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IMF-World Bank Report Calls for Greater Attention to Gender Equality and Fragile States to Reach Global Targets by 2015

The following statement on the joint International Monetary Fund–World Bank Group’s 2007 [Global Monitoring Report](#) was issued today in Washington by the IMF and the World Bank:

“To reach key development objectives by 2015, women’s equality and fragile states need to receive concerted attention and the international community must scale up strategies for reaching the eight Millennium Development Goals. While progress on the first goal of halving poverty is on track everywhere except in Sub-Saharan Africa, efforts to attain goals related to child mortality, disease reduction, and environmental sustainability are falling short.

“The 2007 Global Monitoring Report: Confronting the Challenges of Gender Equality and Fragile States on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) assesses the contributions of developing countries, developed countries, and international financial institutions (IFIs) toward meeting universally agreed development commitments. The goals, which call for halving between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of the people living on less than US\$1 a day, achieving universal primary education, reducing infant and maternal mortality, and ensuring environmental sustainability, among others, were approved by 189 world leaders in 2000.

“Due to strong growth performance and better policies, over 34 million more children in poor countries gained the chance to attend and complete primary school since 2000; over 550 million children were vaccinated against measles, and the number of HIV positive people with access to antiretroviral treatment rose nearly sevenfold from 2001. Nevertheless, there are regions-- Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia in particular--where a number of countries are seriously off track to meet the millennium goals, and many people are being left behind.

“Many poor countries are making the difficult decisions needed to get their policies aimed at poverty reduction and growth. But they cannot accomplish this task alone. They need to have reliable, predictable and efficiently delivered aid from their partners,” said Rodrigo de Rato, IMF Managing Director.

“This year’s report focuses on gender equality and the lack of opportunities for women as well as the vulnerability of fragile states. The authors stress that MDG 3—the promotion of gender

equality and empowerment of women—is important for reasons of fairness and is also essential to economic well-being and the advancement of such other goals as halving poverty, achieving universal primary education, and lowering the under-five mortality rate.

“Persistent poverty and unequal opportunities for women slow development and block attainment of the MDGs. Likewise, fragile states need urgent attention if the goals are to be met,” said World Bank Group President Paul Wolfowitz, “We face the dual challenge of focusing on those most in need while also pushing ahead in strong-performing nations that are close to reaching their goals.”

“Due largely to strong growth in developing regions, an estimated 135 million people were lifted out of extreme poverty between 1999 and 2004. The share of people living on less than US\$1 a day in Sub Saharan Africa dropped by nearly 5 percentage points to 41 percent over the same period, although the absolute number of poor remained near 300 million due mainly to high population growth. By 2004, dollar-a-day poverty in all other developing regions had fallen, with the biggest drop in East Asia.

“Progress in gender equality and women’s empowerment has been uneven. Concerted country efforts have helped raise girls’ enrollments significantly in the past decade, reaching gender parity in primary school enrollments in most (83 of 106) developing countries. Yet, in the same period, the increase in women’s participation in the economy and in political decision-making has been modest at best. The report recommends a stronger role for donors and IFIs in monitoring gender equality and in scaling-up women’s access to opportunities, rights, and voice. Investing in gender equality is smart economics, the report stresses.

“Progress with the MDGs is also a major challenge for the world’s 35 fragile states, defined as nations particularly beset by weak governance and institutions, often compounded by conflict or crisis. Many of these countries are among those least likely to meet the MDGs. An estimated 9 percent of the developing world’s population (485 million people) lives in fragile states, yet they account for 27 percent of the developing world’s extreme poor. Also, nearly one-third of all child deaths occur in fragile states. Donors and international agencies need to rethink how aid is delivered to make support to these countries more effective, particularly in turn-around situations where real opportunities for progress exist.

“This year’s GMR also takes stock of the changing aid landscape. It gauges progress in implementing the 2002 Monterrey Consensus, which commits developing countries to improving their policies and holds developed nations to their promises of more and better aid as well as greater market access. The extent to which G8 countries are fulfilling their aid commitments is also assessed, as is progress toward implementing the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

“Francois Bourguignon, the Bank’s Chief Economist and Senior Vice President for Development Economics, said, “Aid fragmentation is slowing progress on the MDGs. More aid will be good, but a proliferation in donors, global funds, and earmarking aid under new initiatives distorts priorities and strains the capacity of developing countries. We must improve aid coordination if aid is to become more effective.”

“In 2005, official development assistance (ODA) from Development Assistance Committee members rose to \$106.8 billion, but most of the increase reflected debt relief operations. ODA then fell in 2006 to \$103.9 billion, raising uncertainty about the G8 Gleneagles promise to double aid to Africa by 2010.

“In 2006, most developing countries saw little or no increase in real official aid flows. This must change quickly if donors are to deliver an additional \$50 billion in annual aid (over 2004 levels) by 2010. But scaled up aid must be accompanied by technically sound and sequenced country plans for meeting the MDGs,” concluded Mark Sundberg, lead author of the GMR.