

UN ESCAP 71st Commission Session: Australia Country Statement

Executive-Secretary, Ministers and Distinguished Colleagues.

Australia is very grateful for Thailand's hosting of this, the 71st session of The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and for Dr Shamshad Akhtar and the ESCAP Secretariat's ongoing support to member states.

Australia welcomes the theme for this year's Commission session, *Balancing the Three Dimensions of Sustainable Development: from Integration to Implementation*. With July's Financing for Development Conference in Addis Ababa coming up fast, the post-2015 development agenda to be launched in September in New York, and a new global climate agreement at the UN Climate Conference in Paris at the end of this year – I have little doubt that in time 2015 will come to be viewed as a pivotal, landmark year for sustainable development. It is timely, therefore, that we consider, as a whole, the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development and how they shape the development challenges of the Asia Pacific.

In our view, the post-2015 development agenda must focus global efforts on sustainable economic growth and poverty eradication. The new agenda should give more attention to the drivers of economic growth, including trade, the private sector, infrastructure investment and jobs and equally importantly, gender equality. Gender equality as well as women's and girls' empowerment is

imperative for the realisation of sustainable development, inclusive and effective institutions, and peaceful societies where the benefits of growth are shared by all.

We must find new and more creative ways to deal with the challenges a more complex and multilayered development context presents. In March the Australian Government launched innovationXchange, which aims to catalyse and support innovation across the Australian aid program and come up with the best and brightest and most practical ways of solving development problems. We will collaborate with new partners, including in the private sector, to find innovative approaches to deliver the best, most effective, sustainable and transformative aid program that we can deliver. The initiative includes a specific project – SEED Pacific – to harness the collective power of business and society to help solve critical development challenges in the Pacific.

Sustainable and inclusive private sector-led growth that creates jobs, provides public revenues and reduces poverty does not just happen. Private sector development requires the creation of conducive domestic and international environments, which help to support inclusive growth, while generating development opportunities for all. In developing countries, the private sector generates 90 per cent of jobs, funds 60 per cent of all investments and provides more than 80 per cent of government revenues.

Critically, we must also ensure that growth and opportunities are fairly distributed, and that wealth creation is inclusive and does not reinforce existing inequities. We can no longer afford to bear the financial cost of not engaging women fully in the economy. It is estimated that the Asia-Pacific alone loses around US\$50 billion a year because of limited access by women to jobs. Australia also strongly supports development that actively includes and benefits people with disabilities – just this

week launching a new strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program. This enables countries to harness the potential contribution of all citizens, maximising opportunities for poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth.

Australia is committed to working with others to deliver a strong and effective global climate change agreement in Paris at the end of this year. Australia supports the below 2 degree goal as the compass for global climate action. To this end, Australia is taking strong and effective action on climate change and we are on track to meet our 2020 emissions reduction target.

Australia is also supporting other countries in the region to reduce emissions, build resilience to climate-related shocks and to manage climate change impacts in ways that support economic development. Australia pledged \$200 million to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) over four years, and we continue to support efforts to build developing countries' resilience and capacity to adapt to climate change through our aid programme, especially in the Asia-Pacific.

Australia recognises that the impacts of climate change are priority issues for many developing countries, including Pacific Island countries. We will continue to work with Pacific partner countries and regional organisations to build resilience and manage the impacts of climate change on economic development, and to support key regional programs that promote resilient economic growth, for example, through support to meteorological services.

We also recognise that credible and accessible data helps governments formulate and evaluate evidence-based policies, and empowers the private sector to seek opportunities, expand their businesses and fuel growth. Australia remains committed to building the statistical capacity of our

ESCAP partners in the region, particularly through the improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems, and economic and social statistics more broadly. Good quality statistical frameworks will help Member States tailor their implementation of the SDGs, by illuminating the areas where most work is required.

Another key in implementing such a far-reaching post-2015 agenda is forging a new global partnership between all actors, and harnessing all sources of development finance; both traditional and non-traditional. Through the global partnership we commit to many *partnerships* with a range of sectors and stakeholders, including governments, the private sector, non-government organisations and civil society. It is the cooperation between this breadth of contributors that will make the agenda truly transformational. And the culmination and combination of their efforts that will make the ambitious sustainable development goals achievable in our region.

Through the global partnership we also commit to *how* we will deliver our sustainable development results. Principles that should guide our cooperation in the post-2015 agenda include development effectiveness, national ownership of development priorities, a focus on development outcomes, and mutual accountability and responsibility.

Australia remains committed to delivering a compelling post 2015 development agenda that focuses global efforts on economic growth and poverty reduction. We look forward to continuing to work and cooperate with member states in our region, the Executive Secretary and the Secretariat, to help bring prosperity and opportunity to all the peoples of the Asia-Pacific.

Thank you.