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Ban mobilizes his 'superheroes' to give added thrust to MDGs



Bill Gates, a member of the UN's MDG Advocacy Group

22 September 2010 – Continuing his drive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today rallied his "superheroes," a group of eminent personalities he appointed to boost the effort to slash hunger, poverty, disease and lack of access to education by 2015.

"When it comes to raising public awareness and mobilizing political will, we need eloquent voices, inspiring leadership and creative minds," he **told** the MDG Advocacy Group which he set up earlier this year. "That is why I have called upon you. Your outstanding accomplishments made you obvious choices. You are especially well-placed to hold leaders accountable for sticking to their commitments."

Co-chaired by Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and Rwandan President Paul Kagame, the Group includes well-known figures such as Nobel Peace Prize laureates Muhammad Yunus and Wangari Maathai, former Chilean president and new UN Women head Michelle Bachelet, former Mozambican first lady and Graça Machel, entrepreneur and philanthropist Bill Gates, and singer and political activist Bob Geldof.

When he appointed the Group in June Mr. Ban called them "a real collection of superheroes in defeating poverty."

"Imagine how many more visionaries, activists, entrepreneurs and Nobel Prize-winners we might have if all people could live a life with health, education, dignity and well-being," he said today. "Yes, many people lift themselves out of poverty on their own. Yes, the school of hard knocks has many famous graduates who have struggled and succeeded.

"But how much better it would be to give every boy and girl the opportunity to make the most of themselves. That is your noble mission as MDG advocates."

Today's meeting was the latest Mr. Ban has held over the past three days with specialized groups in connection with the MDG Summit he is hosting at UN Headquarters in New York to give added momentum to achieving the targets, some of which are lagging far behind their schedule for 2015.

The eight MDGs seek to: end poverty and hunger; achieve universal education; secure gender equality; improve child health; boost maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS; ensure environmental sustainability; and attain global partnership on development.

"When it comes to raising public awareness and mobilizing political will, we need eloquent voices, inspiring leadership and creative minds," Mr. Ban said. "That is why I have called upon you. Your outstanding accomplishments made you obvious choices. You are especially well-placed to hold leaders accountable for sticking to their commitments.

"I also count on you to support UN-led initiatives. I know you have already agreed to work with us to boost the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria."

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