

Economist wants the rich to hand it over

By **Carter Dougherty** International Herald Tribune
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Sachs's mission: End poverty everywhere

DAVOS, Switzerland As an economist who has advised governments from Poland to Bolivia, Jeffrey Sachs has a reputation as a fervent evangelist for economic progress through market reforms. But his new mission to eliminate poverty everywhere may be his most challenging task yet.

Sachs, who is charged with spearheading the United Nations' ambitious Millennium Development Goals, this month issued a 2,574-page study outlining measures to cut in half the number of poor people in the world within a decade. That was the easy part.

Now, Sachs, a Columbia University economist, is tackling the phase that involves raising money to pay for antipoverty projects that can raise living standards in the world's poor countries. The main stops in this fund-raising journey are Berlin, Tokyo, Washington and many other capitals in Latin America, Asia and especially Africa.

"I am a pragmatist and have heard for two decades from cynics about what can't be done and seen with my own eyes what can be done," Sachs said in an interview at the World Economic Forum in Davos. "There is so much glibness and cynicism about the situation of poor countries."

He speaks enthusiastically of his own vision of eliminating poverty by 2025. The title of his forthcoming book on the subject: "The End of Poverty."

Yet Sachs acknowledges that such talk - a hot topic among the well-heeled crowd in this Alpine town - has fallen terribly short in the past.

"This process brings a lot of people together and raises awareness," he said. "But it could do more concrete things."

Raising awareness is one thing Sachs does well, as his trip through Davos demonstrates. He bounds about the snow-covered Congress Center to deliver pointed arguments to friends and enemies alike, dealing further blows to his already scuffed black loafers.

At a packed session Thursday on combating poverty in Africa, former President Bill Clinton and the rock star Bono conferred a virtual demigod status on Sachs, citing his work on meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

Sachs hews to a crushing schedule that would shame the prime minister of a medium-size nation. And he seldom leaves even a bad argument unanswered.

But can he deliver the goods?

The first step in meeting the UN goals will require a large increase in development aid, Sachs says. Getting going will cost, in 2006, \$28 billion beyond the \$42 billion that rich countries have pledged so far, the Sachs report concludes. Anything less, it indicates, would be like sending a single firefighter to an entire city block that is burning.

"Doing aid at scale is what makes the world safe and saves lives," Sachs said.

Sachs would like to see 16 poor but well-governed countries "fast-tracked" onto a path for greater aid. He has in mind star performers like Ghana, where a hotly contested presidential election last month proved that the West African nation is one worth helping. The notion that poor countries would only waste the money is bunk, in Sachs's view.

"The generalizations for what can and can't be done are staggering," he said.

The chief sinners, in his view, are the United States, Japan and Germany, all of which devote less than 0.3 percent of gross domestic product to aid. For Sachs, a reasonable level would be 0.7 percent from industrialized nations, which would raise tens of billions of additional dollars.

President Jacques Chirac of France endorsed this goal in a speech at Davos and highlighted the Sachs report, even though his country pays only 0.35 percent. Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain also greeted the report.

But positive feelings in Europe will mean little unless Sachs can persuade the Bush administration to significantly raise U.S. contributions, he concedes. The United States created the Millennium Challenge Account, a \$5 billion program to promote market-friendly reforms in poor countries. But Sachs says he recently lectured a senior White House official on the need to do more.

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