PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Development Programme

The MDGs can be achieved in Rwanda, says the National Human Development Report

Kigali, 26 July 2007: Eight years before the 2015 benchmark set for the Millennium Development Goals, Rwanda has embarked on a long term vision that is aligned with the Millennium Development Goals. The 2007 National Human Development Report (NHDR) entitled **"Turning Vision 2020 into Reality. From Recovery to Sustainable Human Development"** launched today examines some of the most pressing development concerns facing the country and the challenges to meet both the MDGs and the Vision 2020.

Rwanda is currently at the cross-roads in its development process. After a successful transition from emergency to stabilization and recovery, the country is currently embarking on a long term development vision, which constitutes a perfect example of a localized MDG-based development strategy. The Vision 2020 wants Rwanda to become a medium income economy by 2020.

The report states that achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Rwanda is possible, even with reasonable assumptions on economic growth and development assistance. It reveals that Rwanda presents all the necessary fundamental attributes to showcase the potential of the Millennium Declaration. Rwanda's experience shows that even war-ravaged least developed countries can make progress towards achieving sustainable long-term development.

However, achieving the MDGs in Rwanda will require a fundamental rethink of the structure of development assistance. The country already receives more foreign aid than most African countries, at US$55 per capita, yet the impact of this aid on poverty reduction and economic growth is still insufficient, states the report. If Rwanda is to achieve the MDGs and Vision 2020, then "business as usual" must be replaced by a bold new partnership for development which is based on the principle of mutual accountability.

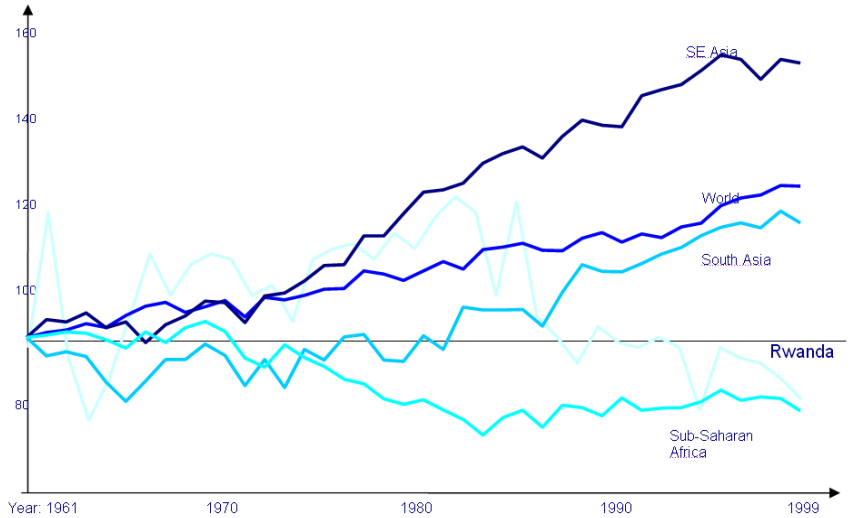
"What is particularly encouraging about the report is its conclusion that the challenges can be overcome through a targeted public investment policy that addresses the above-mentioned bottlenecks, and that the cost of doing this is not prohibitive", says Moustapha Soumaré, UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident Coordinator.

The Report reveals that Rwanda's high growth rates hide large and growing inequalities between social classes, geographic regions and gender. These disparities cut across all sectors and undermine Rwanda's progress towards the MDGs in all areas from health to education and even poverty reduction.

The average Rwandan farmer currently uses only 4kg of fertilizers per hectare of land. This is 10 times less than the minimum required to achieve MDG 1 of eradicating extreme poverty and hanger and almost 100 times less than the levels reached in some industrialized countries. To reverse the trend, in absolute terms, Rwanda needs to invest at least US$15 per capita to bring agricultural productivity up to the minimum standards required to achieve the MDGs.

The Agriculture Challenge

Figure 3: FAO Index of Net Food Output per Capita 1961-2000



Source: FAO Statistics Division

Another challenge raised by the report is the access to water for all. The Rwandan Economic Development Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) Needs Assessment has shown that Rwanda would have to invest US$7 per capita on average between now and 2015 if it is to achieve the targets set in the Millennium Declaration of universal access to free and clean water. For water investments to be effective, the report states that user fees need to be removed and other obstacles to water access tackled through targeted interventions and community-based management systems.

The report further reveals that Rwanda will need more, better coordinated and aligned aid to the health sector, and it needs to spend it in a more equitable and effective way. Despite the increase of health budget since 2000 and the predicted rise in 2007 to close to US$10 per capita, this still falls far short of the average of US$34 for developing countries and US$12 for sub-Saharan Africa, reveals the report.

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About Vision 2020:

VISION 2020 is a framework for Rwanda's development, presenting the key priorities and providing Rwandans with a guiding tool for the future. It supports a clear Rwandan identity, whilst showing ambition and imagination in overcoming poverty and division. Vision 2020 constitutes a perfect example of a localised MDG-based development strategy. Vision 2020 targets are virtually identical to MDG targets in all sectors where there is an overlap, even though their interpretation sometimes differs. Vision 2020 and the MDGs are mutually reinforcing and necessary complements of each other.

About the Report:
The NHDR is based on a human development approach. Human development refers to the expansion
of choices and capabilities facing people to live the lives they choose. The strength of the human development approach is its ability to place people in the centre of analysis, and to move beyond focusing only on income or economic growth.

About the UNDP:
UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges as they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners.