

Keynote: Prof. Jeffrey Sachs

Session brief:

Date: Wednesday, 20th August, 2008.

Time: 9.00am

Title: Young Professionals and the Millennium Development Goals

The session with Jeffrey Sachs was via virtual conference from New York. Jeffrey started by posing a two-part question:

- What the composition of the delegates in attendance at the summit was - the regions and profession represented?
- What the purpose of the summit was?

Cameron replied that most regions were represented – Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe and that most representation was from Africa. He outlined the purpose of the summit as basically to identify how young professionals can be involved in ensuring the achievement of the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) and draw up an operational strategy to accomplish this.

Jeffrey Sachs noted that was a good starting point as “connectivity is the essence of achieving MDGs”. He went on to talk about how the MDGs emanated from a number of global conferences in the 80’s and 90’s and how the goals were aimed at calling on the world to inspire itself with the importance of a number of goals. Kofi Anan played a pioneering role in bringing the goals together and the leaders came together in September 2000 to form the MDGs (eight goals). He noted that global partnership, which is the 8th goal, would make it possible to accomplish the first seven goals.

He mentioned the failings in the financial obligations of the rich countries in contributing 0.7% of 1% of their GDP to poor nations towards eradicating poverty, improving healthcare and other MDGs. The remaining 0.3% was to be donated to philanthropic organisations. According to him, only 5 countries – Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Luxemburg, the Netherlands have achieved the set target in terms of financial commitment.

He added that we are half-way through the time allocated for the goals and a positive observation is that they are still being talked about, they have a life and a heart to them. The less developed countries (LDCs) have particularly taken them to heart and showed great commitment in a bid to get out of poverty. Technological advances have also made it more possible to achieve the goals, new vaccines are being developed, the use of mobile phones have spread rapidly, even to the interiors of LDCs. The spread of mobile phones he said has broken isolation and much of poverty is about isolation – lack of information/knowledge.

The G8, at the Glen Eagles summit in 2005, committed to double financial aids to Africa and the LDCs by 2010. However, the past years have been disappointing as the rich countries have mostly failed to follow through on their financial commitment to the MDGs. “More attention has been paid to wars, excuses have been made, and there have been lots of delays”. Interest and commitment from the poor counties however continue to rise in spite of the disappointments from the rich countries.

He also mentioned that there is no systematic management in the international community and as such, no system of accountability. Goals are set, politicians speak, make promises but there is no systematic plan to deliver the goals. There have been formal back tracking by France and Italy and the in the US, systematic neglect and there seems to be no awareness of the MDGs by the US leadership.

Conferences coming up:

- 22nd September – Attention will be on Africa, where poverty is most prominent.
- 25th September – No specific region. General look at the achievement of the MDGs.

Private Sector/Individual involvement:

- Use a big voice to get hold on government. Hold the government accountable to reduction of poverty through good governance, proper utilization of meagre funds.
- The rich countries have to be accountable to their commitments as well. The US contributes 0.16% instead of 0.7% of its GDP.
- The IYPF can get involved in actualising the achievement of the MDGs via the 'Millennium villages'. The villages connect with 500, 000 people across regions in Africa, India, Cambodia. Apply known ways to break through poverty at the village scale to make investments in health care, ICT, Education, safe water, solar power. \$60/villager/year would go a long way in achieving these developments.

Jeffrey concluded by stating that the goals are achievable but we are not winning the battle yet and more work needs to be done. According to him, viable goals have been set and viable strategies have been put in place but it's time to roll up sleeves, become advocates, get involved and connect with the villages, eagerly waiting to get all the help they can.

He challenged the summit to come up with operational strategies and give provide him with reports and the strategies decided at the end of the summit.