



**Asia-Pacific Ministerial Dialogue:
From the Millennium Development Goals to the
United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015**
Bangkok, 26-28 August 2013

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Chair's Summary¹

1. The Asia-Pacific Ministerial Dialogue: From the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to a United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015 was held in Bangkok from 26 to 28 August 2013, convened by the Government of Thailand in cooperation with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The Ministerial Dialogue resulted in the adoption of the Bangkok Declaration, as a statement of consensus from the region, provided as Annex I to this document. The programme is provided as Annex II.

2. This Ministerial Dialogue was the first regional event at that level to discuss the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015 following the release of the Report of the High-level Panel (HLP) of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda in May 2013.

3. It was attended by more than 250 participants², including representatives of Governments, civil society, business, representatives of United Nations funds, programmes and agencies, other members of the international community and other stakeholders.

¹ This document is issued without formal editing.

² For the list of participants see <http://apmd2013.unescap.org/>

4. The participants agreed that the present Chair Summary and the Bangkok Declaration of the Asia-Pacific region on the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015 should be brought to the attention of the Open Working Group.

5. The discussions highlighted that shared aspirations for change were expanding and deepening, however, there was a strong sentiment that the final days of negotiations of the agenda beyond 2015 would face tremendous challenges. In view of that, this Ministerial Dialogue was convened to create a platform for voicing the concerns and aspirations of member States from the Asia-Pacific region and to foster regional consensus that could contribute towards building a genuine global partnership called for by the High-level Panel.

6. Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, in her opening remarks, noted that Asian and Pacific countries had made great strides in lifting millions of people out of poverty and in meeting several of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets, including access to safe drinking water and gender parity in education. However, the region was still facing great challenges, including persistent and widening gaps in income and poverty, among and within countries, and among different social groups. Further, she noted that violence against women and girls remained a deep-seated problem in many countries. The Executive Secretary, in referring to unfinished MDG business, called for a transformative agenda for Asia and the Pacific that would be people-centred, cared for the planet and that would generate shared and sustained prosperity. In that connection, the Executive Secretary stressed the need for a new development model based on structural changes for equality, inclusiveness, resilience and sustainable development, as a more integrated whole.

7. As Chair of the sixty-ninth session of the Commission, H.E. Mr. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, in his statement to the Ministerial Dialogue, recalled the collective journey launched at the United Nations Millennium Summit. Speaking from the view of the g7+ group of fragile States, the Prime Minister stressed that the post-2015 Development Agenda must integrate economic growth, peace building, climate change and environmental management. He emphasized that the ambitious objective of building peaceful, vibrant, just, resilient, inclusive, and sustainable societies could be achieved through the right policies, necessary investment, partnerships with civil society and the private sector, and collective action at the global and regional levels. The Prime Minister

highlighted the Ministerial Dialogue as an example of regional cooperation and the key role of ESCAP in ensuring collective action as the most inclusive intergovernmental platform in Asia and the Pacific.

8. In his inaugural keynote address, H.E. Mr. Surapong Tovichakchaikul, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, noted that poverty eradication should remain central to the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015, and that the Agenda should continue in the spirit of the Millennium Declaration in placing people at its core. He urged countries in the Asia-Pacific region to join hands and work even harder as partners to bring about greater improvement in people's well-being, while ensuring sustainability. He further noted that the post-2015 Development Agenda needed to more vigorously address various forms of inequality and highlighted the importance of health goals and targets. It should also incorporate instruments that help absorb shocks and build resilience, and ensure people live in dignity, supported by the rule of law, with their human rights respected and opportunities to develop their full potentials and enjoy fundamental freedom. Good governance must also be strengthened to ensure accountability, transparency and equality. In closing, the Deputy Prime Minister reiterated the importance of the Ministerial Dialogue in positively contributing to the global process, as well as building partnerships in the region so that no one would be left behind in defining the new development agenda for all.

9. During the three-day meeting, three roundtables, comprising distinguished individuals from Government, civil society and the private sector discussed the Asian and Pacific perspectives on the achievement of the MDGs, the transformative shifts that should be addressed by the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015 and the means of implementation.

10. The first roundtable was moderated by H.E. Mr. Sihasak Phuanketkeow, Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Thailand. The Roundtable reviewed the key issues arising from the Report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Post-2015 Development Planning and an ex-officio member of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, provided an overview of the High-level Panel's report and outlined some of the challenges that the Panel faced. She underlined that people remained at the core of the development agenda and that, while economic growth

was necessary, it often had little impact on the lives of many. The new development agenda should ensure that work continues on the unfinished challenges of the MDGs, with eradication of poverty as the core element of sustainable development. H.E. Ms. Emilia Pires, Minister of Finance of Timor-Leste, Member of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, highlighted that the Asia-Pacific region still faced many challenges. She noted that the region accounted for two-thirds of global poverty, while also highlighting the numerous achievements of the region, and poverty reduction due to high economic growth in some countries. She highlighted two important aspects in the report: good governance, and peace and stability, and related these to the experience of Timor-Leste, where peace and stability were a fundamental basis for its development. Ambassador Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, New York and Co-chair of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG on SDGs), pointed out some of the challenges that the OWG faced, because of its diverse membership (representing all 193 Member States of the United Nations), and the on-going broad consultations with stakeholders, which brought forward wide-ranging development priorities. However, he emphasized the need for the SDGs to be focused and reminded that, while the OWG was responsible for defining the goals, their final outlook would be decided through the intergovernmental process.

11. In the open discussions, both Government and civil society representatives supported the report's emphasis on poverty, hunger and inequality, and agreed that poverty eradication remained one of the greatest global challenges, while highlighting the need for a unified and people-centred development agenda. Inequality was also discussed from its various perspectives, such as income, consumption of global resources, as well as the weight of political voices at global fora. Broader calls were made to ensure that "no one is left behind", that the voices of all countries in the Asia-Pacific region, least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and small island developing States (SIDS), as well as the voices of vulnerable groups of people, were reflected in the post-2015 Development Agenda. Countries in situations of conflict also needed special attention. Opportunities for innovative virtual platforms to be supported and used for a constructive dialogue, and as a channel for expressing views and providing inputs to the work of the OWG from all stakeholders, and innovative means for a facilitation mechanism that promote technology transfer were highlighted.

12. The issues of peace and stability as highlighted in the Report, created a lively discussion on how these should be reflected in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Some participants viewed that peace and political stability are a prerequisite for development, since only in peace could people enjoy the benefits of universal education and health coverage, while others viewed economic stability as very important to political stability. Concerns were voiced as to the need to limit the overall coverage of issues in the post-2015 Development Agenda to ensure that the core development challenges were not diluted. There was also a call for more targeted support to vulnerable and fragile countries to overcome internal conflict and unleash their productive and development capacities.

13. The second roundtable was moderated by Mr. Shun-ichi Murata, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP. This roundtable discussed the perspectives from Asia and the Pacific on the progress on the achievement of MDGs in the region and the lessons learned for the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015. Mr. Anisuzzaman Chowdhury, Director, Macroeconomic Policy and Development Division, ESCAP, outlined the key findings of the ESCAP background paper that assessed the progress of the region in relation to the transformative agenda proposed by the High Level Panel. Underscoring that the region was an early achiever on some MDGs, he also highlighted that deprivation in the region remained a challenge. While the MDGs were a powerful galvanizing force, some important targets, such as inequality were either missing or not ambitious enough. He highlighted the changing development context and structural issues that introduced trade-offs between the three dimensions of sustainable development. His Excellency Mr. Le Luong Minh, Secretary-General of ASEAN pointed out that sustainability was underpinning ASEAN economic, social, and political cooperation. Reiterating the earlier intervention made by the Prime Minister of Timor Leste, he also underlined that sustainable development and ASEAN integration would not happen without peace and stability. Mr. Stephen P. Groff, Vice-President for Operations in East Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, ADB, shared his view that the five transformative shifts introduced by the HLP report were consistent with findings of the consultative processes initiated by ESCAP, ADB, and UNDP in Asia and the Pacific region. He added that credibility of the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015 should be underpinned by supporting financial mechanisms. Ms. Yoke Ling Chee, Director, Third World Network, said that global partnerships, finance, transparent and accountable governance, particularly in the domains of global trade and finance, were integral to the Post-2015 Development Agenda from the perspective of the region. She also emphasized the

importance of building effective institutions in developing countries. Ms. Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul, Chairperson of Toshiba (Thailand) Co. Ltd. shared the company's experience in overcoming the aftermath of the flooding in Thailand in 2011 through the active participation of the management, employees and the community, stressing that people were at the core of development. In the follow up to that, she highlighted the need to create a balance between the pursuit of business interests and people's welfare. She also noted the importance of including small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in discussions on sustainability. Noting that economic growth alone was not enough, the panellists called for a shift of the economic paradigm - away from unsustainable patterns of production and consumption towards a paradigm that was socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and took into account people's happiness and well-being.

14. During the question and answer session, Government delegates stressed that the post-2015 Development Agenda should be underpinned by sustainable development finance architecture. Civil society delegates called for upholding the principle of common but differentiated responsibility in the context of development finance, distributive justice, women's rights, and decent work.

15. The third roundtable was moderated by H.E. Mr. Norachit Sinhaseni, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations. The roundtable focused discussed the key policy, institutional, technological and social innovations – collectively referred to as the means of implementation – needed to implement a post-2015 Development Agenda with sustainable development at its core. In his presentation Mr. David O'Connor, Chief, Policy and Analysis Branch of the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs said that for the SDGs to be meaningful, substantial policy change, technological resources and financing were required. He reviewed the various ideas that were being considered at the international level to finance sustainable development objectives, the challenges associated with each of them, as well as the scope for international cooperation. H.E. Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, said that in order to determine the required means of implementation, there was a need to first clarify what constituted a common vision. He noted that, although ending extreme poverty remained important, the required five transformational shifts discussed in the HLP report prompted a look beyond poverty as a common vision. He noted the importance of government and civil society partnership in defining this vision. He emphasized the

importance of partnerships and leadership with credibility in mobilizing the means of implementation. Mom Rajawongse Disnadda Diskul, Secretary-General of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation Under Royal Patronage presented the Thai model of sustainable development based on H.M. the King of Thailand's "Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy". The Doi Tung Development Project has demonstrated how to implement sustainable development in an integrated and balanced manner among the three pillars of sustainable development. He discussed the three elements of the 3S model that was guiding the work of his organization, namely survival, sufficiency, sustainability, as exemplified by his organization's work in Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar. His organization's work provided an example of South-South cooperation as a means of implementation. He stated that development must be people-centred and based on the reality on the ground. Mr. Tassapon Bijleveld, Chief Executive Officer of Thai AirAsia, discussed making tourism support economic objectives in a sustainable way. Noting that, in Asia, most of the tourism was based on the utilization of nature, he stated that Governments needed to give proper guidelines to the private sector on how nature should be used for tourism in a sustainable manner.

16. It was agreed that addressing the means of implementation would spell the difference between success and failure in implementing the post-2015 Development Agenda, particularly for the LDCs, where national action was often not adequate to meet the development challenges. It was recommended that the United Nations should conduct regional assessments on the kind of financing required by each region. Civil society representatives highlighted the importance of working with communities in order to achieve the goals that we wanted. It was highlighted that the means of implementation should uphold the Rio Principles, as well as the existing goals and commitments. The meeting was informed about the ongoing work to define options for a technology facilitation mechanism. There was also a call for respecting labour rights based on ILO conventions.

17. Government and other delegates formally presented their perspectives and shared their views.³ The meeting noted that the MDGs helped the Asia-Pacific region and countries therein to set priorities for development strategies reinforced by time-bound targets and measurable indicators. The MDGs were also seen to have contributed to better processes and institutions as well as appreciation of the bottlenecks faced. Useful experiences and

³ See <http://apmd2013.unescap.org/>.

knowledge had been derived, which would serve well in providing meaningful regional inputs to the discussions on the post-2015 Development Agenda.

18. It was noted that significant national and regional progress had been made in terms of MDG achievement. In this context, economic growth, civil society engagement and global commitment had enabled many countries in the region to achieve remarkable progress toward key MDG targets, particularly in reducing poverty, improving health, expanding access to education and increasing literacy. While much progress had been made, it was also noted that new challenges, such as those related to climate change, were emerging and there was “unfinished business” of uneven progress within and between countries in Asia and the Pacific. This called for a concerted final push to achieve the unmet goals.

19. In assessing MDG achievements and lessons learned, the importance of adapting global goals to country-specific contexts and nationalizing MDG policy in tandem with domestic development priorities and strategies was emphasized. As part of this process, the role of government leadership and inclusive consultation with diverse stakeholders, including experts, civil society, academia, the private sector and international organizations was highlighted. There was also a call for efforts to enhance the collection and analysis of data and address subnational inequalities and challenges through “localized” MDGs, or subnational development programmes, with region-specific targets and indicators.

20. The HLP report was commended for its comprehensive and integrated approach to the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The ambition of the report’s proposed “transformative shifts” and its advocacy of a goal to eradicate extreme poverty in all its forms by 2030 were also recognized. While bold and comprehensive, it was noted that the report was also practical, building on the core advantage of the MDGs grounded in time-bound, specific targets with measurable indicators.

21. Among the challenges highlighted by delegations were: widening income inequality, poverty, population dynamics including migration, lack of access to education and health care, non-communicable, new and emerging diseases, unemployment in particular youth unemployment and lack of decent work and social protection, food insecurity and malnutrition, lack of access to water and sanitation, natural disasters, environmental

degradation, inequality in access to land and productive assets, violence against women, energy insecurity, climate change and wasteful consumption of resources.

22. In proposing goals to meet these challenges, delegations stressed the principle of inclusivity, or "leaving no one behind," and argued that poverty reduction and education must remain at the core of global development objectives. Universal access to health care and education, promotion of disaster risk reduction and preparedness, and support for climate change adaptation were among the proposals for goals for the post-2015 Development Agenda. In particular, the critical need to ensure gender equality and promote women's empowerment as a fundamental precondition and central component of sustainable development was stressed. A strong focus on improving the quality of education, skills development and livelihood training was also advocated.

23. Some delegations expressed support for the inclusion of peace-building, governance and accountability in the goals outlined in the HLP report and cited regional good practices toward these objectives, such as incorporation of governance objectives in national development strategies.

24. It was encouraging to learn from a number of country delegations that social security and social empowerment had reduced poverty and that increased wages had supported economic growth. Positive experiences with universal health coverage were also shared. There was a sentiment that, in the race to achieve access to universal education, the need to improve the quality of the existing education systems should not be neglected. In this regard, the importance of budget expenditure in the social sector was underlined as investments in human capital would secure medium and long-term progress towards achievement of the "The Future We Want".

25. It was highlighted that the post-2015 Development Agenda needed to have an open and inter-governmental process with poverty eradication at its core and reflect equally the interests of all countries. There was also a need to have a transformative agenda that would put people at the centre of all development strategies, with due attention to peoples' happiness and preservation of cultural and traditional values.

26. The meeting was informed experiences that some countries had in promoting green economy and green growth, in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. Such policies provided a number of tools and methodologies that could facilitate the transformative shifts to a new economic paradigm that would also support MDG attainment and poverty reduction. Positive examples of leadership, including at the level of Heads of States, in advancing such strategies was highlighted. The need to transition to a low-carbon society was also highlighted as important for poverty eradication. Technological change, along with social change, was seen as a key transformational driver for the countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

27. It was proposed that a new framework should build on lessons learned and successes of the MDGS, maintaining an emphasis on poverty reduction and eradication and gender equality and women's empowerment, while encompassing more innovative and comprehensive initiatives that promoted sustainability and resilience. These initiatives would include the promotion of the principles of green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and access to sustainable energy sources, enhanced access to markets through fair trade, the promotion of full and productive employment and universal health coverage, reductions in rural-urban disparities and inequality in urban areas, the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and preparedness, and engendering the effective rule of law.

28. Guiding principles were also cited – such as placing poverty eradication and development at the centre of the agenda, respecting the right to choose development models, a basis in MDGs, and upholding the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. Some delegations saw peace, effective rule of law, open and accountable institutions as being among the prerequisites for further progress.

29. Transformation needed to be guided by goals and priorities that were clear, with targets and indicators that were both quantitative and qualitative. Enhanced statistical capacity was a pre-requisite for assessing and monitoring progress, and had built awareness, participation and ownership of the MDG agenda in the region.

30. Some countries mentioned specific goals and priorities, such as unleashing human potential for sustainable development, eradicating poverty and reducing inequality, ensuring

sustainable food security and nutrition for all, universal access to health and family planning services, achieving gender equality, ensuring quality education and skills for all, increasing employment opportunities and ensuring workers' rights, ensuring good governance, promoting sustainable production and consumption, ensuring environmental sustainability and disaster management, strengthening international cooperation and partnership for sustainable development, universal health coverage, mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction, sustainability in urban settings and effective rule of law.

31. Delegations reinforced that the post-2015 development framework must be grounded in renewed and committed global partnership, with every country in the Asia-Pacific region expressing clear political commitment to realizing equity, resilience and sustainability. It was added that all stakeholders needed to be involved, along with judicious use of science, technology and innovation, and information and communication technologies to facilitate implementation, and supported by peace, effective rule of law and accountable institutions to ensure sustainability.

32. There was a general agreement that there is a need for implementation mechanisms to facilitate national and international financing, strengthened South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, fair trade, technology transfer, human resource development, institutional capacity building and experience-sharing. However, it was underscored that South-South cooperation and Triangular cooperation, though important and supporting the transformative shifts in the region, should not replace the North-South cooperation, which continues to be a key mechanism to support developing countries.

33. It was noted that the views of countries with special needs, LDCs, LLDCs and SIDs , must be reflected in global dialogue and consensus in developing the post-2015 framework. Given their levels of socioeconomic development and heightened susceptibility to climate change, environmental degradation and the impact of natural disasters, these countries required increased and focused support in terms of overseas development assistance and other forms of partnership to enable technical cooperation, capacity development, access to markets, and technology transfer.

34. As an example of regional partnership and implementation support, delegations noted the creation of the Pacific Islands Development Forum, an intergovernmental organization

focused on mainstreaming the sustainable development paradigm that enables inclusive participation of all key stakeholders from governments, the private sector, civil society, the media and academia. The Pacific Energy Summit, supported by the European Union and New Zealand, was noted as an example of North-South partnership that successfully leveraged collective contributions toward shared sustainable development objectives.

35. In order to facilitate implementation of the SDGs, delegations underscored the need for institutions to be reformed, including through promoting inclusiveness, enhancing transparency and accountability, and increasing access to financial resources.

36. In general the sentiment of the Ministerial Dialogue was that the post-2015 Development Agenda could not be advanced without the United Nations framework and the support of the United Nations system that would foster and ensure global, regional and national partnerships, and broker new social partnerships actively engaging the private sector. Also, the United Nations system's crucial role in developing an effective the financial architecture to support implementation of the sustainable development agenda was noted. The HLP was commended on its outlined five transformative shifts, including forging a new Global Partnership.

37. The role of the United Nations system, Regional Commissions and agencies would continue to be crucial for undertaking capacity development support to member States to formulate effective development and transformative policies and strategies, and in their implementation. In particular capacity for development of economic models, which would account for investment in social, human and natural capital, were highlighted as useful tools for improving decision-making for economic transformation and increasing the resilience of the economy.

38. Reflecting the conclusions of the High Level Panel, "No one should be left behind" was the common call from the Ministerial Dialogue. The United Nations system was invited to support new and genuine global and regional partnerships between all actors – including Governments, civil society, scientists and the private sector. The role of the United Nations system in supporting the process for development of the post-2015 Development Agenda and the SDGs was noted, and in this regard ESCAP and other United Nations entities were commended for providing continuous financial and technical support.

39. Civil society urged delegates to be acutely aware of their accountability for the success of the post-2015 Development Agenda. The results of the work done by civil society organizations from 21 countries working with millions of people across the Asia Pacific region during a 2-day consultation meeting was outlined. A “Development Justice” framework⁴ had been formulated to address the growing inequalities of wealth, of power, of resources, and of opportunities. The five "foundational shifts" of the framework were: Redistributive Justice; Economic Justice; Social Justice; Environmental Justice; and Accountability to the People. As an illustration of the impacts of the market-driven approach to development a civil society representative shared a personal story about the impact of the existing economic model of development and the resulting intersecting and multiple crises of finance, environment, food, energy and democracy, on her family - those people, she stated, who saw the wealth and resources they were entitled to share in being directed to the world’s obscenely wealthy 1 per cent. She urged a commitment to development justice, challenging Government delegates "to be brave" and to honour their constituents.

40. UN system organisations informed the meeting of the principles and priorities for sustainable development related to their work, including integration of economic growth, social justice and environmental stewardship and the need to end hunger and malnutrition in a context of growing environmental constraints.

41. At the “Luncheon Presentation: Raising Awareness for an Inclusive Development Agenda beyond 2015” on 27 August 2013, the rule of law and good governance were highlighted as key factors conducive to the promotion of inclusive development and empowerment of vulnerable groups.

42. The Ministerial Dialogue adopted the Bangkok Declaration and welcomed the Chair’s Summary.

⁴ See <http://apmd2013.unescap.org/> and <http://www.unescap.org/Sustainable-Development/forums/Post-2015CivilSocietyConsultation/index.asp>

43. The Japanese delegation expressed their appreciation to the Royal Thai Government and the ESCAP secretariat for the organization of the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Dialogue, and while supporting the adoption of the Bangkok Declaration as a whole, the delegation expressed its reservations on the preambular paragraph four touching upon "common but differentiated responsibility". Although expressing respect for the Rio+20 outcome document, the delegation did not think it appropriate to emphasize the concept which may cause North-South confrontation in the context of the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015.

44. While supporting the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015 and efforts of the countries to achieve sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific, the delegation of the United States of America disassociated itself from the Bangkok Declaration citing reservations with some of the paragraphs.

45. The meeting was closed by the His Excellency Mr Jullapong Nonsrichai, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand and Mr Shun-ichi Murata, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP with a call for a new partnership for advancing the global development agenda.
