Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to present to you the first of my annual reports on progress achieved by the United Nations system and Member States towards implementing the Millennium Declaration.

I shall do so briefly, because I believe the report speaks for itself. In fact I cannot do better than repeat to you what I wrote in the concluding chapter:

“The record of the international community in the first two years of implementing the Millennium Declaration is, at best, mixed. Some Millennium goals have benefited from the hard decisions and courageous reforms that are needed. Others have not.

“In the remaining thirteen years, progress must be made on a much broader front. Otherwise, the ringing words of the Declaration will serve only as grim reminders – of human needs neglected, and promises unmet.”

Excellencies,

At a time when grave decisions have to be taken about threats to international peace and security, and the best way to deal with them, some of us may be tempted to put the broader and longer-term agenda of the Millennium Declaration “on the back burner”. I implore you to resist that temptation.

Nothing, indeed, could be more contrary to the spirit of the United Nations and its Charter, in which the goal of saving future generations from the scourge of war is so closely linked to that of promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.
The United Nations must be able to confront immediate threats to peace and security without slackening its efforts on behalf of those who struggle to survive on less than a dollar a day, without clean water or sanitation, and go to bed hungry every night.

We cannot afford to treat the Millennium Declaration as something to think about tomorrow, or whenever the pressure of business permits. Let us not forget that our Heads of State and Government adopted it as an urgent agenda – a list of the things we most urgently need to change if this new century is to be any better than the last.

And yet, at present we are falling short. What this report shows is that, if we carry on the way we are, most of the pledges made in the Declaration are not going to be fulfilled.

On all our broad objectives – human rights, democracy, good governance, the resolution of conflicts, and the special needs of Africa – we are moving too slowly. Unless we can speed things up dramatically, we shall find when we get to 2015 that the words of the Declaration ring hollow.

And on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals – the targets which are most precise, and therefore easiest to measure – there are marked differences between regions.

Over the past decade, East Asia has already halved the proportion of people living one dollar or less per day – from 28 per cent to 14. South Asia, where nearly half the world’s poor still live, has seen a more modest drop: from 44 per cent to 37.

But in Africa, where ten years ago 48 per cent of the people were living on one dollar a day or less, the figure today is 47 per cent. In ten years, Africa has only managed to cut the proportion by one forty-eighth. There will have to be a dramatic change if by 2015 – only just over twelve years from now – it is going to be cut by fifty per cent.

The first big test of our commitment will come in 2005 – little more than two years from now – by which time Member States hoped to have achieved parity of girls and boys in both primary and secondary schools. I regret to say it is unlikely to be met.
Between 1990 and 2000 the gender gap narrowed only by 25 per cent. And without greater success in placing more girls in school, I fear it will prove even more difficult to reach the other goals.

Excellencies,

The Millennium Goals are global, but what will determine whether they are or are not met is what happens in each separate country. And there is no magic formula for reaching them that every country can apply.

Each country must find the right mix of policies – the one that suits its local conditions. And the people of each country must insist that those policies be applied.

Let no one think that this applies only to developing countries. The developed countries, too, must ensure that no part of their own population falls short of the Millennium Development Goals. And they also have a special global responsibility. They must deliver what they have promised: to open their markets fully to the products of developing countries; to let them compete in the global market on fair terms; and to provide much more generous development assistance. Without these things, many developing countries will be unable to reach the Millennium Goals, however hard they try.

In other words, it is not here at the United Nations, or by the work of United Nations officials, that these goals can be achieved. They have to be achieved in each of the countries that you represent, by the efforts of its Government and its people.

That is why I have started a Millennium Campaign: to make the Goals better known throughout the world, and to try and mobilize the force of public opinion behind them.

I shall deliver my annual global report to you each year, but I hope that every developing country, with the help of the United Nations and other international institutions, will also produce its own annual report – so that in each country the people
will know how they are doing. Our hope is that, in this age of democracy, once people
know, they will insist on action.

Excellencies,

With the Declaration, the Road Map, the Millennium Development Goals, and
the decisions taken this year in Monterrey and Johannesburg, we now have an
impressive corpus of international commitments, all brought together in a single
coherent vision, on which all Member States agree.

This vision can become a reality only if all those who have a stake in it play
their due part. As I have just said, the decisive action must be taken within and by
each Member State. But the international community, and the United Nations in
particular, also has an enormous collective stake in the outcome. We must all do our
part to ensure that the necessary action really happens, and I personally am fully
committed to do so.

This Assembly, which is the most authentic representative of the international
community as a whole, has an especially important role to play, and, here and now,
an important procedural decision to take.

Let me urge you to follow this process with vigour, but also in an integrated
fashion. The Millennium Declaration has given us a big picture. We must not allow
that picture to be fragmented and dealt with piecemeal by different processes in
different committees. We need to keep the whole of it firmly in view.

Mr. President, I leave that important issue in your capable hands.

Thank you very much.