

Talking Points as Delivered by Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and ESCAP Executive Secretary.

New Delhi SRO Host Country Signing Ceremony, ESCAP, Bangkok, 12 March 2012

Your Excellency, Mr. Anil Wadhwa Ambassador of the Republic of India to Thailand,

Colleagues - especially those joining us via video link from New Delhi,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- 1. I was very pleased to officially open our new ESCAP sub-regional office in New Delhi on 15 December last year. We are today here to formally sign the Host Country Agreement for this new office with the Government of India.
- 2. I would like to express our gratitude to the Government of India for its generous support in hosting this important new office.
- 3. South and South-West Asia has re-emerged as a dynamic sub-region.
- 4. The sub-region, along with China, has led the current world economic recovery, in fact the subcontinent accounted for over a quarter of global GDP until the early 19th Century. I believe that it has the potential to regain this position of economic leadership in the first half of this century.
- 5. Yet South and South-West Asia also faces massive development challenges. Assisting the sub-region to harness new development opportunities and in address development challenges, are the primary goals of the new office.
- 6. The new SRO covers Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey. These include some of the world's fastest growing economies but also one of the largest concentrations of hunger and poverty with wide development gaps within and among countries.
- 7. Our office will strengthen ESCAP's assistance to member States in formulating and implementing inclusive and sustainable development policies, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
- 8. It will also focus on building productive capacities in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the sub-region, facilitating connectivity and boosting intraregional cooperation.

9. My thanks again to the Ambassador and his Government – and my very best wishes to Dr. Kumar and his team for the very important work they are already doing.

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