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UNITED NATIONS MILLENNIUM CAMPAIGN CALLS ON COUNTRIES TO COMMIT TO MORE EQUITABLE TRADE, MORE EFFECTIVE AID AND GREATER DOMESTIC RESOURCE MOBILIZATION TO ACHIEVE THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AT FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE IN DOHA

New York, November 26, 2008 – The United Nations Millennium Campaign is calling for donor countries gathering at the Financing for Development Conference in Doha to commit to equitable trade rules and more effective aid that can help achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Poor countries in turn must focus on mobilizing domestic resources and enhance MDG-related public expenditures, as poor people brace themselves for the ripple effects of the global economic shock.

“Trade could be the most important source of external development financing for many poor nations, but not until the rules are changed in favor of achieving the MDGs,” said Salil Shetty, Director of the United Nations Millennium Campaign. “However, as the result of the financial crisis, global trade may contract for the first time in decades. At the G-20 summit in Washington, world leaders affirmed their commitment to reform the currently skewed trade regulations, and at this week’s conference in Doha they must now live up to that commitment by defining clear timelines to put in place a trade system with genuine market access for poor countries and an end to trade-distorting agricultural subsidies that deny farmers in poor countries with no other means of sustenance an opportunity to compete on equal footing. At the same time, poor countries must mobilize domestic resources towards fighting poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.”

As the financial crisis bites deeper, rich countries reviewing their public spending for cuts must start by eliminating their wasteful agricultural policies that only help rich farmers in rich countries at the expense of poor people. They must eliminate all remaining limitations to market access for the poorest and most vulnerable economies. Rich countries have pledged to provide free market access time and time again, but have maintained restrictions which make a mockery of their commitments.

World leaders reiterated their commitment to the MDGs at the G-20 summit in Washington. Donor governments must not use the financial crisis as an excuse to renege on the commitments they have already made to work towards the achievement of the MDGs and to deliver aid. At the G-20 meeting, the UN Millennium Campaign called for a schedule for delivering on existing aid commitments and for a special bailout package of \$300 billion in additional financing for poor nations over the next two years to weather the financial crisis.

According to the OECD, less than half of all bilateral aid can be used by recipients to address their needs. Donors should improve the effectiveness of their aid by reducing the amount of “aid” that is actually spent in donor countries themselves and by reducing bilateral aid agreements.

At the same time, it is now more urgent than ever for poor countries to mobilize domestic resources to fight poverty and allocate it towards the MDGs and meeting the needs of their poorest citizens. This is the only sustainable long-term option for financing development. This can be achieved through a combination of widening tax bases, more effective tax collection, improving the efficiency of government systems of service provision, and fighting corruption.

On October 17-19, the UN Millennium Campaign and its partners mobilized more than 116 million people around the world as part of “Stand Up and Take Action,” demanding that world leaders keep their commitments to end poverty and achieve the MDGs.

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Note to editors:

The UN Millennium Campaign was established by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2002. The Campaign supports citizens’ efforts to hold their governments to account for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development Goals were adopted by 189 world leaders from the north and south, as part of the Millennium Declaration which was signed in 2000. These leaders agreed to achieve the Goals by 2015. Our premise is simple: we are the first generation that can end poverty and we refuse to miss this opportunity. For more information, visit www.endpoverty2015.org.