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UN Summit Outlines New Global Development Blueprint

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The summit is part of the United Nations General Assembly, attended by around 150 heads of state and government.

"Development works," declared U.S. President Barack Obama, who joined the summit Sunday afternoon.

The 17 proposed sustainable development goals adopted in the first session will replace the Millennium Development Goals, which were adopted in 2000 and will expire this year.

The new agenda, said Obama, seeks to "break the cycle of poverty" through commitment and collective action.

He urged the international community to adopt the new roadmap and to discard "old divides between developing and developed nations."

Even as the leaders pledged to fulfil the goals they also offered some criticism, not of the agenda, but of the economic model to which it applies.

According to Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, "only a decisive transformation of the economic systems, only a complete and absolute change of the systems imposed by neo liberal thinking" will make the new agenda feasible.

"The best poverty reduction strategy is the reduction of social, economic, territorial,

environmental and cultural distances," emphasized Ecuador's president, Rafael Correa.

Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solis, who said disarmament had a direct link to peace and development, pointed out the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council (U.S., Russia, China, UK, France) are among the top six military spenders in the world and the largest producers and exporters of weapons.

The three-day U.N. summit, which saw the largest gathering of world leaders, also featured several parallel forums to promote policies related to the development agenda, including gender equality and environmental protection, which has been gaining momentum ahead of an upcoming United Nations climate conference in Paris in December that will set new targets for combating climate change.

Close to 80 leaders also participated in a meeting on gender equality and promised to eliminate discrimination against women before 2030.

"(As heads of state and government) You have the power and responsibility to ensure that gender equality is - and remains - a national priority," said U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

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