

U.N.: Scores can escape hardship

Vast aid increase by U.S., others would improve life for half-billion

By Edith M. Lederer

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — In the coming decade, more than 500 million people can escape from poverty and tens of millions can avoid certain death if the United States, Japan and other rich countries keep their promises to vastly increase development aid, a U.N.-sponsored report said Monday.

The report spells out the investments needed to meet the U.N. goals adopted by world leaders at the Millennium Summit in 2000 to tackle poverty, hunger and disease, mainly in African and Asian countries where 1 billion people live on \$1 a day or less.

Another 1.8 billion people live on just \$2 a day. "The system is not working right now — let's be clear," said Jeffrey Sachs, head of the U.N. anti-poverty effort and lead author of the report. "There's a tremendous imbalance of focus on the issues of war and peace, and less on the dying and suffering of the poor who have no voice."

See Hardship, Page A6

Hardship

■ 150,000 African children die of malaria each month.

From A1

"The overwhelming reality on our planet is that impoverished people get sick and die for lack of access to basic practical means that could help keep them alive and do more than that — help them achieve livelihoods and escape from poverty."

As an example, he said, providing nets to cover beds and keep out mosquitoes in impoverished African and Asian countries could save the lives of more than 1 million children this year who will die from malaria.

An estimated 150,000 children in Africa die each month from malaria, he said.

"We have the world's eyes focused on the tsunami of the Indian Ocean, but the world continues to overlook the silent tsunamis of deaths from malaria which take every month the number of people that died in the Asian tragedy," said Sachs, who heads the Earth Institute at Columbia University.

Sachs presented the report Monday to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who appointed him in 2002 to head the Millennium Project and develop a plan to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

The 3,000-page report, "Investing in Development," said the poorest countries do not have the resources to meet the goals. Those goals include halving the number of people living on \$1 a day, achieving universal primary education, reducing child and maternal mortality, halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS and malaria, and halving the number of people without access to clean water and basic sanitation.

An independent team of 265 of the world's leading development experts compiled the report.

Calling it "a major intellectual achievement," Annan said the report will be an important contribution to the debate on how countries that have fallen behind can meet the "eminently achievable" goals.

Annan intends to use the report to help prepare his own recommendations for world leaders attending a follow-up summit in September. Annan expressed hope the summit will produce "bold and far-reaching decisions."

The resources needed to meet the goals are definitely within the means of the world's richest nations and their combined \$30 trillion economy — with \$12 trillion in the United States alone, Sachs said.

In 1970, the world's nations agreed to provide 0.7 percent of their gross national income for development assistance. So far, only five countries have met or surpassed the target — Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

Six others have made commitments to reach the target by 2015 — Belgium, Finland, France, Ireland, Spain and Britain — and the report urged all developed countries to set similar timetables.

The United States only spends about 0.15 percent of its gross domestic product on development aid, though President Bush has increased the amount.

"The required doubling of annual official development assistance to \$135 billion in 2006, rising to \$195 billion by 2015, pales beside the wealth of high-income countries," the report said.

It recommended that the international community designate a significant number of well-governed, low-income countries for "fast-track status" to receive the massive increase in development aid this year. The report suggests Mali, Burkino Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mauritania and Yemen.

Poorly governed, poverty-stricken countries like Belarus, Myanmar, North Korea and Zimbabwe should not get large-scale aid because they are accused of wide-ranging human rights abuses, the report said.

Report highlights

Key recommendations from the United Nations-sponsored poverty report:

■ **Strategies:** Poor countries should develop national strategies to meet the U.N. goals, including moves to strengthen good governance and promote human rights.

■ **Teamwork:** Developed and developing countries should jointly launch quick actions to save millions of lives. These should include free mass distribution of anti-malaria nets and anti-malaria medicines for children, eliminating fees for primary school and essential health services, providing anti-retroviral drugs to 3 million AIDS patients by the end of 2005, and providing free fertilizer for small farmers with poor soil by the end of 2006.

■ **More aid:** Rich countries should increase development assistance from 0.25 percent of gross national income in 2003 to about 0.44 percent in 2006 and 0.54 percent in 2015 to support the Millennium Development Goals.

NOTE: THIS UN INVESTMENT IN DEVELOPMENT REPORT INDICATES THAT OF THE 6.3 BILLION PEOPLE ON EARTH 45% ARE LIVING IN EXTREME CHRONIC POVERTY WITH 1 BILLION (16%) LIVING ON \$1/DAY AND 1.8 BILLION (29%) LIVING ON \$2/DAY.