

Mr Chairman, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen

I thank the Royal Thai Government for its generous hospitality and ESCAP for organizing this important forum on Sustainable Development, and for inviting me and my delegation from Sri Lanka to participate.

Sri Lanka has made good progress in working towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The poverty has come down to 4.5% last year and infant mortality rate is 9%, while economic growth was 7.3% and the unemployment was 4%. We had the advantage of a welfare state (free health and education services etc.) which had achieved good quality of life indices even before the MD Goals were set. While the drive for economic and social equity continues to be a major component of our strategy to eliminate poverty, the vital need for rapid economic development is recognized as being critically important.

Appreciating this, a drive for integrated socioeconomic development based on the economic, social and environmental pillars was initiated. This is fully entrenched in the National Science Technology and Innovation Strategy which is being implemented by an intergraded frame work (the COSTI) that brings together all relevant state institutions, private sector and civil society.

While the progress has been satisfactory it is becoming evident that we need more external support. For instance to identify and access global markets, overcome various obstacles in international trade and capacity building (in areas such as skills development, technology transfer, value chain assessments, managing Intellectual property, generation and managing '*big data*', assessing and developing modelling scenarios for sustainability and developing global and regional partnerships). These are problems faced by all developing countries and the UN system should assist and create a level playing field to enable this.

If we are really serious in achieving the ambitious post 2015 SD goals the UN System will have to play a leadership role in ensuring that the many challenges are overcome. For instance the very future of our Planet rests on arresting the phenomenon of global warming. If this is to be achieved every country must observe the targets set to cut down on the generation of green house gases. There are many health and environmental problems arising from ongoing agricultural and industrial practices that need to be reversed. Environmental and health consequences of widespread use of toxic chemicals in agriculture such as cancer, kidney diseases etc. not only affect the present generation, but

due to accumulation of toxic substances in ground water, future generations are also at high risk. Alternative agricultural practices (such as organic farming) have benefitted from R&D and can now match the yields from chemical driven agriculture. But the mindsets of producers of these chemicals as well as that of the farmers and policy makers have to be changed by an intensive global effort led by the UN system.

A major constraint is the inadequacy of local and foreign investment within developing countries for sustainable development. While the UN focuses on innovative financing mechanisms, it should also play a leading role in establishing a new financial system that safeguards developing countries from the manipulations of speculative capital. The provision of a stable global financial environment is essential for the success of sustainable development especially in the case of developing countries. The multilateral financial institutions like the World Bank, IMF and ADB must be made more democratic so that the voices of the developing countries are heard and their interests are promoted.

The achievement of the post 2015 SD targets requires political will and commitment at all levels. At national level, for instance in Sri Lanka, the short term election needs mitigate against a long term sustained development effort. Therefore, the UN must play a catalytic role in highlighting the importance of sustainable development goal attainment within member countries.

Within the UN System too the political commitment at leadership level and effective coordination are vital for the success of the post 2015 Sustainable Development agenda. Every effort needs to be made to mobilize the participation of political leaders at the highest level at UN fora. By ensuring that decisions taken at this and other UN forums are incorporated in the final UN resolutions for implementation, the political participation and commitment can be encouraged and enhanced.

With determination and commitment at UN and national levels the vitally important SDGs can and must be achieved.

Thank you

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