



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

**Ministerial Conference on Public-Private Partnerships for Infrastructure
Development
5 October 2007
Seoul**

**Ms. Noeleen Heyzer
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and
Executive Secretary of the
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**

**Opening Statement:
“Public-Private Partnerships and
Financing for Infrastructure Development”**

Your Excellency, Mr. Chang Byoungwan, Honorable Minister of Planning and Budget, Government of the Republic of Korea,

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I echo the words of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in extending my own warm greetings to all of you.

And I would also like to express my deep gratitude to the Government and the people of the Republic of Korea for the wonderful arrangements for this Conference and for the warm hospitality extended to all delegations and to me personally.

For this, as well as for honouring us with your presence today, Your Excellency, Mr. Chang Byoungwan, Minister of Planning and Budget, please accept our sincere appreciation.

I should also like to extend our gratitude to all the officials and staff at the Ministry of Planning and Budget, at the Korea Development Institute and other institutions for their hard work and dedication in preparing for this important Conference.

Clearly your efforts have paid off. I am pleased to see that we have assembled such a distinguished group of participants --- ministers, senior government officials and business leaders --- to focus on public-private partnership for infrastructure development.

We are here today to focus on public-private partnership to develop adequate infrastructure for transport, energy, water and health services. We are here today to explore ways in which public-private partnerships can best serve the interests of the region and its poorest people.

For although the Asia-Pacific region is one of the world's most dynamic in generating wealth, it is also home to more than half of the world's extreme poor - more than 640 million. We also have more than two-thirds of the world's malnourished children. And this is a region where more than a quarter of a million women die each year as a result of events as natural as pregnancy and childbirth.

If we look behind those numbers what do we see?

We see poor rural communities cut off by bad roads that may be impassable

for half the year.

We see farmers who cannot communicate with their markets.

We see decrepit hospitals that are short of the most basic equipment. We see women walking miles to fetch water for their families.

We also see schools with classrooms that may be nothing more than four bare walls and a blackboard. In short, we see a critical lack of infrastructure.

Now we can add some numbers. What would it take to build those roads, those communications systems, those water supplies, those hospitals, those schools?

At ESCAP we have estimated that over the period to 2010 the Asia-Pacific region would need to invest \$608 billion annually. Compare that with the actual investment in recent years: \$388 billion per year – and you'll see that we face an annual gap of \$220 billion.

In a region that is at the heart of globalization, and with vast quantities of investment funds, that should not seem so much of a problem. Yes, we can look to governments to expand their budgets on education, and particularly on health. Yes, we can look to funding from national or international banks, or from multilateral institutions.

And yes, we can look to the private sector to seek out investment opportunities. Each has a contribution to make. But two things are clear: projected overall demand for infrastructure finance far exceeds projected supply; and the supply of infrastructure finance is more readily available to the larger emerging economies in Asia than to other developing countries, particularly to least developed countries, land-locked developing countries, the Pacific island developing countries and the countries with economies in transition.

All of us, governments and private sector investors, central and multilateral development banks, UN and bilateral development agencies, need to work more closely together to address this challenge. The challenge is too broad, too large and too complex for just one or just a few stakeholders to address. We must work together to explore all possible options as well as the most appropriate way that each of us can support increased infrastructure finance in Asia and the Pacific. And we must address the infrastructure financing needs in the Asia-Pacific region, including the rural and isolated areas as well as the exploding urban cities. This

conference with its wide range of participants is an excellent start.

And that is why, in a similar vein, we are alert to the possibilities of public-private partnerships. These schemes can combine the strengths of governments which have the responsibility to ensure the provision of public goods with the strengths of the private sector – in particular its ability to move swiftly and deliver high-quality services on time.

Over the period 1990-2005, eight countries of the ESCAP region invested \$367 billion in public-private partnerships. ESCAP itself has direct experience with such partnerships. Providing water supplies in Sri Lanka, for example, building micro hydro power plants in Indonesia, and carrying out effective social marketing of anti-retroviral treatment in Thailand. We need to explore which of those schemes have worked best and why.

But ESCAP's greatest contribution is as the intergovernmental body with universal membership in Asia-Pacific. We can look across the region to track innovations that have worked and highlight critical areas of concern.

We have also been developing tools to help governments analyze the key issues in public-private partnerships, seek creative solutions to critical problems, prepare the necessary action plans and mobilize technical support and build capacity to deliver results. The ESCAP High-Level Meeting that preceded this Conference has recognized the importance of this cross-regional work and wants to see it expanded through regional and global alliances. As a result, over the next 18 months this will indeed be one of the secretariat's key priorities.

This region is home to many partnerships that have worked, partnerships

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