account. We need a global agenda with shared responsibilities for all countries but indeed, no one size fits all approach.

4. We need sustainability. Many of us have seen first hand in our professions that social and economic development is intricately intertwined with the environmental status of our planet. Yet for too long, the two debates have been led in distinct and separate spheres. We must leave behind this artificial divide. We must focus on a coherent and realistic framework that will genuinely improve the living conditions of a growing world population WHILE ALSO respecting the limits of our planet. We need to merge the discourse on ‘sustainable development goals’ with the post-MDG debate.

5. According to new World Bank figures, 600 million jobs will have to be created within the next 15 years in order to keep just the present level of employment. That level, as we all know, is far from sustainable. We see in North Africa, for instance, that young people in particular do not have the prospects they deserve and claim. Private businesses are the main drivers of innovation, economic progress and jobs. That is why we have to include the investment climate for the private sector and job creation in our considerations. I think a long-term sustainable growth path of 7% is clearly achievable in Africa and should be a goal.

6. And, my final point: Leave no region behind! We must keep focusing on the poorest and pay special attention to Africa. In my inaugural speech as German Federal President in 2004 I said, ‘The humanity of our world can be measured against the fate of Africa.’ And I still subscribe to this view today. There is a compelling call to make Africa’s vast natural resources finally a blessing for its peoples rather than once more a curse. There is enough evidence for what is needed to achieve this: certainly transparent and fair contracts with private investors, zero tolerance for corruption, making good use of windfall profits for development and in general good governance. But in light of the demographic trends in Africa job creation must be a top priority. A strategic approach for this is to enable African economies to take their commodities through to a more advanced stage of the value chain and build up the manufacturing sector including attaining the skills in need for this. Here in particular partnerships between industrialized countries and developing countries will have to stand the proof of a new development narrative.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am quite sure that the other panel members have their own ideas. So, how are we to achieve a consolidated report? How do we move forward? In November, the High Level Panel will meet in London for an in-depth discussion, and we will have similar meetings in Monrovia and Jakarta in the months to come. In between, we will all try to reach out – not least to civil society and to the private sector and of course to you here tonight. I think the panel is acutely aware that if we are to be successful we will once again need a special momentum. We will need this ‘remarkable convergence of views’, as Kofi Annan described the atmosphere back in 2000. Only then will we be able to create a bold and practical agenda, one that is courageous and concrete at the same time. Or once again from Sir Peter (Ustinov): To be both a realist and a visionary is the best way to turn expectations into hopes, and hopes into reality.

Thank you. I now very much look forward to hearing your points of view.