

Revised Version
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**Statement of the United Nations Development Programme
Delivered by Mr. Thangavel Palanivel, UNDP Chief Economist for Asia-Pacific**

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour and pleasure for me to join all of you and represent UNDP at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development. With the target date for the MDGs approaching, and with negotiations on post-2015 well under way, this Asia-Pacific Forum is timely. Therefore we would like to thank UNESCAP for organizing this important event.

Enhance growth and equity simultaneously

Asia and the Pacific region has achieved a remarkable economic growth in the last two decades. As a result, nine Asia-Pacific countries were also able to move from the low-income country (LIC) group into the middle income country (MIC) group in the last decade. However the region's economic growth has slowed down considerably in recent years. The slowdown has been accompanied by raising income inequality, growing environmental pressures and rapid ageing (in East Asia), factors that raise the possibility that Asia's emerging economies might now be falling into a middle-income trap. In this regard, it is critical for countries in the region to analyse the underlying causes and take appropriate action to restore high growth that the region experienced before the 2008 global financial crisis. The slowdown has also increased the unemployment rates in many countries - particularly among youth and women. In this context, action is needed not only to accelerate economic growth, but also promote more job rich growth. Another disturbing aspect in Asia-Pacific is increasing inequality between poor and rich, between male and female, between rural and urban areas and between coastal and non-coastal regions. The imperative now is how to advance both growth and equity simultaneously including women's empowerment in the economic and political development agendas.

Confronting Environmental Pressures

Despite some progress on environmental protection, the Asia and the Pacific region is depleting its natural resources such as water at an unsustainable rate. Lack of access to clean, affordable sources of energy is also a constraint to development and poverty alleviation. Two decades back climate change was

barely a factor in development thinking. Today it is on top of the global agenda. As the 2012 UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Human Development titled "*One Planet to Share*" emphasises, "growing first and cleaning up later" is no longer an option.

Strengthening resilience

Countries in the region are increasingly vulnerable to external shocks, both natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes and economic crises. In this regard, vulnerabilities must be managed and capacities enhanced at every level by focusing on the strength of individuals, their communities, and institutions to prevent and mitigate the impacts of shocks. We are happy to inform you that the 2014 Human Development Report, due to be launched in July 2014, is expected to provide some guidelines in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

Leveraging Demographic Changes for Human Development

The Asia-Pacific region is currently going through significant demographic transitions such as growing youth population, rapid ageing, and rapid urbanization. These demographic changes offer both opportunities and challenges. Understanding and harnessing these changes will enable the region to enhance its potentials. We are pleased to inform you that the upcoming Asia-Pacific Regional Human Development Report will focus on these issues.

Promoting regional cooperation and South-South interactions

While official development assistance remains a critical resource for LDCs and SIDSs, the region needs to adapt to the fast-changing development landscape in the world by looking into alternative options such as regional integration and south-south cooperation. At the same time, countries in the region should not approach regional economic integration or South-South cooperation as a stand-alone engine of growth, but instead as part of a broader set of interdependent challenges involving investment, structural changes and technological upgrading.

Enabling greater voice and participation of citizens in decision-making

The quality and responsiveness of governance is also perceived as a significant issue in the region. To date, however, despite the widespread recognition of the importance, there is no consensus around how to reflect these issues in the post-2015 agenda. In this regard, UNDP recently published a Discussion Paper on

'Governance for Sustainable Development' which provides some guidelines for how we can integrate governance, rule of law, peace and security priorities into the post-2015 development agenda.

Integrating culture in the development agenda

Cultural related industries and services represent one of the most rapidly expanding sectors in Asia and the Pacific. Consequently there is a growing interest for culture as an integral part of the broader development debates at the country level. UNDP and UN systems are responding effectively to the growing interest of Member States in this regard. For example, UNDP, together with UNESCO and UNFPA, is currently co-leading a dialogue on how to make sure that culture is taken into account when implementing the Post-2015 agenda.

MDGs and Post 2015 agenda

To conclude, we believe that the experience of and the lessons learnt from the MDGs should underpin the elaboration of a post-2015 development agenda. We also believe that it is critical to link the poverty eradication, social equity, and environmental sustainability agendas together. The need for more inclusive and sustainable growth has been echoed by the more than 2 million people who have participated in the UN-facilitated global consultations on the post-2015 development agenda in 2013. Since Asia and the Pacific is a very diverse region, the post-2015 global agenda will also need to take into account huge variations among countries.

At UNDP we always advocate for the full inclusion of civil society and other stakeholders such as parliamentarians and the private sector in shaping national, regional and global policy agendas. In this regard, we are pleased to inform you that UNDP, jointly with other UNDG agencies, is launching another round of national dialogues on Post-2015 development agenda in more than 50 countries this year. These global efforts will continue to capture the voices of peoples, so that they can inform and influence the creation of the post-2015 agenda.

While we at UNDP are actively supporting Member States in their deliberations on the post-2015 agenda, we also remain firmly focused on accelerating MDG progress ahead of the 2015 target date. On behalf of UNDP, let me assure you that we will be at the forefront in shaping a bold and big post 2015 agenda as well as in turning the agenda into reality.

Thank you.