

Opening Statement by Mr. Thomas Stelzer,
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Regional Preparatory Meeting for Asia and the Pacific
13 March 2013, Bangkok, Thailand

**Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,**

It is a privilege to be here.

Let me begin by congratulating the Government of Thailand and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific for hosting and organizing this regional consultation. These deliberations will ensure that the issues and priorities of the Asia and Pacific region will be conveyed to the ECOSOC global discussion in July.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Rio+20 Outcome Document underlined the critical role of science, technology and innovation (STI) as key enablers for achieving the MDGs and sustainable development. STI has the potential to tackle mankind's most pressing problems and be means of implementation of the multilateral sustainable development agenda.

However, harnessing this potential will require linking more closely the STI agenda to sustainable development challenges.

Sustainable energy has been identified as a key priority area for sustainable development and achievement of the MDGs. Access to modern energy services can contribute to poverty eradication, save lives, improve health, meet basic human needs, and promote social inclusion, gender equality and productive activities.

Energy access and affordability, however, continue to be critical challenges for a majority of people, especially in rural and inaccessible areas. Nearly 700 million people in the Asia and Pacific region have no access to electricity, while about 1.9 billion people have no access to modern cooking fuels or facilities.

Over the past years, energy security has been elevated to the top of the global agenda. High and volatile energy prices, growing environmental pressure generated

by increasing demand for fossil fuel-based energy, have combined to make this a complex issue.

Like never before, the current global energy system is at the core of some of the deepest dilemmas of our times: prosperity versus poverty; globalization versus security; and growth versus environment.

With global energy demand projected to climb to 70% in the next 25 years, it is apparent that the historical correlation between economic development and energy consumption, has led us towards a path of growing energy insecurity, environmental and health risks, and climate change impacts.

As UN Member States begin discussion on a set of Sustainable Development Goals and a future development agenda beyond 2015, it is critical to focus on a common vision that addresses this dilemma.

Renewable energy can play a key role in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda.

Energy access, affordability, security and sustainability are set to remain critical challenges for the foreseeable future and key priorities for a new sustainable development agenda. The Secretary-General's initiative on "Sustainable Energy for All" has identified energy efficiency measures and diversification of energy sources, including doubling the share of renewable energy sources in the global energy mix, as key strategies to address the global energy challenge.

Scientific evidence shows that renewable energy can indeed tackle many of these challenges. Renewable energy generates considerably lower greenhouse gas emissions than fossil fuel and other traditional energy sources. It can improve energy quality and mitigate environmental and health risks associated with energy systems. It can also increase access to modern energy services for impoverished and remote populations.

Maximizing the potential of renewable energy sources, however, brings associated costs as they require adequate infrastructure and large scale deployment of renewable energy technologies (RETs).

In many developing countries, including in the Asia and Pacific region, these costs can be prohibitive, as they require addressing a broad range of basic technological, infrastructural, financial and cultural challenges, cutting across a variety of policy areas.

The cost of renewable energy will ultimately influence its desirability for many countries. Countries at different levels of development will have very different sets of incentives in this regard.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Enlarging renewable energy options for all countries to meet expanding energy demand is critical to promoting sustainable development.

STI systems that are better linked to sustainable development objectives could contribute in this regard. Making RETs more affordable is one way to ensure this.

STI and RET systems that are focused on addressing the needs of the poor would also provide greater incentives for renewable energy use worldwide.

Therefore, there is a need to review the current objectives and delivery mechanisms of available STI systems. Setting STI goals in each country to ensure that they address basic energy challenges and sustainable development objectives should be made a policy priority. This might also entail integrating indigenous knowledge and grassroots technological innovation into more formal research and development systems.

Today's reflection on these issues will benefit from sharing experiences and lessons learned across the region.

This consultation is an opportunity to discuss regional approaches - for example to off-set costs associated with renewable energy systems - to expanding renewable energy use. Regional burden-sharing, for instance, could provide an effective incentive to invest in needed technologies for many countries.

I look forward to an interesting and stimulating discussion, and wish you success in these deliberations.

Thank you.