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ESCAP/ADB/UNDP Sub-regional Workshops on Millennium Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda for Asia-Pacific

Summary of key messages

The summary of key messages that were discussed and emerged from the recently concluded workshops on MDGs and Post-2015 development agenda in the Asia-Pacific region is as follows:

A: MDGs:

- MDGs had provided a powerful tool to consolidate national, regional, and global efforts around clear, concise and measurable development objectives for the countries as well as the global community.
- The progress towards the MDGs has not only been considerably varied across different goals and indicators, but the achievement of the MDGs has also been unequally distributed across countries as well as different population groups within a country in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Countries took considerable time and efforts to integrate MDGs in national development strategies and it would therefore be desirable to build on the MDGs
- Several critical gaps including policy gap, strategy gap, growth gap, resource gap and implementation gap which hampered the achievement of the MDGs and therefore need to be explicitly addressed in the post-2015 development agenda.
- Countries will need to put more efforts in generating domestic resources due to slowing down in economic growth, reduction of ODA, and uncertain FDI in achieving the MDGs by 2015.

B: Post-2015 development agenda:

- The post-2015 development agenda must encompass three pillars of development: economic, social and environmental.
- The post-2015 development needs to be built on the MDGs along with an explicit focus on inequalities and disparities, preferably at the goal-level.
- The post-2015 development agenda must encompass economic growth, productive capacity development, poverty and hunger, gender equality and empowerment of women, youth employment and decent and productive employment.

- Post-2015 development agenda's priority issues include social protection, food and nutrition security, energy security, natural disasters and climate change, peace and security, human rights, capacity building of institutions at all levels and governance and greater policy coherence.
- In order to ensure sustainable development, the components of human security and human protection would be necessary, which could enable a uniform approach and development of specific targets to measure the achievement of human rights in full.
- The post-2015 development agenda has to be focused on outcomes, strategies and means to achieve the inclusive and sustainable development goals.
- Special attention should be given to CSN economies (LDCs, SIDS, LLDCs) to protect and improve on inclusive and sustainable development outcomes.
- The importance of south-south cooperation and triangular cooperation was also highlighted.
- Increased role of different stakeholders such as CSOs, private sectors, media, centers of excellence in realizing the post-2015 development agenda.
- Majority of the participants stressed that the timeline for new development agenda should be until 2030.
- The post-2015 development agenda shall be an agenda to foster strong, balanced, inclusive and sustainable growth, while maintaining overall focus on poverty eradication and/or reduction and sustainable development.

C: Summary of key sub-regional messages:

i) Central and East Asia [26-28 September 2012, Almaty, Kazakhstan]

- Within-country disparities in health-related outcomes such as malnutrition, stunting and mortality of children, use of maternal healthcare services and access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation tend to be larger in these countries
- Need to focus national efforts on disadvantaged population groups in closing remaining gaps
- Lack of basic infrastructure was holding back the achievement of MDGs in many instances. Timely and prudent investment in basic infrastructure such as rural roads, electricity, rural schools and clinics was a prerequisite in achieving MDGs
- Need for efficient institutions, skills, and knowledge to implement new goals such as food security
- The sub-region is moving to targeted social protection intervention compared to other sub-regions, which are moving to universal coverage.

ii) Pacific [10-12 October 2012, Nadi, Fiji]

- It was felt that existing economic policies are not succeeding as enablers to finance MDG achievement and therefore in the future closer attention needs to be paid to the national context and priorities.
- There is need for better access to markets for countries' exports

- Need to improve service delivery so as to achieve the future they want, particularly for the most vulnerable groups within society, including the elderly, persons with disabilities, minorities and youth.

- Need to develop a united and distinctive 'Pacific voice' within the context of the "blue economy" for pursuing shared development goals internationally, including recognizing the vulnerability of SIDS to climate change consequences, and the protection and preservation of oceans and marine resources.

iii) South-East Asia [21-23 November 2012, Bangkok, Thailand]

-The sub-region is facing structural demographic changes with growing proportion of the ageing population who need support beyond their own means.

-Several countries in the region face challenges related to migration, urbanization, skills development, youth employment as well as natural disasters.

-Social protection is a major issue that deserves a place in the region's future development agenda. However, there are attempts across the sub-region to expand coverage including to the largely uncovered informal sector and particularly to vulnerable groups.

-Noncommunicable diseases form a specific and grave challenge to the Pacific countries and economies and require urgent attention in the post-2015 development agenda

-Generate financial resources by improvement in tax administration, tax reforms and further engagement of business sector in development projects.

iv) South Asia: [9-11 February 2013, Dhaka]

- MDGs framework should continue to be a foundation for any future development agenda, as it is still an unfinished business.

- Inclusive growth and poverty reduction and/or eradication must be the central focus of the post-2015 development agenda, while aiming for inclusive and sustainable growth as well as employment creation.

-Increasing inequality and disparities need to be explicitly addressed in the post-2015 development agenda

-Due to lack of availability of external financing, the sub-region needs to explore innovative sources of financing to address the new and emerging development challenges including targeted approach towards ODA. The feasibility of establishing an regional financial architecture should also be explored.

- National government and the international development and financial institutions need to follow a well-defined accountability framework in a transparent manner. The governance framework should encourage participation and cooperation of all stakeholders (country and institutions) and promote development cooperation which is responsible and accountable.

-The post-2015 development agenda should be owned by countries, however there is a need for having an universal set of goals but with the possibility of different sets of indicators across regions/sub-regions and targets at per with the stages of development.

- Regional development cooperation under the overall aim of strengthening of South-South cooperation need to incorporate areas such as food security, climate change, connectivity, energy security, technology transfer, sharing of knowledge, ICT, inclusive finance, and exchanges of best practices

v) LDCs consultation: [17-19 December, Siem Reap, Cambodia]

- Economic growth is vital for realizing any post-2015 development goals but growth must be inclusive and sustainable and it must address inequalities and disparities.

-LDCs expressed the need to reemphasise areas such as productive capacity development, poverty and hunger, gender equality, health related outcomes including non communicable diseases, education goals with more emphasis on quality dimensions, decent and productive employment, and demographic dynamics including urbanization.

- The other priority areas for the LDCs include social protection, water management, food and nutrition security, energy security, natural disasters and climate change, peace and security, human rights

-Capacity building of institutions at all levels, greater policy coherence and systemic change, well-defined accountability framework, governance at all levels including development cooperation and a more equitable sharing of responsibilities between the national governments and the international community.

-LDCs need to receive sustained international financial support to help bridge resource gaps, and to create space for economic dynamisms and accelerated progress towards achieving development goals on a timely manner. In that regard, the important role of trade in services such as tourism and remittances were highlighted.