

Statement by Ambassador Asoke Kumar Mukerji, Permanent Representative, at UNDP Segment of the First Regular Session 2014 of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS on January 27, 2014

Mr. President, permit me at the outset to congratulate you on your election as President of the Bureau. I wish you all success in navigating the Board, in what promises to be an eventful year, as we all gear up towards crafting the post 2015 development agenda and the SDG's.

We would also like to place on record our appreciation to the outgoing Bureau, which was so ably presided over by Ambassador Roble Ohaye, Permanent Representative of Djibouti and his team of Vice Presidents, for their commendable role in guiding the work of the Board last year. My felicitations are also due to the Administrator Madam Helen Clark for her insightful statement and well crafted report on the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy in 2013. I would also like to align myself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Bolivia on behalf of the G-77.

Mr. President, the meeting of this Executive Board comes at a very critical point, very soon, the post-2015 development agenda, one of the United Nations' most ambitious projects, would be unveiled. As our PGA Ambassador John Ashe affirmed the day he accepted office, and I quote: *"If we are to rise to the task, the General Assembly must be equally as bold, ambitious and collaborative."* I would therefore, Mr. President, submit the following for your consideration:

One, for the UN Development System, as well as, for the post 2015 Development Agenda to succeed, the starting premise has to be rooted in the D of UNDP, and strongly anchored on issues of 'development' alone. If we were to lose sight of this defining objective, and cloud ourselves with extraneous issues by trying to somehow connect them with development, we would might end up doing the development agenda a great disservice.

Second, UNDP's Strategic Plan has given a very explicit vision, which is the eradication of poverty and inclusive growth. This has to be the singular guiding objective of UNDP's activities, as well as the critical benchmark of assessment, as the organization proceeds forward in the implementation of the strategic plan, especially in developing countries. The QCPR Resolution, which forms the defining basis of the UN Development System's policy framework, provided an overarching mandate to, and I quote *"assign THE highest priority to poverty eradication"*. This, according to the Resolution, *"should continue to be the core focus area for the United Nations development system and*

that ALL its development programmes and projects should attempt to address this greatest global challenge as their underlying objective"

Three, when we look at this mandate, and then consider UNDP's Global Programme, which is also placed for decision before this Board, we found it a bit disconcerting to note that even the phrase "poverty eradication" did not find mention in any of the five priorities of UNDP's draft of the Global Programme. This was a bit surprising, as it supposedly drew sustenance from the Strategic Plan, which had clearly spelt out its vision, as I have just quoted. We are grateful that your team has since given it another look, and this has been duly corrected.

Four, with regards to the Regional Programme for South Asia and Pacific, we welcome the extremely consultative and participatory process that has been followed by your RBAP team in drafting this document. We welcome the inclusion, at the impact level, for an indicator to measure, how many people have been brought above the poverty line with UNDP's assistance in programme countries. This is most useful and a tangible way of measuring your contribution on this overarching mandate. However, an apprehension still remains that while UNDP's resources are being allocated against some very pertinent outcomes, UNDP may not be actually contributing towards several of them. We would therefore request further refining of the outcome level indicators in the regional programme for Asia and Pacific.

Fifth, since this Board Session also looks at the Gender Equality Strategy of UNDP, I would like to emphasize a priority, which I have already flagged both to the SG, as well as the UN Women Executive Director, requesting the UN Development System to also consider how to empower women by providing them access to, and use of, enabling technologies for socio-economic development. Based on the rapid penetration of information and communication technologies into societies in developing, including least developed economies, it is necessary and feasible for us to look at the 'force multiplier' effect of these technologies in altering the narrative of women's empowerment debate in developing countries. We can attempt this by planning programmes and projects that place such empowering tools at the hands of women, themselves. In addition, we would also underscore that with regards to the draft gender equality strategy document, the appointment of gender advisors for mainstreaming purposes need not be necessarily linked only to the budget of country offices, which are anyhow determined through a separate process driven by UNDAFs.

Six, with regards to the Strategic Framework of the UN Office for South South Cooperation, which has also been placed for consideration before this Board Session, let me first place on record our sincerest appreciation for the UN Office for South South Cooperation, and its

entire team of Ines, Francisco and Mr. Yiping Zhou, for having so ably spearheaded the work of the office inspite of the resource constraints. Our submission to you, Madam Administrator, remains two fold: One, as host to the only entity in the whole of the UN System, which has a singular mandate to promote South South cooperation, the Office needs to be given the resources, both financial and human, which it needs for its effective functioning and discharge of its mandate. Secondly, we need to also move beyond the lip service that has been traditionally meted out to South South cooperation. Words must translate into action, and developing countries, who are pursuing projects of South South cooperation, should find the UNDP willing to assist them wherever they so request assistance from the multilateral system. We need to acknowledge this in the Strategic Framework of the Office.

To conclude, Mr. President, let me submit that this Board Session, given its agenda, is an important and timely opportunity not just for stock taking but also to constructively contribute to the future of UN's post 2015 development agenda. Our suggestions today have been made in this spirit and I hope will find resonance, within the larger UNDP community of development practitioners. The next four years over which the Strategic Plan of UNDP will be implemented will be a litmus test, given the trying times that confront most developing countries today.

As a country that has one of the longest relationships with UNDP and is the largest contributor to its core budget among developing countries, we have an abiding interest in UNDP's success and your efforts in the global development agenda.

Let me finish by quoting Mahatma Gandhi, when he had said: *" Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man you have seen, and ask yourself if this step you contemplate is going to be any use to him."*

As the largest development arm of the UN system, I hope UNDP would continue to be guided by this advice, as we embark upon our collective endeavour to wipe out poverty from the face of this planet.

I thank you Mr. President.

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