

**UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

Advisory Panel Meeting on Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific

Expert Group Meeting on Training Design for Upgrading Statistical Capabilities on  
MDG Indicators

28-29 September 2004

UNCC Theatre, UNCC, Bangkok

**Opening Statement**

**by**

**Mr. Kim Hak-Su**

**Under Secretary-General, United Nations and Executive Secretary,  
United Nations Economic and Social Commission  
for Asia and the Pacific**

Distinguished members of the Advisory Panel,  
experts on statistical training, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Advisory Panel Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific and the Expert Group Meeting on Training Design for Upgrading Statistical Capabilities on MDG Indicators. At the very outset, I thank Mr Hafiz Pasha, Regional Director, UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific and Mr Brahm Prakash, Director, Poverty Reduction and Social Development Division, Asian Development Bank for being with us today. I would also like to thank Ms Erna Witoelar, UN Special Ambassador for MDGs in Asia-Pacific, for accepting our invitation to be a member of the Advisory Panel. We all feel very fortunate to be able to bring together such a distinguished body of eminent experts to deliberate on some of the most pressing poverty issues facing our region today. I am very happy that a number of representatives from other agencies could join us.

This is a joint opening session of the two meetings associated with UNESCAP and UNDP partnership in the achievement of the MDGs in Asia and the Pacific. As you may know,

UNESCAP and UNDP were the first two bodies within the UN system to forge a partnership to promote the MDGs at the regional level. Indeed, this happened soon after the MDGs emanated from the Millennium Declaration. This partnership began in December 2001 when Mr Hafiz Pasha and I agreed to undertake the first Phase of the project, “Supporting the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific”. This initiative led to the preparation and publication of the first regional report on MDGs in June 2003.

With the successful conclusion of the first phase, UNESCAP and UNDP have joined forces again to launch the second phase in February 2004. This project covers two Regional MDG Reports; the second report will be released in 2005 and the third in 2007 along with a series of Technical Background Papers covering key areas of the MDGs. A component of a parallel project with support from UNDP, on Building Data/Statistical Capability for MDG Monitoring and Reporting, is also being implemented by the United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (UNSIAP), a subsidiary body of UNESCAP, in collaboration with the UNESCAP Statistics Division. This project will present an opportunity to build statistical capacity for the generation of sound, reliable and comparable data relating to the MDGs, which are indispensable for supporting the analytical work needed in the preparation of national and regional MDG reports.

These two projects show that it is necessary to look at both policy options and better statistical data in our efforts to assist countries in achieving the MDGs. Both projects aim to build upon the success of the first phase by broadening collaboration with UN and associated agencies and creating synergies with further MDG related initiatives. I am very pleased to note that ADB is also making arrangements to join this partnership, so that three major multilateral

development agencies working in the Asia-Pacific region will be able to deliver a unified message on the MDGs.

Distinguished members of the Advisory Panel, experts, ladies and gentlemen,

The key MDG challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region may be summarized as follows:

- (1) Despite having the fastest economic growth rates in the world, the region continues to have the largest number of absolute poor. Recent estimates show that a staggering 700 million people in Asia and the Pacific, accounting for a little less than two thirds of the world's poor, live on less than US\$1 a day.
- (2) While some countries have achieved remarkable reductions in poverty levels, the decline has not been linear. In fact, several countries have increasing poverty levels during certain periods. Hence, sustainability of poverty reduction remains a challenge.
- (3) A further challenge relates to the region's diversity of culture, political institutions and stage of economic development, in particular to the huge variations generated by this diversity in the level of achievement of the MDGs among and within countries.
- (4) While some countries may have achieved the MDG poverty reduction targets, meeting the targets on hunger and other goals remains a continuing concern.

All these factors suggest that as the United Nations prepares for the five-year review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, a major breakthrough is needed if the 2015 targets are to be met. Partnership among all stakeholders in addressing poverty issues in a more coherent and coordinated way is required for such a breakthrough to happen. In fact, the broad consensus surrounding the MDGs has already generated unprecedented, coordinated actions, not

only within the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, but also within the wider donor community and, most importantly, within developing countries themselves. Complementing these efforts, the commitment of Governments, individually and collectively, to the MDGs, and their integration into national and international development strategies, policies and actions are essential to accelerate progress in achieving the MDGs.

Distinguished members of the Advisory Panel, experts, ladies and gentlemen,

We are gathered here today for two reasons:

1. to guide the secretariat on the content of the second regional MDG report to be issued in September 2005, and to advise on the Technical Background Papers covering various issues, and
2. to solicit expert guidance on the content, strategies and design for a two-week subregional training workshop on upgrading national statistical capabilities for producing MDG-related indicators.

I am very confident that with their extensive expertise and knowledge in development issues, the Panels would be able to come up with concrete recommendations to guide the work of the secretariat and UNSIAP.

I wish the meetings all success.

Thank you.

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