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# Planning Ministry presents Jordan's vision to meet its MDGs

By Rami Abdelrahman

AMMAN — The government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reiterated on Monday that the Kingdom can overcome the challenges of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

An action plan prepared by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation to achieve the targets set by the MDGs was launched yesterday, alongside the UN Millennium Project Report, "Investing in Development," which will give development practitioners a framework to help developing countries achieve the set targets over the next decade.

The action plan, titled "Social and Economic Development Plan (2004-2006)," was described by His Majesty King Abdullah as "flexible enough to respond to local, regional and international developments."

"It sets the vision, message, objectives, policies, reform procedures and developmental projects which will be adopted and executed in all national economic sectors," the King said in the plan's introduction.

Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Tayseer Smadi said the plan targets the causes of poverty and inequality, adding that the main challenges include how the country deals with globalisation, scarcity of water resources, burdens of foreign debt, underrepresentation of women in the labour force, regional instability, poverty and unemployment.

"Despite the scarcity of water and agricultural land, the population is not living in dire poverty," UNDP Resident Coordinator Christine McNab said at the launch.

"Jordan is on track to achieve most of the goals by the appointed year, 2015, but its challenges should be put on the track they require and deserve, and the year 2005 should inaugurate a decade of bold action in the country," she added.

Around 189 countries are currently working towards improving the social and economic living conditions of their citizens under MDG targets.

By 2015, the UN hopes the world will achieve the eight goals, which include reduc-

## Tracking Jordan's progress towards the Millennium Development Goals

- 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger** — The government's commitment towards the two issues confirms that the first goal can be achieved by 2015.
- 2. Achieve universal primary education** — Recent progress in the net primary enrolment rate and the sharp decrease in adult illiteracy encourage optimism about the likelihood of achieving the second goal. However, government policies should successfully manage to address the challenges that the education system still faces.
- 3. Promote gender equality and empower women** — Remarkable improvements have been recorded in women's access to education and healthcare, but women's unemployment is still too high and their political and economic participation is very low. Sound and effective gender-related policies and more active government commitment are essential to successfully achieve this goal.
- 4. Reduce child mortality** — The country has been addressing this issue through developing health assistance, carrying out inoculation programmes, conducting awareness campaigns and reducing micronutrient deficiencies. Strong government commitment on this issue will enable Jordan to face the challenges that still jeopardise the achievement of this goal.
- 5. Improve maternal health** — Despite the country's sound health policies addressing maternal health and its success in providing qualified medical assistance at the delivery, the maternal mortality rate is still high. To achieve the fifth goal more effective policies have to be enacted to strengthen post-natal care, reduce discrepancies in the quality of healthcare services and reduce its costs.
- 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis** — The country's healthcare system is sound enough to handle the challenges of achieving this goal, but it is necessary to enhance data collection, carry out massive awareness campaigns and keep the healthcare system flexible, affordable and accountable.
- 7. Ensure environmental sustainability** — Despite some recent successes this goal will only be achieved through stronger government commitment regarding the legislative framework, increased resource allocation, and closer coordination between policies and strategies.
- 8. Develop a global partnership for development** — Jordan is facing the challenges of this goal by working both on external relations and internal policies. Government commitment to modernising the economic and legal framework and the tax system is strong. However, increased efforts are needed to secure more effective roles and functions for all the stakeholders in the development process.

Prepared by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and UNDP

ing poverty by half, eliminating hunger and disease, promoting gender equality, investing in education, health and achieving environmental sustainability.

The report's authors contend that these goals are attainable by even the poorest countries as long as the proper investment strategies are in place, including funding and commitment.

Jordan signed the MDGs in 2000 and is striving to achieve the set targets with support from UNDP, civil society and governmental and nongovernmental organisations.

The 330-page UN Millennium Project Report, which

was also launched yesterday, was presented officially to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in January and comes as the first in a series of major global initiatives on the MDGs this year.

The report states that the goals can be met in 2015 if a breakthrough is achieved in 2005. It outlines what needs to be done, where immediate action should be taken and how much it would cost. It also recommends specific and practical steps to reach the goals. The report adds that developing countries can see breathtaking results within three or five years through recommending "Quick Wins" steps.