

Millennium Development Goals must be reached, clerics say

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With fewer than 1,000 days left to meet the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, religious leaders from the G-8 countries are pushing heads of government to renew their efforts to meet the anti-poverty benchmarks by 2015.

The MDGs are eight development targets that were established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000 and include targets on reducing extreme poverty, improving child mortality and combating HIV/AIDS.

In an April 5 letter to the *Financial Times*, the 80 religious leaders said "meeting the targets is possible but only if governments do not waver from the moral and political commitments made over a decade ago."

The letter was signed by Episcopal Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, newly installed Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and other clerics from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The letter focused on the need for tax reforms, free trade and business transparency in order to strike at the underlying causes of poverty. It also called on all G-8 countries to fulfill an existing commitment to devote 0.7 percent of their national incomes to aid.

The U.N. website says progress has been made, but some goals remain out of reach: "Governments, international organizations and civil society groups around the world have helped to cut in half the world's extreme poverty rate. More girls are in school. Fewer children are dying. The world continues to fight killer diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS."

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