

Johannesburg
28 April 2010

Article by CGF Research Institute (Pty) Ltd

MDGs: ANOTHER COUNT-DOWN . . .

There's something about a count-down that draws our attention, no matter what kind of count-down it happens to be. There is bound to be some form of excitement or pressure attached to the second hand as it approaches the top of the hour. This is evidenced for example when a child counts down the remaining days to a birthday and is eager to open presents. Similarly, as South Africa approaches the opening of the 2010 FIFA World Cup™, other more "mundane matters" appear to move to the back-burner. Of course, not all count-downs represent excitement. In fact, the opposite may indeed be true when considering the mammoth tasks which lie ahead in respect of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which still require all hands on deck.

The MDGs are drawn from the actions and targets contained in the Millennium Declaration that was adopted by 189 nations as a global partnership, in response to addressing some of the greatest challenges facing poorer countries. Whilst it is understood that the poorer countries need to take responsibility for their plight -- South Africa included -- it is agreed that financial assistance will also be required from the developed nations to fast track the challenges that lie ahead.

There are eight goals which are expected to be achieved by 2015, the top six being; the Eradication of Extreme Poverty & Hunger, achieving Universal Primary Education, Promotion of Gender Equality & the Empowerment of Women, Reduced Child Mortality, Improved Maternal Health & the Combating of HIV Aids, malaria and other diseases.

Understanding that South Africa has just completed its preparations for the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ which has cost billions of Rands, one wonders whether our country will have, not only the money, but indeed the political will and energy to achieve our MDG goals by 2015?

Moreover, one needs to question whether the majority of South Africans are even aware of the MDGs and the challenges we face as a nation should these objectives not be met on time, or met at all? Whilst the soccer mania continues to grip our attention, it is crucial that South Africa and its leaders do not loose sight of a far greater imperative which is found within our MDG responsibilities, and underpins the future sustainability of our country.

According to the MDG Monitor -- an international tracking system which shows how countries are performing in their efforts to achieve their MDG goals -- South African officials seem to believe that the country is in *reasonable shape* regarding our MDG progress. In the goal categories; Eradication of Extreme Poverty & Hunger, achieving Universal Primary Education, Promoting Gender Equality & the Empowerment of Women, Ensuring Environmental Sustainability and lastly, Developing Global Partnerships for Development; South Africa reports that it is *very likely* to achieve these goals by 2015. Whether this is to be believed or not is the debate. Bearing in mind of course that corruption undermines all the good intentions, including those of the MDGs. To this end, the key message of the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon -- on International Anti-Corruption Day -- was that corruption is one of the biggest impediments to the world's efforts to reach the MDGs.

Citing an extract from the decisions taken on Anti-Corruption Day in December 2009; "when public money is stolen for private gain, it means fewer resources to build schools, hospitals, roads and water treatment facilities. When foreign aid is diverted into private bank accounts, major infrastructure projects come to a halt. Corruption enables fake or sub-standard medicines to be dumped on to the market and hazardous waste to be dumped in landfill sites and in oceans. The vulnerable suffer first and the worst."

ARTICLE

South Africa must draw reference to those matters cited by the UN Secretary General as our country continues to be bogged down by our notorious corrupt practices. This is further evidenced by the 2009 Index of African Governance rankings report, produced by Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, where South Africa slipped from 5th to 9th position out of 53 African countries due to low scores in areas such as Respect for Civil and Political Rights, Respect for the Rule of Law, Respect for Physical Integrity Rights, Safety & Security including South Africa's high crime rates. The Index measures governance according to a country's ability to provide good governance for their inhabitants across 5 major categories of analysis, these being Safety & Security; Rule of Law, Transparency & Corruption; Participation & Human Rights; Sustainable Economic Opportunity and Human Development.

Bear in mind, the UN's Convention Against Corruption is the world's strongest legal instrument to build integrity and fight corruption. If South Africa is not able to contain or at least improve upon its governance rankings, vis-à-vis the area of corruption, then it is clear that the MDG goals South Africa is required to achieve will be under even greater threat. In this vein, at a recent Conference of States, it was decided that countries will be judged upon the actions that they take to fight corruption, and not simply the empty promises that have been uttered regarding the fight of corruption.

The words of US President Barack Obama in July 2009 need to be remembered; namely that "development depends on good governance, and *that* is the ingredient which has been missing in far too many countries. That's the change which can unlock African potential but that is the responsibility which must be met by Africans. Africa's future is up to Africans."

While there appears to be progress against some of these MDG goals found within eloquent reports, the real truth of these developments will be told by the people of South Africa. According to the MDG Monitor, South Africa will *possibly* achieve the remaining three of the eight MDG goals, namely Reducing Child Mortality, Improving Maternal Health, Combating HIV Aids, malaria and other diseases if some changes are made.

Time will tell whether the progress against all the MDGs can be believed, and whether these changes will have been truly felt by the poorest of poor in South Africa.

About CGF Research Institute (Pty) Ltd

CGF specialises in conducting desktop research on Governance, Risk and Compliance (GRC) related topics. The company has developed numerous products that cover GRC reports designed to create a high-level awareness and understanding of issues impacting a CEO through to all employees of the organisation.

CGF's capabilities extend to management consulting, executive learning and facilitation of Corporate Governance and Risk awareness workshops, which caters for large corporates to small and medium sized businesses.

For further information, please contact:

Terry Booysen: Chief Executive Officer
CGF Research Institute (Pty) Ltd
Tel: (011) 476-8264 / Cell (082) 373 2249
Email: tbooysen@cgf.co.za
www.cgf.co.za
www.corporate-governance.co.za

Words: 1122

