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U.N. Report Urges Rich To Give More

Nations Have Not Met Pledges to World's Poor

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UNITED NATIONS, Jan. 17 -- The United States and other rich nations need to increase their overseas development assistance this year by as much as \$48 billion in order to achieve their commitment to slash in half global poverty for a billion people in the next 10 years, according to a United Nations report.

The 3,000-page U.N. report was based on the research of 265 scholars, scientists and poverty specialists. It recommends such practical measures as providing mosquito nets and building roads and ports to help lift people out of abject poverty.

Jeffrey D. Sachs, a Columbia University economist who oversaw the three-year U.N. Millennium Project, said he hopes the recommendations will prod governments to spend more on the world's poor and serve as a guide for countries seeking to channel money into anti-poverty programs. But he also noted that the distribution of international aid has been woefully inadequate in recent years, with only 30 cents of every aid dollar reaching the poor.

"We are in a position to end extreme poverty within our generation," Sachs said Monday in presenting the 13-volume report to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Sachs said most rich governments have fallen far short of their commitment at the U.N. Millennium Summit in 2000 to set aside 0.7 percent of their gross national product to fight global poverty. Development assistance from the world's 22 wealthiest nations averages about 0.25 percent, or \$69 billion. The report recommends increasing it to 0.44 percent in 2006, or \$135 billion, and 0.54 percent, or \$195 billion, by 2015.

Only five countries -- Sweden, Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Norway -- have met the goal, which was reaffirmed by President Bush and other world leaders at the 2002 conference on international finance at Monterrey, Mexico. Six others -- Britain, France, Ireland, Spain, Finland and Belgium -- have pledged to reach that level by 2015.

The United States, the world's richest country with an \$11 trillion economy, provides 0.15 percent, or \$16.3 billion, of its gross national product for overseas development assistance. It would need to spend \$30 billion more a year to reach the 0.7 percent target.

The report's release comes just weeks after Jan Egeland, a senior U.N. aid official, said that the United States and other donor countries have been "stingy" in their development assistance.

Sachs said he hoped that the spirit of charity that followed the recent tsunami will continue, spurring donations to vital but obscure causes that could save millions of lives. "Unbeknownst to most people, as many children die every month of malaria as died in the Indian Ocean tsunami, about 150,000 or more," Sachs said. "And yet malaria is a largely preventable and wholly treatable disease."

World leaders from 189 countries pledged in New York in 2000 to halve extreme poverty by 2015 for the world's 1 billion people who survive on less than \$1 a day, and to reduce hunger and reverse the spread of AIDS and malaria.

Sachs said governments and international development and financial institutions, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have not devised a strategy to achieve the goals.

The report calls on the world's most powerful countries to increase investments in poor countries, eliminate trade barriers and extend debt relief to poor countries that have shown a commitment to good governance. Germany, Japan and other wealthy countries that seek permanent seats on the U.N. Security Council should be made to increase their aid commitments as the price of admission, the report said.

The plan also calls on poor countries to dramatically increase spending on anti-poverty initiatives, including research that advances health care, improves crop yields and preserves the environment. The report cites inexpensive "quick fix" initiatives -- such as eliminating fees for schools, health clinics and antiretroviral drugs for AIDS victims -- that could save millions of lives.

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