

Millennium Goals: Empty Promises?

Caritas Urges G-8 Leaders to Make Good on Commitments

VATICAN CITY, JUNE 25, 2008 (Zenit.org) - The president of Caritas Internationalis is lamenting that at current rates of progress, the Millennium Development Goals set to be attained by 2015 may take 100 years to reach.

Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga affirmed this in a joint statement from Caritas and the International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity sent to the Group of Eight leaders.

The leaders of the G-8 nations will meet in Japan in early July. The G-8 groups Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States.

Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga said, "We regret that we have to write once again in 2008 to remind donor governments of the promises that remain unfulfilled.

"There is now a real danger that the Millennium Development Goals will be remembered as empty words. This can only fuel the cynicism with which so many people in developing countries already regard rich countries' expressions of concern."

The cardinal noted that the term set for achieving the goals is already half over. It is clear, he added, "that too many countries will fail to achieve the goals. In some cases, at present rates of progress, they may have to wait more than a hundred years before the goals are reached."

"For G-8 states, the challenge of recovering momentum towards their 2010 targets is enormous," the prelate continued. "Aid can make a real difference to the lives of the poor and is an essential component in any strategy to achieve the MDGs. We celebrate the progress that is being made in so many countries because they have governments that are genuinely committed to poverty reduction and have shown that they can make good use of the resources at their disposal."

At the Japan meeting, the leaders are also scheduled to address climate change.

Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga also spoke of that issue.

"Climate change is being felt hardest by the poor in developing countries -- those who are least responsible for the emissions that are causing it," he lamented. "Humanitarian assistance is taking a larger share of donor aid. The danger is that inadequate resources pledged to development will be diverted to climate change. We urge governments to ensure that assistance to developing countries on climate change will be additional to resources for poverty reduction."

The eight Millennium Development Goals are: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV-AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership of development.