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U.N. Millennium Project For Ending World Poverty

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Jeffrey Sachs, in his Nov. 27 Letter to the Editor in response to my column ("Dismal Science," editorial page, Nov. 15) tersely denies that he believes in central planning for poor countries. Perhaps since space was short, we should let him expand on this point in his own words (from his U.N. Millennium Project, also reiterated with slightly different wording in his 2005 book "The End of Poverty"):

"In each of these countries, the Project and local research partners built upon international best practices to identify . . . the input targets that would be needed for the country to achieve the MDGs [Millennium Development Goals] by 2015. These estimates cover hundreds of interventions . . . that need to be provided to meet the Goals. . . . The second stage of the planning process will be for each country to develop a long-term (10-12 year) framework for action for achieving the MDGs, building upon the results of the MDG needs assessment. . . . This MDG framework should include a policy and public sector management framework to scale up public spending and services, as well as a broadly defined financing strategy to underpin the plan. The third stage of the planning process will be for each country to construct its medium term (3-5 year) poverty reduction strategy (PRS) and, where appropriate, its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) based on the long term MDG plan . . . and should be attached to a Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) . . . Fourth, both the 10- year framework and three-year PRS should include a public sector management strategy. . . . Bringing together a wide variety of inputs from expert resources, the Millennium Project secretariat has been co- ordinating a multi-step process to develop a methodology for country- level MDG needs assessments."

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(Joint with Africa House)