

23 march 2010, A group of powerful women from the front-line in the fight against poverty have appealed to European leaders to ensure health and education for all people by rescuing the Millennium Development Goals.

Testifying at the European Parliament today, the 'W8' – a group brought together by Oxfam from Mali, Georgia, Thailand, Nicaragua, The Philippines, Bangladesh, Malawi and India – backed Oxfam's call for Europe to adopt a "rescue package" to get the MDGs back on track.

The MDGs, signed by world leaders in 2000, commit to halving the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. With development aid faltering, the ability of poor countries to meet poverty goals is increasingly at risk.

Unmet commitments

In a report to the UN general assembly this month, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said progress on the MDGs was being stymied by unmet commitments, inadequate resources and a lack of focus and accountability. This comes in the wake of a warning by the European Commission that Europe's international credibility was being undermined by Member States' failure to stick to aid commitments; now €13 billion (\$17.6 billion) short of 2010 targets.

Oxfam spokesperson Elise Ford said: "With the MDGs teetering on the edge of failure, Europe can play a key role in rescuing the goals and at the same time salvaging its own international reputation. Without a European rescue package which includes a new credible plan to meet aid commitments, citizens in the poorest countries won't get the most basic education and health care, and European leaders will not be able to hold their head high on the global stage." Only five years left

Responding to the W8's call for an MDGs rescue plan, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said: "With only five years to go, the need for concerted action to achieve the MDGs is becoming increasingly urgent. Last year's global economic crisis has further aggravated the situation for billions of poor people around the globe. It is both timely and necessary to remind leaders of the promises they have made and the crucial necessity of their continuing commitment."

Leonor Magtolis Briones of Social Watch Philippines said: "We have traveled to Brussels to appeal to European leaders not to abandon their promises to support health and education in developing countries. We see the desperate human cost of lack of basic services first-hand. A dramatic focus of political will and ambition and concrete actions plans are needed."

"If Europe agrees a strategy to achieve the MDGs, and world leaders to back it at the UN MDGs Summit in New York in September, 2010 could go down in history as the turning point in the fight against poverty."

Source: Oxfam