

Statement by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative at UNDP Segment of the First Regular Session 2013 of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS on January 28, 2013,

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 implementing its agenda, in what promises to be an eventful year.

We would also like to place on record our appreciation to the outgoing Bureau, which was so ably presided over by Ambassador Martin Grunditz, Permanent Representative of Sweden, and his 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.

Mr. President, 2012 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. Rio plus 20 outlined the imperative of poverty eradication as the greatest global challenge, and laid down the roadmap for the "future we want ". We must therefore ensure that effective implementation mechanisms and the means that developing countries need to achieve the same, are followed up, and provided for, by the multilateral system.

As a country that has one of the longest relationships with UNDP and is the biggest contributor to its core budget among developing countries, we have an abiding interest in UNDP's success and its efforts in the global development agenda. I would therefore, Mr. President, submit the following for your consideration:

One, we had been saying all along, that for the UN development system to be successful globally, it needs to be firmly rooted in its core focus area, which **has primarily to be development related ONLY, and that the 'D' in UNDP should stand for decimating poverty.** With the adoption of the QCPR Resolution by the 67th UNGA, this has been made even more abundantly clear. For the first time ever, in such a resolution, you have a section dedicated exclusively to Poverty Eradication, in which you have been given the mandate by 193 member states to "assign the highest priority to poverty eradication" which has been reaffirmed in the same resolution as the "greatest global challenge".

I would like to quote OP 70 of the QCPR resolution: *"eradication of poverty through the development of national capacities in developing countries 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"***

I hope that given this very specific mandate outlined by the QCPR, which also happened to be a long standing and considered conviction of my delegation, you would now try to place poverty eradication at the heart of UNDP's operational activities for development, as its primary objective.

Mr. President, **incidentally**, we now also have before us the findings of the evaluation report on UNDP's contribution to poverty reduction, whose findings need to be taken seriously. We hope that in the crafting of the next strategic plan, the specific message from this report would be addressed as well.

Second, as you prepare your next strategic plan for the period 2014 - 2017, it is absolutely imperative that all the "actionables" that the UN Development System and its agencies have been called upon by member states to pursue by the QCPR, are not just incorporated but also implemented as part of the strategic plan being so developed. It would also be prudent to dovetail these actionables into those UNDP country programmes, which are synchronous with the time period of the QCPR.

Third, an agenda item being discussed in this Board Session within the purview of programming arrangements is the establishment of the Contingency Fund, with a proposed allocation of USD 46.8 million dollars. Mr. President, we would like to submit that member states need to be assured of the following before you decide to establish the Fund:

Is there a specific need which has arisen in 2013, which necessitates the creation of this Fund ? Should it be given a 7% allocation just because another sister agency made a decision in 1997 to do so ? Why should money from an already shrinking resource pool for programming activities of member states, be kept aside, when the same precedent to which its existence is being borrowed from, illustrates that last year more than 80% has gone unutilised? These are some questions that do merit some answers, , before we proceed to establishing, what we feel is a misnomer in the name of a Contingency Fund.

Fourth and finally, Mr. President, even though South South Cooperation is being singled out as a new buzzword in the evolving narrative of the developmental discourse, much more remains to be done to give it the 'muscle' it needs from the UN system. We believe, the first thing to do is to let it proceed and grow on the basis of its unique characteristics of national ownership and mutually agreed terms. Looking at South-South cooperation as either permitting a dilution or substituting for North-South aid would only serve to shackle it to the detriment of developing countries.

Along with Brazil and South Africa, we have partnered in **the IBSA Trust Fund Initiative**, which has been a flagship project under the overall canvas of South South cooperation. 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,

capacity building projects in Sierra Leone, besides several others in Palestine, Burundi and Lao PDR. As Chair of the IBSA Trust Fund last year, we explored ways to further strengthen our engagement with the UNDP through innovative partnership mechanisms that facilitate development solutions for other developing countries, particularly the LDCs. We are particularly thankful to the UN Office for South South Cooperation for the excellent support we have received and hope that it would be given the resources it needs to pursue its mandate.

To conclude, Mr. President, this Board Session, given its agenda, is an important and timely opportunity not just for stock taking but also to constructively contribute to UN's development agenda. **Our suggestions have been made in this spirit and I hope will find resonance in the larger UNDP community.**

For us, UNDP has and will remain, the force multiplier arm of the UN, which will continue to foster national and local capacities and promote national ownership by building socio-economic resilience in the most vulnerable developing countries. We reaffirm our steadfast commitment and support to UNDP, and India is willing to walk the extra mile in helping you, achieve your mandate of poverty eradication. I thank you.

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