



Roundtable on Tajikistan's National Development Strategy

**New York – Secretariat Conference Room 2, 13:30
12 December 2005**

Welcoming statement for Roundtable

Excellencies,
Your Majesty,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Roundtable on Tajikistan's National Development Strategy. We are very fortunate that the Government of Tajikistan and the Millennium Project have chosen to hold this event in New York, and I thank you all for coming.

Worldwide, more than one billion people—one-sixth of the world's population—live in extreme poverty, lacking the safe water, proper nutrition, basic health care and social services needed to survive. The consequences of this poverty reach far beyond the afflicted societies. Poverty, inequality and disease are chief causes of violent conflict, civil war and state failures.

Today, Tajikistan is unfortunately the poorest country in the Commonwealth of Independent States. The economic aftermath of a civil war in the 1990s means that even today, two-thirds of the population live in poverty—although this has been improving. The country's landlocked status increases its vulnerability, while at the same time limiting its opportunities.

Yet Tajikistan stands on the brink of change: It now has a real opportunity to alter its future through progressive economic, social and political reforms to become an example of equality and prosperity in Central Asia.

In 2000, the Government of Tajikistan signed the UN Millennium Declaration along with all the Member States represented at the United Nations. Since then, Tajikistan has demonstrated its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, or MDGs, by working to align its poverty programmes and to allocate funding to achieve strategic targets.

In 2004, Tajikistan was the only CIS country to be selected by the Millennium Project for its pilot MDG Needs Assessments programme. And in May of this year, the Government of Tajikistan and the Millennium Project worked together to complete the Needs Assessment, a detailed analysis of development trends in the country, and specific changes which might be required in order to meet the MDGs by 2015.

The Government followed up this first step by drafting a concrete plan for meeting the MDGs, which is the National Development Strategy for 2006-2015, which we are here to discuss today. My friend, State Adviser Kholboboev < *pronounced kohl-bo-boy-ev* > , and his colleagues are here today to present the draft Strategy document.

We are happy to welcome our guest speakers: Her Majesty Queen Noor, a friend and supporter of Tajikistan and UNDP, and Mr. George Soros, chairman of the Open Society Institute and the Soros foundation network.

We are also fortunate to have with us today Professor Jeffrey Sachs, the Director of the Millennium Project, who will describe for us—and for those countries contemplating the preparation of National Development Strategies of their own—the MDG planning process.

UNDP's contribution to the process in Tajikistan will be ably presented by our Resident Representative in the Country, Mr. William Paton. And my colleague, Ms. Marta Ruedas, the Deputy Director of UNDP's Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, will moderate the panel discussion on the Strategy.

The Strategy we are reviewing today is the result of more than six months of discussions and consultations involving government officials, civil society and the international community in Tajikistan. With such an informed and high-powered line-up of speakers, I am sure that our dialogue this afternoon will be no less vigorous and fruitful.

The General Assembly resolution on National Development Strategies has in many countries triggered public debate, informed policy formation and decision-making. I am sure this first concrete output under the resolution will do the same in Tajikistan.

With a realistic appreciation of what can be achieved with the limited financial resources available, combined with high-level political commitment to targeting the poorest sections of society, the National Development Strategy can be a powerful tool for development in Tajikistan.

As we begin discussion of the Strategy, I wish to congratulate the contributors to this strategy and the Millennium Project team. I believe that together we will prove that National Development Strategies can be powerful tools to trigger public investment decisions based on thorough analysis and constructive recommendations. I trust the commitment I have sensed from the national authorities will ensure that the Strategy will

STATEMENT BY MR. ZÉPHIRIN DIABRÉ

be translated in policy decisions and contribute to the improvement of the lives of the Tajik population.

Thank you.