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#### CITY NEWS

### UN action plan to fight poverty

By Staff Reporter

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A blue-ribbon team of 265 world's leading development experts yesterday proposed a package of specific measures that could root out extreme poverty by half and radically improve the lives of at least one billion people in developing countries by 2015. The recommendations, the most comprehensive ever for combating global poverty, were laid out in a report titled "Investing in Development: A practical plan to achieve the millennium development goals" under UN Millennium Project, an independent advisory body to the UN Secretary General.

The report was formally handed over to Kofi Annan yesterday at the UN headquarter in New York.

"Until now we did not have a concrete plan for achieving the Millennium Development Goals," said Prof Jeffrey D Sachs, the economist who directed the three-year UN Millennium Project, according to a UNIC press release released in Dhaka yesterday.

"The experts who contributed to this huge undertaking have shown without a doubt that we can still meet the goals - if we start putting this plan into action right now," he said.

"We are in a position to end extreme poverty within our generation," Sachs said adding that "Not just cutting poverty in half, if we want to eliminate extreme poverty, we can do that by 2025."

The report calls for a major overhaul of the international development system, which is broadly found to be too often unfocused and inefficient.

Only about 30 cents of each dollar of international aid actually reach on the ground investment programmes in poor countries aimed at extreme poverty, hunger and disease.

The Millennium project studied countries with high concentrations of people living in extreme poverty to determine how much investment was needed to confront hunger, education, gender equality, health, water and sanitation, slums, energy, and roads.

In low-income countries that would mean an increase of US \$70-80 per capita in 2006 for investment rising to US\$ 120-160 per capita in 2015, the report mentioned.

The Millennium Project's report was released as the Asian Tsunami disaster focused global attention on the need, scale and effectiveness of aid to world's poor.

The Project's plan addresses the concerns and shows that targeted investments in essential public services such as health, education and infrastructure make poor communities less vulnerable to such disasters and to the hardships of disease, hunger and environmental degradation.

The project report leads off a year-long series of global initiatives aimed at making the Goals a reality, including a report to UN member states from the Secretary General in March, which will draw heavily on the Project's recommendations.

The year 2005 has become the key year for mobilising international support for the fight against poverty and disease as the world leaders gathering at the G8 summit in July and again at the UN in September, Project officials stressed.

"The project team has given us the biggest intellectual contribution to the development debate from the UN system in at least 20 years," said Mark Malloch Brown, the Secretary General's incoming chief of staff and chairman of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). The UNDP financed and supported the project on behalf of the UNDG partners.

The crucial part of the report is that it emphasises on the concerted effort to provide such support on sufficient scale to have a national level and even global impact.

Meeting the goals is not just a matter of global justice and human rights but is essential for global security although time is short - only 10 years to go.

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