



Statement from UNDP Administrator Helen Clark on the Occasion of International Human Rights Day

(Theme: Non-Discrimination)

10 December 2009

One of the founding principles of the United Nations is our faith in the dignity and worth of every person, without distinction on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, property, birth or other status. Today, however, on International Human Rights Day, we are reminded that discrimination in all its forms continues to undermine this principle.

It manifests itself through discrimination in the job market based on ethnicity, nationality or disability, or through gender inequality in education as girls are kept home from school because families cannot afford the fees.

It rears its head in agriculture, as those with the weakest rights - small farmers and women producers – are forced out of increasingly scarce access to water, or in tackling HIV, where stigmatizing men who have sex with men and refusing to provide harm reduction services for drug users sets back prevention and treatment work.

At UNDP, we place critical importance on tackling inequality and discrimination. Our work includes helping nations design and institute policies for **inclusive growth**, supporting the development of non-discrimination laws with effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, and strengthening transparent, accountable and responsive governance.

The international community has now barely six years left to reach the **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**. The concurrent global crises make their achievement harder. There is a real risk that the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people, particularly women and children, face further exclusion and marginalization from the development agenda.

We cannot allow that to happen. The human right to live free from discrimination is an intrinsic part of development - and development is a means to realizing this right. **Vigorous commitment to and progress on the MDGs should drive nations towards non-discrimination within regions, among indigenous communities, and between men, women, girls, and boys. Otherwise, even as targets are reached, national figures could mask the real story.**

So as we enter 2010, let this be our New Year's commitment: to strive personally and professionally towards a future of opportunity for all, not just for some. Let's work together to abolish discrimination and celebrate our diversity.