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**United Nations Country Team (UNCT)
Ethiopia**

Launch of the MDG 2015 Report for Ethiopia

Welcome Remarks

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Check against delivery

His Excellency, Dr. Yinager Dessie, Commissioner, National Planning Commission,

Distinguished Participants from the government, private sector and civil society,

Colleagues from the UN agencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all today to the UN Conference Centre for the launch of Ethiopia's 2015 MDG progress report as we kick start the celebrations of the UN's 70th anniversary in this country.

We have come together today as partners with a vested common interest in Ethiopia's development to dialogue and take stock of the country's progress, learn lessons, and bravely face up to the unfinished business.

Distinguished participants,

The past fifteen years, where we have tracked Ethiopia's progress against the Millennium Development Goals, has overall been years of rapid progress for the country. Ethiopia has demonstrated a strong will and commitment at the highest level and this has been translated in the progress we see before us to tackle the development challenges set out in the MDGs.

The UN Country Team has been honoured to find itself at the forefront of supporting Ethiopia to make progress on the MDGs – particularly through the joint UN Development Assistance Framework – and our wide ranging interventions in a number of key sectors such as agriculture, education, health, environment, climate change, governance, peace, security and humanitarian assistance.

We have also been privileged to work alongside the government and stakeholders to monitor Ethiopia's progress across the years as the MDGs have been the common rallying ground for both the UN and Ethiopia.

Let me once again take this opportunity to commend Ethiopia which has taken the unique approach of fully contextualizing and integrating the MDGs into its national plan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The MDG report that we are launching today is the fifth in the series of such progress review reports that the UN Country Team has partnered with the government to jointly prepare and publish.

What makes the current report unique is that it is broader in coverage and provides detailed progress by region, and urban and rural areas.

It is also unique in the sense that it identifies the areas that the Government and UN Country Team should continue to work on as the deadline for MDGs looms

and as we embark on the implementation of the successor Sustainable Development Goals.

As the UN Secretary General Mr. Ban Kii Moon has noted 2015 is a landmark year for humanity.

Globally, as here in Ethiopia there have been major achievements due to the commitment and focus that the MDGs have brought to galvanize global action. Thanks to the MDGs more than one billion people have been pulled out of extreme poverty. The world has made great strides to tackling hunger. More girls are attending school than ever before.

However, as the UN Secretary General was the first to admit we are all keenly aware that we have not reached everyone and unfortunately have come up short.

Here in Ethiopia the country has met MDG 1 but we still have over 20 million people are still living below the poverty line. While disparities have been narrowing across range of social and economic services we have unfortunately seen that progresses on the MDGs has not been uniform. There are variations between regions, between urban and rural, and between sexes.

Part of the reason is that it is not easy to ensure equity, especially when, due to historical context, the starting points are vary.

While unemployment has declined overtime in Ethiopia, at 15 percent, the level of urban unemployment is very high.

In the health sector we need to improve the number of skilled health workers and access to facilities to expand quality services to improve maternal health.

The MDG target for reducing under-five mortality rate has been met by Ethiopia but we cannot rest on our laurels as more still needs to be done to reduce the current figure further.

Ethiopia has managed to tackle HIV/AIDs and other communicable diseases but these still poses challenges.

The post-2015 development agenda will call on Ethiopia to continue working on communicable diseases and also scale up interventions to tackle non-communicable diseases as these are becoming health burdens on the country.

When we look at education the enrollment rate heralds good news however we need to strengthen the drive to ensure quality and retention.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Earlier this week, H.E. Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn came here to the UN Conference Centre to close a two day consultation with development partners and other stakeholders on the country's second Growth and Transformation Plan.

The wind of commitment to accelerating development is still blowing strong and steady for Ethiopia, commonly referred to these days as a country in a hurry to develop.

As Ethiopia embarks on the implementation of GTP II and Agenda 2030, the important lessons learnt in the MDGs must be digested and good practices replicated and even scaled up in the SDGs rollout process.

The United Nations Country Team is committed to continue working with Ethiopia to tackle the unfinished MDGs business while at the same time we rollout the Sustainable Development Goals in this country.

This will require of all of us a number of concrete measures, ranging from the contextualization of the SDGs to national realities, mainstreaming of the 17 Goals and 169 targets into the national and sub-national development plans.

We will also need to assess the costing and financing needs for the Sustainable Development Goals.

As the MDGs monitoring and reporting exercises have shown, improved availability of data is crucial for sound analysis and decision making. Data will play a key role as we track and monitor results towards the achievement of the SDGs by 2030.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We find ourselves at a unique point in Ethiopia's development agenda where the UN global launch of the Agenda 2030 coincides with the launch of the GTP II and the rollout of the new UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

This is a timely opportunity that both the Government and the United Nations must grab so as to strategize and achieve our common vision of achieving sustainable human development, eradicating poverty, ensuring that we leave no one behind, and building a resilient Ethiopia.

I thank you for your attention. **Ameseginalehu**