

Human Rights & Human Welfare

Volume 10
Issue 9 *October Roundtable: MDGs and Human Rights*

Article 4

10-1-2010

MDG: Reinvigoration or Mourning?

Marc Alexander C. Gionet
St. Thomas University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/hrhw>

 Part of the [Human Rights Law Commons](#), [International Humanitarian Law Commons](#), [International Law Commons](#), and the [International Relations Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gionet, Marc Alexander C. (2010) "MDG: Reinvigoration or Mourning?," *Human Rights & Human Welfare*: Vol. 10: Iss. 9, Article 4.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/hrhw/vol10/iss9/4>



All Rights Reserved.

This Roundtable is brought to you for free and open access by the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Human Rights & Human Welfare by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact jennifer.cox@du.edu, digitalcommons@du.edu.

MDG: Reinvigoration or Mourning?

Abstract

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals Summit got underway on September 20th in New York. Opening speeches seemed to be a roster of who's – who of contributors towards global poverty with the IMF and WTO leading the pack. As speeches progressed, a disturbing trend developed which romanticized the pre-recessionary period of progress towards MDG achievement and reducing world poverty.

Keywords

Human rights, United Nations Millennium Development Goals Summit, Global economy, Global community

Copyright Statement / License for Reuse



All Rights Reserved.

Publication Statement

Copyright is held by the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver. User is responsible for all copyright compliance.

MDG: Reinvigoration or Mourning?

by Marc Alexander C. Gionet

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals Summit got underway on September 20th in New York. Opening speeches seemed to be a roster of who's – who of contributors towards global poverty with the IMF and WTO leading the pack. As speeches progressed, a disturbing trend developed which romanticized the pre-recessionary period of progress towards MDG achievement and reducing world poverty. As Dominique Strauss-Kahn [stated](#) on behalf of the IMF,

“Before the crisis, we saw strong growth and macroeconomic stability in developing countries—driven mainly by good homegrown policies, but supported by an enabling international environment. This was translating into falling poverty and improving social indicators, and gave us grounds for optimism. But because of the crisis...we have lost years of progress, and the momentum has been derailed.”

This defeatist tone was constant in opening speeches, with all lost progress attributed to the economic and financial crisis as well as to volatile food and energy costs. Bolivian President [Evo Morales](#) provided deviation from the defeatism stating,

"If we wish to make progress, it is our obligation to reach the Millennium Development Goals. And in order to reach these goals, the South has to stop financing the North. This millennium should see the closure of the open veins of the South that are bleeding towards the North."

The dominant narrative which has framed meeting the MDGs is in stark contrast to the views of Mr. Morales, who so aptly referred to Eduardo Galeano's definitive work "[Las Venas Abiertas de America Latina](#)" which chronicles the historic subsidization of first world wealth and prosperity by the developing world. The MDGs were constructed to address the very worst consequences of the global inequitable distribution of wealth. It was not a charity drive organized by the fortunate to assist the less fortunate, but a pact to counteract injustice.

Despite its inception as a holistic accomplishment the dichotomy of MDG achievement has developed into the celebrated possible attainment of some goals, such as eradicating diseases like malaria, contrasted by the near resignation of failure to achieve other goals. Following the end of the Summit, the United Nations was quick to promote the [pledges](#) of more than \$40 billion over the next five years towards women and children's health, removing that effort from the larger context.

Canada is an excellent example of a nation that has made selective commitments, championing certain goals while withdrawing support for others. As the host of the 2010 G8 Summit, Canada led the [Muskoka Initiative](#) which pledged an additional \$5.0 billion for disbursement over the next five years in an effort to accelerate progress towards MDGs 4 and 5, relating to maternal and child health care. [Canada's pledged contribution](#) was \$2.85 billion of this sum over five years. While this initiative should be applauded, Canada has also [frozen](#) its overall budget for overseas assistance. In addition, Canada "re-clarified" its [2005 G8 summit promise](#) of \$2.8 billion in annual aid to Africa to \$2.1 billion. Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper also

resisted calls to extend the Unitaid fee, a small fee attached to the purchase of airline tickets, to Canadian consumers despite the program's success. Since 2007, the program has raised \$1.5 billion which has been utilized to increase drug program accessibility for those in low income countries who need HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis treatments.

Canada, along with other states that take a similarly selective approach towards MDG achievement, needs to assume full responsibility towards the holistic objective. Unlike other commitments to the developing world, such as raising foreign aid contributions to 0.7% GDP, the MDGs are not an aspirational goal designed to be striven towards to the fullest extent possible within a state's means. Instead, what the MDGs represent is an interdependent agreement to mitigate the worst effects of the global wealth disparity. And in order to properly address this, as the MDGs establish, total achievement is necessary.

The international community still has a remarkable degree of separation between current achievement and MDG expectations to resolve over the coming five years. Only by shifting the narrative from that of selective championed goals to obligatory holistic achievement will the international community be able to compensate for the currently lagging effort.

Marc Alexander C. Gionet is the Director of the Atlantic Human Rights Research and Development Centre housed at St. Thomas University where he also lectures within the undergraduate human rights programme. Mr. Gionet is currently teaching courses on Humanitarian Law, NGOs and Human Rights and Terrorism and Human Rights. His [most recent publication](#) discusses the transfer of Canadian captured detainees to third parties in Afghanistan.