

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MANJEEV SINGH PURI, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, AT THE UNDP SEGMENT OF THE FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS ON FEBRUARY 02, 2012

Mr. President,

Permit me at the outset to congratulate you on your election as President of the Bureau, I wish you a sterling innings and hope that you would successfully navigate the Board in implementing its agenda for this year.

We would also like to place on record our appreciation to the outgoing Bureau, which was so ably presided over by Ambassador Edita Hrdá, Permanent Representative of Czech Republic, for their commendable role in guiding the work of the Board last year.

My felicitations to the Administrator Madam Helen Clark for her informative statement.

India aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Algeria on behalf of the Group of G 77 and China.

Mr. President,

2011 was marked by major developments across the globe and several key conferences that not only provided an opportunity for stock-taking, but also served as useful reminders to the international community on the pressing challenges that remain to be addressed on the global development agenda. The 4th UN Conference on LDCs and its proclamation of the Istanbul Plan of Action, as well as the Durban Conference on Climate Change, were all small yet significant markers. While we were able to make some progress at Durban, we must continue to be guided by the principles of equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR).

As we prepare for the Rio plus 20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in June this year, we must ensure that poverty eradication remains at the center of global development agenda and that the commitments we have made at the previous Conferences, were not just words and should guide us in the way we act at, and make decisions in Rio and on the post 2015 development agenda. We must ensure that effective implementation mechanisms and target monitoring systems are suitably followed up, as an outcome of our conferences.

Given that the last year was marked by major upheavals and deepening of conflict situations across the globe, as pertinently pointed out in UN Secretary General's address, we must attempt to prevent and mitigate conflicts before they become life threatening. My delegation believes that by virtue of its unique position as the largest development arm of the UN system, the UNDP has a special role in achieving

the five generational opportunities outlined by the Secretary General of sustainable development; preventing and mitigating conflicts, human rights abuses and the impacts of natural disasters; building a safer and more secure world; supporting countries in transition; and working to engage the talents of women and young people.

In all of these, UNDP should be the force multiplier arm of the UN by fostering national and local capacities, strengthening networks for sharing of knowledge and best practices, promoting national ownership, and by building socio-economic resilience in the most vulnerable developing countries.

Mr. President,

While India has been able to clock an average growth rate of 8.5% in the last seven years, education and health have been important focus areas in our development agenda and there is encouraging news in these sectors. The Right to Education Act is now on the statute books. Enrollment of children in primary schools is near universal and dropout rates are falling.

The National Rural Health Mission has begun to successfully address the large gaps in health infrastructure. Institutional deliveries have increased from 54% in 2006 to 73% in 2009. A major initiative in health for the poor has been the National Health Insurance Plan, which now provides an insurance cover for in-patient treatment to well over 100 million people. We are now building on this experiment and are confident that the Indian model of development would lead us to a path of sustainable growth.

Today's Board meeting also has on its agenda Item Number three, the issue of Gender in UNDP. Madam President, I am pleased to inform that women in India are playing a pivotal role in shaping our national discourse and policy making. Economic empowerment of Indian women right till the grass roots level, especially through the Self-Help Groups has been phenomenal. Out of the six million self help groups in India, more than 80% (*about 4.8 million*) are women's groups, which have provided microfinance, employment and livelihood, and have made a defining change in the lives of millions of Indian women at the village level. In the field of women's education, as per the latest census figures, our female literacy rate rose to 65.46% in 2011, adding more number of women literates than their male counterparts in the last ten years in India! Besides, we are slowly but steadily, also moving towards providing for one third reservation for women in our National Parliament.

Mr. President,

Let me now turn to the main agenda of the UNDP segment today on programming arrangements. We need to carefully and strategically consider this second review within the context of the three concurrent initiatives of the new strategic plan, the integrated budget and the agenda for organizational change. We need to

comprehensively analyse the pros and cons of the four models being proposed and only after a considered and consensus driven approach, arrive at the most preferred option. As UNDP adapts to the rapidly evolving nature of development cooperation, it will also need to update its operational model to maintain its global reach and capabilities while substantially improving organisational efficiency.

Mr. President,

My delegation is particularly pleased to see the increased UNDP focus on South-South cooperation as an important pillar of development cooperation. We encourage the UNDP to continue to harness the full potential of South-South Cooperation as a useful vehicle for the development of capacities within the South. In this endeavor, India has always shown willingness to lend its technical expertise and experiences of several success stories in the region.

Apart from making the largest contribution to UNDP's core budget from amongst programme countries, we have successfully partnered UNDP in third countries like Afghanistan. Another effective model of cooperation with the UNDP has been the IBSA Trust Fund, managed by the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation in the UNDP. While we would call upon the UNDP to explore ways and means to further strengthen the Special Unit for South South cooperation, we are also happy to inform that within the IBSA Initiative Framework, we have already concluded several key developmental projects including rural electrification through solar energy systems in Guinea Bissau, improving the health infrastructure services for Children in Cambodia, rehabilitation of health centers and water desalination projects in Cape Verde, besides several others in Palestine, Burundi and Lao PDR. As Chair of the IBSA Trust Fund this year, we are committed to exploring ways to further strengthen this engagement with the UNDP through innovative partnership mechanisms that facilitate development solutions for other developing countries, particularly the LDCs, and other interested developing countries. The global network of UNDP country offices and its knowledge-sharing platforms could be used to effectively channel Indian development experience and technical expertise, where it is needed most.

In concluding, Mr. President, we reaffirm our steadfast commitment and support to UNDP, and India is willing to walk the extra mile in implementing the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan.

I thank you.

**Extempore Remarks as delivered by Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri
Deputy Permanent Representative, at UNDP Segment of the First Regular
Session 2012 of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS on 2nd
February 2012**

Mr. President,

Permit me at the outset to congratulate you on your election as President of the Bureau, I wish you a sterling innings and hope that you would successfully navigate the Board in implementing its agenda for this year.

Madam Administrator, Let me also thank you for your very informative statement. We received a communication from your office that you might be visiting my country in the coming weeks. Let me tell you right here in front of everyone that this is good for us. It symbolizes the simple factor of our close relationship and the fact that we work closely together in addressing several of the issues which of course concern my country, where development is certainly by far the biggest challenge. I am also very happy that the idea for an institute for human development has progressed apace. I see my friend and able colleague of yours, Ajay (Chhibber, Assistant Administrator), sitting out there who has been working very hard on these initiatives and we are appreciative of all of this which has been happening.

Madame Administrator, in the past, over the last year on two occasions when I have spoken at these Board meetings, I have put aside the prepared text which deals with the minutiae of various issues, to basically make 2 or 3 big points and I intend to continue along that line, because I think there is very little which is left, which our colleague from Algeria in the statement on behalf of the Group of 77 has not so very well articulated on behalf of all of us from the developing world.

Madame Administrator and Mr. President, We are in the year 2012 now, three years from our target date for meeting the barest minimum standards for decent life for populations of all over the world, I mean the MDG's. I think we have a long way to go on achieving many of them, and I am afraid we need to put in a great effort to, in my opinion, at least remove the taint of the most difficult forms of poverty from the world. We owe it to ourselves, we owe it to our future generations and I think that is an absolute imperative for the world in which we live. So my call, in the first instance is again to urge the United Nations Development Programme to remain focussed steadfastly and in a big manner on poverty eradication.

You have pioneered so many of efforts on this, the thoughts on this entire subject and now you need to be strong so that we are able to ensure that we meet the minimum standards of the Millennium Development Goals and further to eliminate the scourge of extreme poverty from the world.

Madame Administrator, Capacity-building is a critical need for developing countries. We have different kind of resources in different countries but we all could do in a great measure, I say so also from my country which has a large resource base, is that we need capacity-building. We need capacity-building in a very big way for ourselves but we also need a huge amount of capacity-building and thinking, on how we can leverage the international system for our benefits and for the benefits of the millions of people who live in the developing world.

Later this year, one of the major events on the United Nations agenda, the Rio+20 Conference, would be held in Brazil. It's focus would be on sustainable development. I think this conference does not come even one day too early. The UNDP for all us in the developing world has been our place for thoughts, our place for ideas and our place for how things can be implemented. I believe very strongly that you are in the best position to help developing countries put forward their ideas, their views and perspectives which are absolutely imperative to them from their national priorities and their national ownership perspective and then help them realise this in terms of the international community. In the past I recall, more than a decade or two ago, without any doubt, developing countries would turn to the UNDP for specific and specialized help not just in terms of the big ticket ideas but also in terms of simple things of training negotiators, providing people who can help you. I would just leave this thought with you.

South-South cooperation has obviously been a buzz word for quite some time. Madame Administrator, you are aware that this is an area in which we as a country, India, are of course very strong. We try to do what we can, given our own huge demands, to share with our own brothers and sisters in the developing world. We are also very happy to cooperate with the UNDP in terms of India-UNDP, but also in terms of something which I think is a very interesting concept, that we put together several years back, where our friends from Brazil and South Africa are also there. These are things that we need to take forward, try and ensure that there is success, and that all these efforts move forward. We are a country which is strongly committed to UNDP, the largest contributor to your core budget from the developing world, and basically my speaking in these Board Meetings is to assure you and to tell everyone how we are appreciative of the fact that you are there, the work that you do and we are strongly with you in the efforts that need to be undertaken in the direction of development and poverty eradication in the world.

We need to carefully and strategically consider the second review within the context of the three concurrent initiatives of the new strategic plan, the integrated budget in the agenda for organizational change. We need to comprehensively analyze the pro's and con's for models being proposed and only after a considered and consensus driven approach, and may I add, which includes the member states in this process, the ones who are affected and others too, arrive at the most preferred option. As UNDP adapts to the rapidly evolving nature of development cooperation it will also need to update its operational model to maintain its global reach and capabilities while substantially improving organizational efficiencies.

Madame Administrator, Mr. President and all the senior members of the management who are assembled there, let me once again reassure you of India's strong support for the UNDP. We also count on you for us.

Thank you

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