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Women hold key to reaching development goals – Migiro



12 March 2008 – Efforts to meet international development goals must focus on empowering women, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro **said** last night in a speech delivered at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York.

“Empowering women is not just an end in itself; it is a prerequisite for reaching all of the Millennium Development Goals – our common vision to build a better world in the 21st century,” she said of the targets, known as **MDGs**, that aim to slash a host of global ills by 2015.

UN Deputy Secretary-General
Asha-Rose Migiro

At the moment the news is quite sobering, she said: systematic discrimination against girls and women in the world’s poorest countries will make it impossible for these States to meet the priority goal to halve the number of people living in extreme poverty by that year.

“Women and girls form the majority of the world’s poor and hungry, girls are dropping out of primary school at rates far greater than boys, and the spread of HIV disproportionately affects women and girls,” Ms. Migiro said, adding that efforts to cut maternal mortality rates were also lagging.

As national legal structures were still not adequately addressing this situation, women’s leadership was crucial, she said.

In that context, the Deputy Secretary-General noted that MDG number three, promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment, recognized this by including an indicator for women’s political leadership.

To achieve this, it was crucial to promote affirmative action, human rights protection and leadership training, including apprenticeship programmes for young women in political parties, as well as programmes to develop a “women’s manifesto of policy priorities.”

In addition, she said, it was imperative to boost women’s economic leadership and to protect women against violence. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s recent launch of a UN campaign to end violence against women would bring about the kind of high-level commitment needed to fight that global scourge.

To strengthen all these efforts, she supported the creation of one “dynamic and strengthened gender entity” that would consolidate existing UN structures, to advance the cause of women’s empowerment and realize gender equality worldwide.

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