

PREFACE

It has been a great pleasure for the entire UN family in Botswana to participate in the 'birth' of this maiden Millennium Development Goals Report for Botswana, which has come to life as the result of extensive cooperation between the Government of Botswana, civil society stakeholders and the UN system.

At the Millennium Summit in September in 2000, the member states of the United Nations reaffirmed their commitment to the MDGs. It is important to note that this report reflects Botswana's own development priorities as articulated in Vision 2016, priorities agreed upon by the citizens of Botswana long before the MDGs were born.

The question is not whether a country like Botswana or a community within the country is on track vis-à-vis the global targets. What we must ask is whether the greatest and fastest possible progress is being made, given the specific constraints faced by the country or community and given the level of external support in the form of trade, aid and technology.

So what the MDGs can hopefully help us do is to think 'global' while we do our utmost to act 'local'!

Overall analysis of the goals leaves a generally positive picture of Botswana, not only due to its rapid economic growth and development since independence, but also because of the manner in which the government and people of Botswana have utilized the growth.

Botswana used to be one of the poorest countries in Africa. The prudent use of the diamond wealth, combined with good governance, has resulted in the country enjoying economic growth and increasing prosperity during several decades, and this has propelled Botswana towards the middle-income country status, in ways that have inspired other nations on the continent.

We all realize that Botswana is presently facing great challenges which may wipe out many of the development efforts and results produced since independence. Achieving all of the MDGs, or ensuring that progress in vital areas is not eroded, will be difficult unless we act with resolution to overcome these challenges now.

The most critical challenges include a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, poverty, and environmental degradation. In addition there is globalisation, with flows of trade and finance among nations playing an increasingly critical role, presenting Botswana and her people with exciting opportunities, but certainly also some difficult choices and even some serious threats.

To tackle these challenges and achieve the MDGs, I would like to assure the government and people of Botswana that the entire family of UN agencies, programmes and funds will be here to strengthen our support and advise. Not only support and advise to government, but also to civil society and the private sector.

Mobilisation of and coordination among all stakeholders will be an important precondition for bringing the MDGs all the way to the MDG 2015 or Vision 2016 goalpost. We need to ensure that the targets set reach the kitchen table where

families meet, the kgotla where communities meet, the conference rooms where different decision-makers meet, and the parliamentary chambers where legislation is decided upon.

We also need to ensure that the necessary financial resources are provided to the areas given priority. But in doing that, we need to understand that while *'money changing hands'* is an important element in the process of development, the real impetus for change most often comes from *'ideas changing minds'*.

The present war being waged on HIV/AIDS in this country is proof of this. Ultimately, real change is an act of freedom, not an act of compliance with rules and conditionalities associated with *'money changing hands'*.



Mr. Bjørn Førde

UN Resident Coordinator