Statement by

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on the occasion of the First Regular session of the Executive Board of
UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS

**Item 3:** Country Programmes and Related Matters

Monday 29 January, 2014
Mr. President,

May I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as the President of the Bureau, and also place on record our appreciation to the outgoing President, the Permanent Representative of Djibouti, and his team of Vice Presidents for their outstanding leadership and role in guiding the work of the Executive Board over the past year.

The Asia-Pacific has been the most economically dynamic region in the world over the last two decades. According to IMF, “Developing Asia” grew annually from 2000 to 2013 at a faster rate than any other region. The region has also achieved the world’s largest reductions in poverty, enabling MDG 1 to be achieved five years ahead of schedule, and is on track to achieve some other MDG targets. This achievement has, however, not been uniform. For example, economic growth in the Pacific has been relatively low and erratic in recent years. The majority of the Pacific Island Countries are off-track on many MDG targets, with the exception of the MDG 2.

According to the Asia-Pacific Regional MDG Report 2012/13, despite the rapid growth, rising living standards and reduced poverty, the region still has an estimated 743 million people living in extreme poverty, of which two thirds are women. Gender inequality is highly entrenched in many countries but for different reasons and contexts. Environment degradation has become a huge issue for many countries, while supplying sustainable energy to the populace and industry has become increasingly difficult. The high and rising levels of youth unemployment and rapid urbanization presents new opportunities and daunting challenges of inclusive and sustainable growth. Problems of widening inequality, exclusion and discrimination have also emerged as central challenges for advancing human development and democratic governance in the region.
The region continues to be vulnerable to conflict, external shock, climate change and its associated vulnerability to natural disasters. In fact, the Asia and Pacific region is the most vulnerable to climate change, extreme weather events and natural disasters.

Given the above development context, it is clear that Asia and the Pacific region has witnessed an economic transformation, particularly in Asia, and now needs to move towards a sustainable development path.

The Regional Programme Document for Asia and the Pacific covering the period from 2014 to 2017 is designed in light of the development challenges outlined above and is cognizant of the constraints of operating in a vast and diverse region. It is also informed by lessons learned from past regional cooperation, operational feedback and independent evaluations, and also by the constraints posed by its limited resources. The regional programme ensures necessary focus and attention to the specific development challenges and issues in the Pacific sub-region and includes relevant outputs, which target these concerns.

The regional programme is aligned with the UNDP Strategic Plan, and contributes to the attainment of its overarching objective of helping countries to achieve simultaneously the eradication of poverty and the significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion. The four outcomes of the regional programme mirror the Strategic Plan outcomes, namely the Outcomes 1, 2, 5 and 7.

As part of its overarching considerations, the regional programme will target issues of exclusion of specific population groups, promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. In view of the QCPR recommendations, it will emphasize national ownership of development processes and institutional capacity development across its spectrum of work. UNDP’s regional work will continue to be guided by the five ‘regionality’ principles, which help to define the value addition of regional or sub-
regional approaches to addressing development challenges. Other key aspects of UNDP work at the regional level will include a priority focus to South-South and triangular cooperation, relevant knowledge management, innovation, inter-regional cooperation, and strategic partnerships and collaborations, including with sub-regional organizations and other sister UN agencies.

A number of consultations have been organized to inform the preparation of the regional programme, which have included UNDP Country Offices, national governments of program countries at the country level as well as UN Permanent Missions in New York, sub-regional institutions and other relevant organizations. Inputs and feedback received have been used to further define focus and areas of work of the regional programme. In this context, based on the comments received recently and also during the session on Monday, we have revised the Regional Programme Document with the agreed changes and have posted this on the Executive Board website yesterday. Please allow me to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your active participation in the consultation meetings and for your comments.

The total estimated resource envelope for the Regional Programme for Asia and the Pacific is USD 130 million of which about USD 43.7 million will be funded from UNDP regular resources.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Board and all partners for your continued support for our work. We look forward to working closely with you to ensure that the regional programme provides relevant and effective support to our programme countries in achieving their national development objectives.