

**Statement by Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri
Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations
at UNDP Segment of the Annual Session 2011 of the Executive Board of
UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS on June 13, 2011)**

Madam President,

At the outset, permit me to thank Administrator Helen Clark for her comprehensive opening remarks.

We take heart from the positive examples of progress in UNDP interventions across the world that Administrator Clark has flagged in the course of her remarks. These examples highlight the cross-cutting and multi-dimensional activities of the UNDP at the ground level encompassing, inter alia, poverty reduction, mitigating the impact of AIDS, increasing democratic governance, crisis prevention and recovery, environment and sustainable development, and strengthening development effectiveness.

Such a wide sweep of activities gives the UNDP a unique role within the UN system , thereby positioning it to combat persistent challenges that impede progress and bridge the gaps in the realization of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. In this context, we welcome the UNDP's strategic focus on reviving the organization to improve its ability to deliver development results in programme countries. Only a strong and robust organization can deliver the kind of change that is needed to truly revitalize the development agenda and to bring about sustainable, inclusive, and resilient development - the three broad goals for advancing human development reaffirmed in the mid-term review of the strategic plan.

The expectations from the UNDP as the largest developmental arm of the United Nations are enormous. While appreciating the complex nexus of issues that inform the development agenda, we would like to see a greater sense of urgency in addressing the core challenges of poverty eradication, food security and energy access that constitute the most pressing development issues facing programme countries. We further expect full alignment of UNDP activities and strategies with the national development strategies of programme countries, both in principle and practice. Only then do we have a real chance at delivering durable solutions and genuine progress.

My delegation believes that South-South cooperation is an important and practical mode of cooperation that can meaningfully supplement other streams of cooperation. If UNDP genuinely wants to invest in such cooperation, it not only needs to give it sustained attention at the highest levels, but also devote real resources to nurturing it and shore up its efforts in this direction. Moreover, the focus of such efforts should be to bring together the expertise and technical capacities of the South with UNDP resources in joint partnerships. India, for its part, is actively involved in exploring further options to step up its engagement with UNDP to share our development experiences with other developing countries.

Madam President,

In so far as India is concerned, while we have benefitted from robust economic growth in recent years, we remain cognizant that the largest concentration of poor in the world continues to remain in our country and our region. The government's efforts are therefore focused on pushing for growth while simultaneously ensuring that the fruits of growth percolate to every section of society. We are pursuing this goal through a large plank of ambitious socio-economic development programmes.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, with an annual budget of US\$ 8 billion, is the largest "cash for work" poverty alleviation programme in the world and has benefited 50 million rural households in India so far.

Indian law mandates that all Indian children in the age group of 6 to 14 years must receive free education. The Sarva Shikshya Abhiyan, a universal elementary education programme with an annual budget of US\$ 3 billion has dramatically increased primary school enrolment. We also run the largest free school-lunch programme in the world to ensure that children remain in school while also giving them balanced nutrition. This is being supplemented by Saakshar Bharat, a special programme focused on female literacy launched in 2009.

In the area of women's empowerment, India runs one of the largest-scale affirmative action initiatives ever by mandating that one-third of all elected positions in local government be reserved for women. We are striving to raise this figure even higher. More than a million women representatives already hold elected positions. A legislation to extend reservation of seats in Parliament is under consideration.

Our challenges in the areas of women's and children's health are enormous. We are undertaking multi-pronged strategy to ensure progress including through the National Rural Health Mission launched in 2005 to provide accessible, affordable, accountable, effective and reliable health care in the rural areas.

Madam President,

Before concluding, we would like to add our voice of support to those that have called for more sustained support to the most vulnerable and poorest amongst us. We encourage UNDP to enhance its focus on the development needs of the least developed

countries and low-income countries. We expect to see UNDP play a pro-active role in the follow up to the LDC-IV conference in Istanbul. The success of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPOA) is pivotal in order to improve the state of development in the world.

I thank you, Madam President.



***Extempore Remarks delivered by Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri
Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations
At UNDP Segment of the Annual Session 2011 of the Executive Board of
UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS (June 13, 2011)***

Madam President,

Thank you for giving me the floor, Madam President. My prepared statement is there for circulation. Please therefore allow me to offer some extempore remarks.

Madam President, First of all I would like to join many others in thanking the Executive Director Ms. Helen Clark for her comprehensive opening remarks. We are meeting here at the time of reviewing the strategic plan. We are also meeting her about four years before our target deadline for meeting the MDGs.

Madam President, you would agree that it is time for us to introspect, given that we still have a long way to go in meeting the MDGs, including the most important of the challenges, that of poverty eradication. Let me say so, I come from a country which has done well - we have had progress, we have had growth, but we have still continued to remain the country and the region with the largest concentration of poor. You know one speaks with a certain amount of knowledge, of having faced some of these issues.

In such a time, Madam Administrator, you would allow us to ask this simple question - What can UNDP do for us? You would allow us to mention at least in brief a few areas which are truly of high priority for us – for the UN's major arm on development, the all encompassing body, which reaches out to the developing world for development.

We, of course, are completely with you in saying that we work for sustainable, inclusive and resilient development. Indeed the guiding motto of the Five Year plan currently in force in India is of inclusive growth – which you, Madam Administrator, and your colleagues are well aware of. We believe without doubt that a robust UNDP would be a very good thing for the organization and also for all of us who benefit from your activities.

I just want to make one small observation on an issue that keeps coming up – the issue of transparency – you know, coming from the world's most open society, the largest number of NGOs, freedom of press, we are certainly for transparency and for the fact that it is very important. Member states as being integral to the UN and the UNDP are equally important – they all have their rightful place and I'm sure we can find means and ways of addressing one and the other in a synergized sort of manner.

Madam Administrator, what are the areas, in which I would request to see UNDP's strong and active involvement - without doubt the first one is poverty eradication, I mentioned to you that we are four years away from the MDG target dates, we still have a long way to go, it is absolutely imperative, we know the limitation, we know financial situations in many parts of the world. But I think it behoves all of us, as the international community, particularly at the UN, that our organization - which is UNDP – stands at the forefront of poverty eradication.

Madam Administrator, I would like you to do this not only as a part of the implementation of programs but to throw your considerable weight behind poverty eradication, growth and inclusive growth in major international negotiations, international discussions and discourse in the global polity. This will certainly carry a great deal of weight and be of immense benefit to developing countries.

We of course have issues of energy access which stands paramount too. Today we are seeing a spike in global hydrocarbon prices; these are bound to have impact on many parts of the world where development still needs to be pursued in a very concerted manner. We see issues of food security, a day does not go by where we are not reminded, even though we might have some of the best and largest harvests in terms of quantity of grain, that we still face the prospect of droughts and famines – all of these need to be tackled. We hope to see the UNDP get more involved in this particular endeavor.

South-South cooperation, this is another area where you have been active, Madam Administrator. We have all been active in our own ways to the extent of capacities that we have. My country is certainly very proud of what we are able to do for fellow countries in the South, and even be able to provide financial partnerships in the way that we are able to do so. I believe this is an important and core area of the UNDP that is worth our while to nurture it through devotion of real resources, real efforts and management involvement. In terms of these efforts, I will leave you with the thought, of bringing together expertise and technical capacities of the South with UNDP resources for a joint partnership.

Let me stop here, Madam Administrator and Madam President, because time is running out and we have 30 odd speakers more. Before concluding, let me add my voice to those that have called for more sustained support to the most vulnerable and poorest amongst us. We encourage UNDP to enhance its focus on the development needs of the least developed countries and low-income countries. We expect to see UNDP play a pro-active role in the follow up to the LDC-IV conference in Istanbul. The success of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPOA) is pivotal in order to improve the state of development in the world.

I thank you, Madam President.

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