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## Central Asia to Develop Action Plan to Reach the Millennium Development Goals

*UN Regional Forum Takes Place in Kyrgyzstan, 19-20 July*

Bangkok (United Nations Information Services) – Despite progress in reducing income poverty and promoting education for girls, Central Asian countries still have one of the highest proportion of population undernourished in Asia and the Pacific. The sub-region is also falling behind in meeting some other Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), such as curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

To enable these countries to address the challenges they face towards achieving the MDGs by the deadline of 2015, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) will bring together around 100 delegates from 13 countries at the North and Central Asia MDG Forum, which will be held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 19-20 July 2007.

Participants, who include government policy makers, business leaders, representatives of civil society, academics and the media, are expected to develop an action plan to eradicate hunger and meet all the other MDGs in North and Central Asia.

The Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic, Mr. Almaz Atambayev, is expected to inaugurate the meeting.

Other ministers scheduled to attend the meeting include Mr. Ednan Karabaev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, Mr. Sabyrbek A. Moldokulov, Minister of Economic Development and Trade of the Kyrgyz Republic, Mr. Fan Xiaojian, Vice Minister and Director of the Leading Group on Poverty, China, and Ms. Lidia Gribenko, Councilor of Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Kazakhstan.

Representative of international development agencies attending the meeting include Mr. Shigeru Mochida, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNESCAP, Mr. Ashrat Malik, Country Director for Kyrgyzstan, Asian Development Bank (ADB), and Ms. Kori Udovicki, Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

2007 marks the mid-way point between the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by world leaders in 2000 and the 2015 target date to achieve them. The *Millennium Development Goals Report 2007*, released by the United Nation in early July, shows clear progress by the Asian and Pacific region in reducing income poverty and realizing several other MDGs.

North and Central Asia is particularly impressive in reducing the proportion of people living in extreme poverty, i.e. with less than \$1 a day. In Kyrgyzstan, for instance, the proportion decreased from 20% to approximately 2% between 1996 and 2003. Significant progress has also been made in this sub-region in the areas of education – particularly in reducing gender gap – and maternal health, although several countries are not expected to meet the goal of reducing maternal mortality.

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*Headquartered in Bangkok, UNESCAP is the largest of the UN's five Regional Commissions in terms of its membership, population served and area covered. The only inter-governmental forum covering the entire Asia-Pacific region, UNESCAP works to promote economic and social progress. More information on UNESCAP is available from [www.unescap.org](http://www.unescap.org).*

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On the other hand, the CIS countries in Asia have one of the highest proportions of population undernourished in Asia and the Pacific region – 20% compared to 12% in South-Eastern Asia for the period 2001-2003. This sub-region is not expected to achieve the targets of reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis if the prevailing trends persist, despite low and moderate prevalence rates. Moreover, most countries of this sub-region are landlocked and face particular challenges, such as high international transport costs, isolation from world markets and lack of access to information and technology.

The meeting is organized under the auspices of the tripartite initiative between UNESCAP, UNDP, and ADB, which aims to promote the MDGs in Asia and the Pacific. The North and Central Asia MDG Forum is part of a series, with the South Asia forum being held in Katmandu in October 2006, and the East and South-East Asia forum in Hanoi in March 2007.

More information on the tripartite initiative is available at: [www.mdgasiapacific.org](http://www.mdgasiapacific.org).

**Note to Editors:**

You or your representatives are invited to attend the North and Central Asia MDG Forum from 19-20 July 2007 at the “Issyk-Kul” Hotel, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The opening ceremony will begin at 09:00 on 19 July, followed by a press conference scheduled for 10:00am. A closing press conference is scheduled on the 20<sup>th</sup> July, at 16.30.

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