

EDITORIAL

The remaining weeks before the UN General Assembly's (Millennium Review) 60th Session in September have been marked – finally – by a realisation that there is much catching up to be done if the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved.

A major event in this respect was the 13th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (see page 106) which, following very cumbersome negotiations, reached agreement on a set of policy measures intended to boost global efforts to provide clean water, basic sanitation and decent housing.

This was followed by the publication in June of the UN Secretary-General's state-of-the-world report, prepared by 25 UN agencies and international organisations on reaching the Millennium Development Goals. It is a mixed bag of successes and ongoing failures with the poor getting poorer in sub-Saharan Africa and, if current trends persist, many of the poorest countries not able to meet any of the MDGs.

No wonder that Kofi Annan termed this year a “make-or-break year for the Millennium Development Goals and the world's poor”. All involved realise that the Review Session will be decisive, but many are asking, rather belatedly, if the Millennium Project is a sound strategy for accomplishing the MDGs.

In the remaining weeks before the Review Session those involved are hoping for sufficient political will to move from the commitments to positive action. We shall see.

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The International Conference on Environment, Peace and the Dialogue among Civilisations and Cultures was organised jointly by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Nations Environment Programme.

Under the chairmanship of Vice-President Dr Massoumeh Ebtekar, panel discussions considered the Conference topics, mirroring those of the Millennium Development Goals. I was honoured by the invitation to say a few “wise words” at the closing session and in this respect could recall that the MDGs are based on a set of principles and values which include equity, solidarity, respect and tolerance, themes covered by the Conference. A report on the Meeting is planned for the next issue.

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We shall also be able to report next time on the Third Part of the UN Conference on the Negotiation of a Successor Agreement for the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA), which begins next week. The goal is to reach agreement on the scope and finance of the new ITTA and to adopt it at the Meeting.

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- Wolfgang R. Breyer -