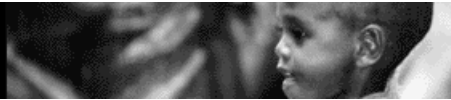




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Growth Goals are Attainable

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Five years ago, world leaders meeting under the auspices of the United Nations Millennium Summit came up with a set of goals to eliminate poverty, ignorance, disease and other human afflictions by 2015.

Specifically, the summit came up with eight targets that have now become popularly known as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including reducing poverty by half by 2015, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and eliminating maternal mortality. Others are reducing child mortality, reversing the spread of HIV/Aids, malaria and tuberculosis, eliminating environmental degradation and developing global partnership for development.

For Kenya and other developing countries, these targets remain mere statements of intent - and the Government has now openly admitted that. Speaking at the launch of the MDG Project report on Tuesday in Nairobi, two Cabinet ministers - Peter Anyang' Nyong'o and Charity Ngilu - categorically stated that most of the goals will remain a mirage given the prevailing economic conditions.

This is not news. We know, for example, that we do not have the resources to provide quality healthcare for all. We know child and maternal mortality are on the rise in the country due to severe resource scarcity. Matters have been made worse by the HIV/Aids scourge which not only erodes gains made but practically makes economic planning impractical.

While we cannot pretend that we can surmount the challenges that hamper the realisation of the MDGs, we should not just throw our hands up and say we are defeated.

The purpose of having the goals is to inspire countries to aspire for greater goals and most importantly, to guarantee the enjoyment of basic human rights. In other words, MDGs are not abstractions but the basic things that any nation has to provide to citizens.

What is critical in realising the MDG goals is political will - which is lacking in many countries, Kenya included. Instead of despairing, the Government should get down to work and put in systems that will help us realise these goals.

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