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**Oxfam International's Response to the UN Secretary-General's report:**  
*'In Larger Freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all'*

**Oxfam's Four Priorities for Action at the 2005 Review Summit of the Millennium Declaration – the 'M+5 Summit'**

- 1. An ambitious plan to meet and exceed the Millennium Development Goals by 2015**
- 2. An affirmation of governments' Responsibility to Protect civilians in armed conflict**
- 3. A commitment to an Arms Trade Treaty based on human rights and international humanitarian law**
- 4. Agreement to improve vastly the international response to all humanitarian disasters**

In his report *'In Larger Freedom,'* the UN Secretary-General has set out a bold agenda for international action. Oxfam International believes that Kofi Annan has challenged UN Member States to take ambitious, but essential steps to save lives and advance collective security in the 21st century.

Oxfam International shares Kofi Annan's view that security and development are inextricably linked. Our experience working towards sustainable development has taught us that we cannot hope to eradicate poverty without addressing the pervasive threats to the safety and well being of people and their communities. And we know from our work in disasters and conflict zones that men and women cannot be said to be 'secure' until they can fully realize their right to a life of dignity and opportunity.

Oxfam International believes that governments must seize the golden opportunity of the Millennium Plus Five Summit to take bold steps on poverty *and* to provide better aid and protection to people caught in conflict and natural disaster. It would be a tragic missed opportunity to approach this meeting as the 'MDGs Summit' or the 'Security Council Reform' Summit. Rather, governments must come together in September 2005 to act on the broad agenda laid out in the Millennium Declaration.

Oxfam International is therefore calling for governments to agree in September 2005 an integrated and clearly timetabled plan which includes at least the following elements:

- 1. An ambitious plan to meet and exceed the Millennium Development Goals by 2015**

At current rates of progress, many of the Goals will be missed in many parts of the world. Oxfam calculates that if current trends are allowed to continue:

- 45 million more children will die between now and 2015
- 247 million more people in Sub-Saharan Africa will be living on less than \$1 a day in 2015, the majority of them women and girls
- 97 million more children will still be out of school in 2015
- 53 million more people in the world will lack proper sanitation facilities

Yet today rich nations collectively spend half the amount on international aid that they spent in the early 1960s (as a proportion of their national income), and only 40% of that money reaches recipient countries.

As the Secretary-General's report makes clear, the technology, money and political framework to meet the Millennium Development Goals are all available. What is needed now is the political will to make it happen. Kofi Annan's report has thrown down the gauntlet to the leaders of rich and poor countries. Oxfam believes the Summit must reaffirm its Millennium summit promises by committing to an ambitious plan to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. This plan must include:

- an immediate \$50bn increase in aid and definite timetables for developed countries to reach 0.7 per cent of GNP in aid by 2010. This must come in the form of aid that is focused on achieving the MDGs and is better allocated, long-term, predictable, untied, and coordinated, with donors financing recurrent costs and undertaking better evaluations of the impact of their aid;
- 100 per cent bilateral and multilateral debt cancellation for the poorest countries to meet the MDGs where relief is needed. All developing countries must have their ability to repay debt judged according to their ability to meet the MDGs. For many this means that they must receive 100 per cent debt cancellation as a matter of urgency. New resources must be given by rich country creditors to provide for this debt cancellation.
- a commitment to conclude by 2006 the Doha round of the World Trade Organisation negotiations in order to make trade work for the poor. This should deliver new trade rules that will: a) end dumping, b) ensure that poor countries have the power to decide the pace and scale of opening their markets, and c) offer new opportunities for poor countries to gain access to rich country markets. The onus must be on rich countries to liberalise agricultural trade, remove all export subsidies by 2010, and address issues of tariff peaks and tariff escalation, as well as recognize that special support is necessary for low income countries to overcome the supply-side constraints to trade.
- a time-bound commitment to provide universal, free basic social services in all poor countries. The Summit must affirm that the MDGs will not be met unless there is massive investment in the ability of poor country governments to eliminate user fees for basic health and education services. Rich countries should guarantee the financing needed to provide this.

Oxfam further believes that no developed country should get a permanent or semi-permanent seat on the Security Council before it has established a definite timetable to reach the 0.7 per cent target for ODA by 2010 and has formally committed itself to this timetable at the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD.

The Summit should affirm that the MDGs are only a step to the necessary goal of poverty eradication. The Summit should also re-affirm the grounding of the MDG targets in the rights

embodied in the Millennium Declaration and recognize the importance of development policies and goals that are not formally included in the MDGs.

## **2. An affirmation of the 'Responsibility to Protect' civilians in armed conflict**

Oxfam warmly welcomes the Secretary-General's proposal that Member States embrace 'The Responsibility to Protect' as a basis for collective action. Oxfam believes that by agreeing governments' responsibilities to protect civilians, and clear criteria for UN-authorized military intervention as a last resort, the international community could make significant strides towards ending the obscene levels of civilian suffering in today's conflict zones. From Rwanda to Darfur, the United Nations system has again and again failed to mobilize the political will and financial resources necessary to protect civilians in times of extraordinary humanitarian crisis. The UN Security Council's statements on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts have not resulted in timely, effective action in many conflicts. If the mantra of 'never again' is to have any meaning at all, the United Nations, and particularly the Security Council, must make a fundamental institutional commitment to the protection of civilians.

In considering whether to authorize or endorse the use of military force, the Security Council should always address – whatever other considerations it may take into account – at least the following five basic criteria of legitimacy: seriousness of threat, proper purpose, last resort, proportional means, and balance of consequences. Under all circumstances, the use of force must not inflict suffering on civilians or damage to civilian infrastructure that is disproportionate to its military purpose, as already set out in international humanitarian law. These guidelines for authorizing the use of force should be embodied in declaratory resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly.

## **3. A commitment to an Arms Trade Treaty based on human rights and international humanitarian law**

In his report, the Secretary-General challenges the world to eliminate the threat of small arms which for many people are the world's weapons of mass destruction. Oxfam too believes that the uncontrolled spread of arms fuels conflict, undermines development, and contributes to countless violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. In the great majority of cases, arms are the tools that inflict violence, coercion and deprivation on civilians in conflict. Basic security for the world's most vulnerable people cannot be realized, nor the Millennium Development Goals achieved, without a fundamental international commitment to both serious reforming the international trade in arms, and addressing the needs of communities awash in weapons.

In his report, the Secretary-General has placed a heavy emphasis on the importance of preventative action. *In Larger Freedom* also underscores the rule of law and stresses state responsibility in relation to the arms trade. Yet in his report, Kofi Annan has stopped short of the recommendation made to him by the his High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change that UN member states take steps towards legally binding controls on arms transfers.<sup>1</sup> Oxfam believes that a new international instrument based on international law – an Arms Trade Treaty - is urgently needed to stop arms getting into the wrong hands. States that export arms have a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that the arms are not misused for human rights violations or breaches of international humanitarian law. The UN Programme of Action on small arms already includes a commitment to this effect.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> . Recommendation from paragraph 96: Member States should expedite and conclude negotiations on legally binding agreements on the marking and tracing, as well as the brokering *and transfer*, of small arms and light weapons.' Emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup> Section II, Paragraph 11: commits states to: "assess applications for export authorizations according to strict national regulations and procedures that cover all small arms and light weapons and are *consistent with the existing responsibilities of States under relevant international law*, taking into account in particular the risk of diversion of these weapons into the illegal trade..." Emphasis added.

The Summit should therefore include a clear recommendation on the need for an international instrument for strict controls on arms transfers based on human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as legally binding agreements on arms brokering and the marking and tracing of arms and ammunition.

#### **4. Agreement to improve vastly the international response to all humanitarian disasters**

National governments have the responsibility to ensure that all their citizens enjoy the basic protections necessary to fulfill their fundamental human rights. But when conflict or disaster strikes, international assistance can be vital to save lives. Often, the international community has been too slow or too feeble in providing such assistance. There is an urgent need to increase the quantity of humanitarian aid such that every civilian caught in crisis can receive the help they need to live with dignity.

Every child, woman and man has an equal right to such a dignified life. Yet there is grossly unequal international commitment to addressing crises in different parts of the world. This inequality is manifested in the vast difference in the provision of humanitarian aid between one crisis and another. Reforms of the humanitarian system must therefore be aimed both at increasing the scale and efficiency of the international response to people in need, and at putting an end to this inequality.

Oxfam strongly agrees with Kofi Annan's call for improvements to international responses to all humanitarian emergencies and endorses the Secretary-General's call to make rapid progress on several fronts. They should include:

- (i) *Predictable funding:* Donor governments should contribute an additional US\$ 1 billion each year, to increase overall global humanitarian funding – and ensure that needs are met in every humanitarian crisis. This additional funding should be contributed either through the UN's existing Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF), provided that its operations are suitably enhanced and improved, or into a new Humanitarian Trust Fund. Donor governments and the UN must determine which option is most likely to deliver humanitarian assistance to those in need, when they need it, wherever they are – in contrast to the under-funded, and unequally funded assistance of 2004 and every previous year. The UN Secretary General should be accountable for the Fund which should be administered by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator. To underpin this, a mechanism to objectively measure humanitarian need should be developed to compare one crisis with another and underpin the fairer allocation of humanitarian resources.
- (ii) *Predictable response:* Oxfam agrees that it is important to address the fact that there are 'too often gaps ranging from the provision of water and sanitation to shelter and camp management' and to strengthen inter-agency response to needs of Internally Displaced People. Essential to this will be strengthened coordination at the field level, including that ensuring that UN Country Teams are led by Humanitarian Coordinators of the highest caliber and that sufficient and flexible resources are immediately available to support these field structures.
- (iii) *Effective coordination:* Oxfam believes the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator should be given, and held to account for, greater authority over the direction of UN humanitarian operations in each crisis. The ERC should appoint UN Humanitarian Coordinators, reporting to him or her, with the capacity - and authority - to direct the operations of other UN agencies. These should be the best people for the job, not necessarily the UN Resident Coordinator in place before the crisis. In these cases, the Humanitarian Coordinator – cooperating with the national government – should have authority to decide on the assessment of needs, the strategy of the response, and the allocation of responsibilities and their consequent resources.

*In Larger Freedom* emphasises the role of integrated missions in strengthening UN coordination. Oxfam believes that UN integrated missions could help to improve coordination – if such missions could better manage the attendant risks. Combining the political and military objectives of UN peace operations with the UN's humanitarian aims threatens the impartial, independent and civilian nature of humanitarian action. Such missions can have an impact on agencies like Oxfam working alongside the UN. The UN's review of its integrated missions must lead to new procedures to reduce the risks of integrated UN missions. Governments and aid agencies alike should preserve the impartial, independent and civilian nature of humanitarian aid. Without this, the risks increase both to humanitarian workers and to the women, men and children in need of aid.