

Asia-Pacific Ministerial Dialog : From the MDGs to the UN Development
Agenda beyond 2015 - Bangkok 26th to 28th August 2013

Mr. Chairman,

First, I would like to thank the Government of Thailand and the Executive Secretary of UNESCAP and its staff for the excellent arrangements made for this meeting.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight international development goals which ~~sought~~ ^{seeks} to eradicate poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat common diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development that ~~were~~ ^{was} officially established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, ~~following the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration.~~

In the past two decades, many countries of the world including Sri Lanka have recorded substantial progress. When compared to the 90s/~~today~~, people are healthier, live longer, are more educated and have better access to goods and services. In the case of Sri Lanka MDGs/ achievements are significant particularly in the areas of health, education and gender equality. Sri Lanka

has already achieved the MDG on poverty, well before the 2015 deadline. According to the UNICEF, Sri Lanka's experience is among the most compelling in achieving MDG indicators for child and maternal health and access to primary health care in South Asia. Sri Lanka's education attainment levels are high in basic indicators such as literacy, access to primary education and the education completion rate. We are close to achieving MDG targets for universal primary education and gender equality in ~~primary~~ education. The Government of Sri Lanka was committed to ensuring gender equality many decades before it was recognized as a MDG *by the international community.*

We think that food security is the main strategy in achieving all key MDGs. It is the basis of sustainable growth and poverty alleviation. Food insecurity is no longer an issue for Sri Lanka which is self-sufficient in staple food production with a surplus of rice and maize.

Our aim is to drastically reduce dependence on external food supplies. New technology, innovations and research in agriculture ~~field~~ *status the* have enabled us to increase our food production ensuring nation's food security in an eco-friendly manner.

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Building the MDGs beyond 2015, the global community should move beyond meeting basic human needs to promote ^{ing} dynamic, inclusive and sustainable ^{growth.} development. The new goals should ~~not only provide for basic human needs, but also~~ ensure essential human rights and create enabling conditions to help individuals realize their potential. Therefore new goals should seek to deliver better living standards ^{for all the people} through inclusive growth and sustainable development.

In most developing countries malnutrition, chronic illness and disability which are problems burdening the poor are decreasing. At the same time, non-communicable diseases, ~~such as heart disease, diabetes, cancers, and asthma, as well as risk factors such as obesity, smoking, high sugar and salt diets, and alcoholism~~ ^{the} are increasing and affecting both ¹ rich and poor. Aging is an important emerging issue, since it increases the old-age dependency ratio and has economic implications. It also meets higher demand for the prevention of non-communicable diseases and related services that are more costly than other types of health care. However, most of these can be ~~dealt~~ ^{addressed} through well-designed low-cost prevention programmes.

Special attention must be paid to a radical shift in education to highlight the role of science and technology. Science and technology helps poor countries, especially the new upwardly mobile poor segments, to 'leap frog' into the

future. They do not have to go through the trials and errors that the developed countries have ~~undergone~~ ^{experienced}.

Sri Lanka faces new challenges in education in providing skills and quality education that is fundamental to the demands of a modern technology based economy ^{and} ~~and~~ lifestyle. The current MDG on universal education draws attention to the quality of education. Education goals therefore should move beyond primary enrolment to improved job skills. The mismatch between the skills provided by the education system and the demands of the labour market must be addressed in the new paradigm.

Middle and lower middle income countries including Sri Lanka have been particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of international trade and finance. ^{And} ~~The~~ unfair trading system, trade barriers and agricultural subsidies have ⁱⁿ ~~hindered~~ the growth of developing countries. Advanced economies are moving towards protectionism ^{whatever} ~~whether~~ the wordplay in international ^{trade} ~~trade~~ may project. Such issues have not been adequately addressed in the original MDGs. Therefore, it is important to move from ^{crisp} ~~presumptions~~ ^{to} actually realizing the economic values ^{of} ~~of~~ the resources of ~~the~~ poorer countries. This needs a new compact between the developed and developing economies of the world if we are to move beyond the MDGs in the post 2015 period.

Thank you.