

**From:** [USUN, PRESS](#)

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**Subject:** Letter from Amb. Bolton on Millenium Development Goals (8/26/05)



**UNITED STATES MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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Dear Colleague:

There has been some confusion in the press recently about the U.S. position on what are known as the “Millennium Development Goals” and I wanted to communicate directly with you so as to eliminate any possible misunderstanding. Let there be no doubt: the United States supports the development goals of the Millennium Declaration.

Unfortunately, the term “Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)” has caused confusion. Depending on who is using it, “MDGs” can refer to two quite different sets of goals: the goals in the Millennium Declaration adopted at the Millennium Summit in 2000 or the goals and associated targets and indicators that the UN Secretariat formulated and promulgated in 2001.

As you recall, at the 2000 UN Millennium Summit, heads of state and government adopted the Millennium Declaration, which brought together a variety of development goals on poverty, hunger, education, health and environment. Some of these goals were original and some were from earlier conferences. The United States supports the achievement of these goals.

The next year, the Secretariat issued a report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Based on the goals in the Declaration, the Secretariat formulated a package of goals and subsidiary targets and indicators, referring to them as “Millennium Development Goals.” They are solely a Secretariat product, which member states never formally adopted.

Since then, the term “MDGs” has become ambiguous. Most people assume that the MDG targets and indicators were agreed in the Millennium Declaration. In fact, some of them are drawn from positions agreed by governments and others are simply Secretariat proposals.

The United States has, on many occasions, called attention to a particular problem with “MDG Goal Eight” - “Global Partnership for Development,” and its various targets and indicators. For the most part, these targets and indicators refer to inputs rather than actual

development goals and do not provide either an accurate or comprehensive picture of international support for development. Some, such as the measurement of ODA as a percentage of donor gross national income, have been explicitly rejected by the United States. The United States has consistently opposed numerical aid targets from their inception in the 1970s.

To avoid the ambiguity of the term “MDGs,” UN member states have consistently agreed to use the formulation “internationally agreed development goals, including those in the Millennium Declaration” in negotiated texts. This spells out exactly what we are committed to, and distinguishes the goals adopted by governments from the Secretariat product.

If the Outcome Document is to move us all forward and garner acceptability by heads of state, it must not backtrack on previous agreements or create ambiguity that will be subject to further misinterpretation. On the eve of the UN Monterrey Conference in 2002, President Bush said in a speech at the Inter-American Development Bank, "America supports the international development goals in the UN Millennium Declaration." We remain committed to work with member states in support of those goals.

Yours sincerely,

John R. Bolton  
Ambassador