

**Department of Economic and Social Affairs**

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ECOSOC AMR Regional Preparatory Meeting for Asia and the Pacific

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon.

I wish to express my profound and sincere gratitude to our most gracious host, the Government of Japan, for hosting this Asia Pacific Regional meeting and for their most generous and fruitful collaboration over the years with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations.

I wish to also sincerely thank all of you for participating in this regional meeting. I look forward to the contribution that you will make when the outcome of this meeting will be presented to the Annual Ministerial Review of the United Nations Economic and Social Council to be held in July 2012 in New York.

Kindly allow me to now turn to the issues you will be addressing this afternoon.

Let me begin with the concept of resilience. How do we measure resilience? One need only look to Asia, for the region's economies have proven remarkably resilient.

Spaced over little more than a decade, Asia successfully rebounded from the Asian financial crisis and then very skilfully navigated through the recent global financial crisis. Both episodes sparked fears that economic stagnation would follow in their wake. But each time, such fears were happily proven misplaced as Asia's economies became even stronger.

The successful Asian responses to both crises showed that the strengthening of the Asia Pacific Region continues unabated, unlikely to be reversed anytime soon.

This, Distinguished Participants, is excellent news, for a more resilient, prosperous Asia makes for a more resilient, prosperous world.

Resilience has been in great supply in this region. Today, as we sit in beautiful Kyoto pondering how best to promote "sustained, inclusive and equitable growth and achieving the MDGs across all of Asia and the Pacific, I ask you to reflect on what the Asian economic miracle can teach the world.

Allow me to make three points on the subject. The first is that rapid, *sustained* progress on poverty and other development goals — despite so many setbacks in so many different places — is possible. Given the right conditions and policies, your region proves it can indeed be done, in one working lifetime no less.

Nor has Asia merely grown fast. For the past years, it has managed to combine growth with *inclusiveness* — my second comment. The Asian experience with inclusive growth has been an invaluable example and contribution to the world. Inclusive growth is also a subject of great interest to all countries and to the United Nations. The Economic and Social Council will be addressing this issue at its forthcoming Annual Ministerial Meeting in July in New York.

This leads to my third very much related point, which is that rapid economic growth can also be *equitable*. The Asian experience has shown the world that economic growth can be achieved in tandem with retaining or even increasing levels of equity. Many countries are now trying to emulate the Asian example of high, sustained, inclusive economic growth with equity.

There are many Asian success stories worth highlighting. Moreover, Asia's sheer diversity makes generalizing challenging. Still, the positive trends for the region as a whole are remarkable, including for our mission of "achieving the MDGs".

Take poverty. Between 1990 and 2005, the number of people in Asia-Pacific living on less than \$1.25 a day plunged from 1.5 billion to 954 million — all the more impressive given that over the same period, its population increased by some 800 million. As a result, the region is now set to achieve the MDG target of halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty.

On another vital target — ensuring all children have access to primary school — Asia-Pacific is also on track. On yet still others, including — cutting gender disparity in primary and tertiary education, stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, reducing consumption of ozone-depleting substances, and halving the proportion of people lacking safe drinking water — we can proudly say *mission accomplished*.

At the same time, we also know that on a wide range of other development indicators — whether social protection, youth employment or green jobs, for instance — there is much unfinished business.

Return again to our earlier theme: *sustained...inclusive...equitable* growth...for all of Asia and the Pacific...in our lifetimes. In your region, we have seen it can be done. What then, ladies and gentlemen, is our next move?

I can tell you that at the United Nations, planning for the future is already feverishly underway.

ECOSOC, as mentioned earlier, is knee-deep in preparations for its critical 2012 AMR on jobs, youth and social safety nets. Globally, unemployment has soared to crisis-

level proportions. Thus, above all, getting the world back to work must remain development priority Number One.

Once properly addressed, however, the world's appetite to tackle other pressing challenges should improve considerably. One such challenge is, of course, sustainable development.

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio + 20, is only six months away. The UN Secretary-General has called it of the most important meetings in the history of the United Nations, and sustainable development the imperative of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Clearly the leaders from this region must be at the centre of any global strategy for sustainable development. Dear colleagues, we need all the political will we can muster to reach a successful outcome in Rio.

At the same time, the AMR will be an important intergovernmental venue as we embark on considerations for a post-2015 development agenda. For example, Member States may wish to discuss cross-cutting and emerging development issues, as well as national experience sharing. In doing so, however, we must not lose critical momentum in our efforts to achieve the MDGs by 2015. In Asia-Pacific, some — though certainly not all — will be met. The only certainty is that plenty of hard work remains.

I thank you.”