

check against delivery

Speech by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte, at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit.

NEW YORK, 26 September 2015

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Mr Secretary-General, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

One of your illustrious predecessors, Mr Secretary-General, once said, 'Never look down to test the ground before taking your next step; only he who keeps his eye fixed on the far horizon will find the right road.'

These wise words by Dag Hammarskjöld have never been more fitting than they are today.

Fifteen years ago, the international community fixed its gaze on the horizon.

The Millennium Development Goals showed an unprecedented level of ambition.

At the time, many wondered whether we needed a reality check.

Were the goals really achievable?

We now know the answer to that question.

The MDGs have been a big success, even though there are major regional differences and not every goal was reached precisely as intended.

So what has the world achieved in the past fifteen years? Well, among other things:

- extreme poverty has been halved;
- maternal mortality has been halved;
- child mortality has almost been halved;
- ninety per cent of children in developing countries now receive primary education;
- and 2.3 billion people have gained access to safe drinking water.

Of course, there is still a lot to be done.

But here, on the eve of the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda and the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals for 2016 to 2030, the success of the MDGs should give us confidence in the next leap forward.

The MDGs have taught us many lessons over the past fifteen years.

Today I would like to mention three.

Three lessons we should take to heart as we move ahead with the SDGs.

First: by working together, in a collective effort, we can make a difference.

We can achieve great things if we set our minds, our means and our hearts to it.

Second: goals like eradicating poverty, achieving gender equality and giving the poor better health care and sanitation should go hand in hand with multi-stakeholder involvement, sound economic principles and sustainable development.

There really is no substitute for an integrated approach.

And third: we must have more private sector involvement in long-term financing, in public-private partnerships and in projects on the ground. Dutch companies and the Dutch government already have a solid track record.

Last year, more than sixty partners signed the Post-2015 Charter, a corporate initiative that brings together Dutch businesses, universities and other organisations that have already committed to the agenda we're discussing at this summit.

So on behalf of the Netherlands, I applaud the outcome of the recent Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa.

New and innovative partnerships and financing arrangements will be key factors for success in the fifteen years of hard work that lie ahead of us.

So what does private sector involvement look like in practice?

It could look like the ambition Heineken has formulated for its breweries in Africa and the Middle East, to source sixty per cent of all its ingredients locally.

The Netherlands is supporting this effort by offering training for farmers. And it's working.

In Burundi, for example, this partnership has already enabled 18,000 farmers to make a steady income by supplying this world-famous Dutch brewer.

It could also look like the Health Insurance Fund, a public-private initiative supported by some of the largest Dutch insurance companies. In 2014 alone, the fund provided health and agricultural insurance for 460,000 people in sub-Saharan countries.

Sixty per cent of them were women.

But it could also look like the Amsterdam Initiative against Malnutrition, or AIM, which was launched in 2009.

AIM brings together many partners: the Dutch government and NGOs, multinationals in food and chemicals like Unilever, DSM and AkzoNobel, and agricultural knowledge institutions like Wageningen University and Research Centre.

AIM's focus is on making good-quality and nutritious food available to as many vulnerable people as possible, using a market-based approach.

The bottom line is simple: developed and run by 20 African and Dutch partners, AIM's project portfolio now provides 26 million people with better access to nutritious foods.

The market-based approach is an important driver behind AIM, and I believe it sets an example for the future.

Within the framework of the SDGs and corporate social responsibility, many individual firms are expressing a growing desire for more effective public-private partnerships.

More and more SMEs are eager to follow in the sustainable footsteps of multinationals that have led the way.

They believe the 'S' in SDG offers opportunities for investment and innovation. It's up to governments and the UN to facilitate, stimulate and make sure that the legal and economic frameworks are in good working order.

And I'm confident that if we do this and keep on working together, we can unleash far more trade and investment in poor countries, moving the needle further from 'charitable' to 'profitable' in the years ahead.

Our commitment to jointly promoting development, in the framework of the UN, is one of the main reasons why the Kingdom of the Netherlands is seeking a seat on the UN Security Council for the 2017 to 2018 term.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Netherlands is fully committed to making the next leap forward.

Thank you.