

**Signing ceremony of Host Country Agreement for setting up UN-ESCAP Sub
Regional Office for South and South West Asia in New Delhi
March 13, 2012**

**Remarks by Anil Wadhwa, Ambassador of India to Thailand and India's
Permanent Representative to UN-ESCAP**

Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, UN Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary, UN-ESCAP

Distinguished colleagues from ACPR and Secretariat,

Dr Nagesh Kumar and other members of SRO New Delhi, who are joining us today via video-conferencing,

It is my pleasure to be present here today for the signing of the Host Country Agreement for setting up UN-ESCAP Sub-Regional Office for South and South-West Asia (SRO-SSWA) in New Delhi.

2. Our Embassy has worked closely with UN-ESCAP during the preparatory work for setting up this office in New Delhi. It is therefore a matter of deep satisfaction for me to be able to sign the Host Country Agreement today with Madame Executive Secretary.

3. As our colleagues would be aware, the SRO has already become functional in New Delhi since December 15 last year. We are happy that Madam Executive Secretary could travel to New Delhi for the opening of the Office, an event that also saw the participation of Hon'ble Jairam Ramesh, India's Minister of Rural Development and of Drinking Water and Sanitation.

4. For the opening ceremony, the ball was set rolling by a High Level Policy Dialogue that was anchored by distinguished Nobel Laureate Prof. Amartya Sen. The Policy Dialogue was a uniquely representative event that saw senior policy makers from member countries providing their insights and guidance.

5. The participants in the Dialogue echoed what has been felt by all of us. It is recognized that this region is one of the fastest growing in the world, yet at the same time faces formidable challenges of eradicating hunger and poverty and reducing social and physical infrastructure development gaps.

6. We feel that the SRO could make a helpful contribution in our collective endeavour to overcome these challenges, by contributing focused and in-depth perspectives to regional efforts, and in helping forge partnerships with government agencies & institutions, private sector and civil society. It could assist members in sharing good practices and replicating successful programmes and projects.

7. The SRO could play a useful role in assisting both members and the Secretariat in implementation of the Programme of Work of ESCAP, by acting as an operations outreach arm.

8. We are confident that the relationship between the SRO with Headquarters, other SROs, and the five regional institutions, would be synergistic and complementary, in order to achieve optimal outcome in its work.

Madame Executive Secretary,

9. Establishment of this SRO in New Delhi is yet another expression of India's firm support to the UN and UN-ESCAP. I would like to recall that India had joined Economic Commission for Asia and Far East (ECAFE), which was ESCAP's early *awatar*, in March 1947, even before our independence. As a founder member, we have been closely involved, and deeply engaged, with deliberations on issues ESCAP is tackling as part of its broad agenda. I take this opportunity to reiterate once again our full support not only to this Office, but to the ESCAP system in general, and our continued commitment to work very closely with the member states and the Secretariat on issues of our mutual interest.

10. At the same time, I would also like to express my sincere hope that all ten member states would take ownership of the SRO's functioning, so that it is able to cater to specific needs of the region, and also make use of existing cooperation frameworks within the region. The Office could thus render valuable assistance in promoting regional integration in many dimensions.

11. I understand that, within the overall work programme of ESCAP, members have identified specific priorities for the SRO to work upon. These include - bridging gaps in Millennium Development Goals, Infrastructure development with a focus on transport, trade and transport facilitation and enhancing connectivity, disaster risk reduction, and energy and food security. It has also been recommended that it focus upon capacity building as a cross-cutting approach.

12. All of these are critical priorities for the region. I am happy to note that SRO has begun its work in right earnest on some of these issues. A high level workshop on 'Accelerating Achievement of MDG's' was organized by the SRO last month that also saw launch of the latest assessment of regional progress made towards MDGs.

13. As the Executive Secretary had rightly pointed out previously - given its location in a vibrant sub-region, the New Delhi SRO could be a springboard of ideas for whole of the ESCAP system. I am certain that under your able guidance, the Office will achieve major accomplishments in its work on identified priorities of the 10-member states it is going to serve.

I wish the Office all success in its endeavours.

Thank You.

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