

1. Statement by Ms. Cihan Sultanoglu at Development Forum
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Meeting of the National Development Council

11 December 2012

Dushanbe, Tajikistan

**Statement by Ms. Cihan Sultanoglu,
United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and
UNDP Assistant Administrator & Regional Director for Europe and the CIS**

Your Excellency Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of Republic of Tajikistan,

Ministers,

Distinguished representatives of Donor Coordination Council,

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me a great pleasure to be here at the meeting of National Development Council. This is a particularly important session since this is right now when the Government of Tajikistan officially launches its fourth mid-term development strategy entitled “Livelihood Improvement Strategy”.

Today’s meeting gives us an opportunity to take stock of achievements and lessons from the implementation of the Third Poverty Reduction Strategy, and agree on the priority actions for the next three years. During implementation of the current strategy in 2010-2012 we have been pleased to note the steady economic growth that Tajikistan enjoyed due to well-thought and strategic macro-economic policies, and witnessed how that contributed to reducing poverty, helped by the conscious focus that the PRS-3 had on achieving as much as possible the UN Millennium Development Goals.

As you know, MDGs are in the core of the UN work in every country and we are always welcoming better alignment of national development strategies with these internationally agreed

development goals. In this regard, we especially appreciate strong commitment of His Excellency President Rahmon to MDG agenda - both globally and at the country level. In fact, we in the United Nations very much appreciate the fact that President of Tajikistan is one of very few, if not the only, Heads of State who personally participated in all MDG-related summits convened by the United Nations since the historic meeting in New York in September 2000 where 163 Heads of State and Government endorsed the Millennium Declaration.

Since signing the Millennium Declaration in 2000, Tajikistan has taken concrete steps towards its attainment such as MDG Needs Assessment, MDG-based National Development Strategy and localizing MDGs through 33 District Development Plans, which mobilized over US\$ 2 billion for local needs. For this UNDP has partnered with the Government through adopting the planning methodology to reform the planning and budgeting process at the regional (oblast) and rayon (district) levels. Tajikistan has seen significant progress on goals such as poverty reduction and primary education. Both the absolute and relative poverty considerably decreased since 2003 (relative from 83% to 42% and absolute poverty from 43% to 17%). We know that universal secondary education was chosen as a national goal as the base primary education attainment was high. However, on some other goals, the outlook is less promising, which needs more government support and attention from contributing donor partners on the attainment of child mortality, maternal health and access to clean water goals.

We are aware that recent visiting IMF missions and many other important international visitors were impressed by the hard work of the Government on maintaining macro-economic stability in the country and its readiness to continue necessary reforms in order to achieve more transparency, increase accountability and introduce more results-focused sectoral reforms. In this regard, it is important that public administration reform which was strongly supported by competent international expertise, including consultants from UNDP and other UN agencies, has progressed steadily, while the State is open to addressing the need to fight corruption. However, we all know that still there are some challenges to overcome. This is why the Government has taken the lead to develop this new mid-term strategy, and it is extremely important that a well-coordinated team of

resident development partners is here today to demonstrate their solidarity in support of implementing this strategy.

The Livelihood Improvement Strategy will have a very important role to narrow the gap for achieving crucial social goals reflected in the National Development Strategy by 2015. In the spirit of the decisions recently made at the Rio +20 Summit we welcome in this document increased focus on sustainable development, and noticeable effort to integrate disaster concerns into development planning as well as a commitment to deepen rule of law reforms. We commend the leadership of the Presidency and the Government, especially by the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, in formulating this Strategy especially with increased effort to undertake broader public consultations. We have also recognized the important roles played by the State Committee on Investment to ensure external assistance is geared towards supporting the implementation of this Strategy. In the future, we also look forward to the increased role that can be played by line Government institutions that will lead to more active sectoral coordination.

While we make our collective efforts in support of implementing the Strategy, the next three years also will represent a critical time span to plan for the new cycle of the National Development Strategy. We are fortunate to see that planning cycle timing in Tajikistan coincides with the international discussion on post-2015 (post-MDGs). The ongoing discussion on post-2015, post-MDG development agenda is an opportunity for the Member States to articulate its vision for the future. We are very glad that after being selected as one of pilot countries for such consultation, Tajikistan has a special role to play in this process, as it is very well placed to influence this global vision-making process.

It goes without saying that water resources carry critical importance for the region and Tajikistan. As such Tajikistan has developed a strategy towards “green economy”, and promoted the use of renewable energy such as small hydropower plants as a mean of promoting socio-economic welfare of communities, especially in the remote rural areas. Tajikistan demonstrated its commitment to develop green economy at a special event it organized during the Rio+20 Summit

earlier this year under co-chairmanship of Presidents of Tajikistan and Hungary. We are glad that Dushanbe will host next August an important and high-level international conference on water cooperation, in preparation for the International Year of Water Cooperation (IYWC) high-level discussion in New York in September, as just endorsed 10 days ago by the UN General Assembly.

Given this active role Tajikistan has played in supporting the new strategic initiative of the Secretary-General, Tajikistan has been selected to be one of the initial pilot countries for this flagship initiative on “Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL)”. This initiative will promote access to energy for all, energy efficiency, and increased use of renewable energy by 2030.

In our view, Tajikistan’s focus on water cooperation and sustainable development, including its recognition of need to mainstream disaster concerns into development planning, will also undoubtedly help the country to formulate its specific national vision contributing to formulation of global post-2015 development agenda. Broad consultations with governmental partners and different civil society groups on this issue have started under the leadership of the UN Country Team and the UN Resident Coordinator Alexander Zuev. We invite all interested partners present here today to take active part in this process in the coming months, so all key stakeholders can jointly shape the future strategic priorities for Tajikistan in the post-2015.

UN family in Tajikistan and UNDP, as its largest programme in the country, for its part, stands ready to contribute to all of these and other critical development priorities of Tajikistan as an active member of the Development Coordination Council (DCC) and of broader international community, which have and will continue to play an important role by walking the development path, side by side with the Government of Tajikistan. UNDP in close collaboration with its key donor partners such as EU, DfID, Swiss Cooperation, Government of Japan, USAID and others, is in a particularly privileged position as we have had jointly developed special initiatives in support of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade in formulating and monitoring the Poverty Reduction Strategy, enhancing aid coordination capacity led by the State Committee on Investment, and assisting the activities of the Development Coordination Council. I would therefore like to

reassure the continued commitment of UNDP in supporting Tajikistan to achieve high level of socio-economic development in the coming years.

Thank you once again for this opportunity to address this distinguished audience, and I look forward to the productive discussion for the rest of this meeting.