

**Welcoming Remarks by  
Mr. Yuxue Xue  
UNDP Resident Representative, 1.i.  
Regional Practitioners Workshop on Economic Recovery  
*Amari Watergate Hotel, Meeting Room C, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Tuesday, 6 December 2011***

Good morning everyone. On behalf of UNDP, I welcome you to Bangkok.

I wish I were greeting you under more happy circumstances. This workshop is set against the backdrop of Thailand's great floods, which have cost hundreds of lives, harmed the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands, and has caused severe damage to property and infrastructure.

Over the course of the next four days, let's not forget where we are. Let's remember that...

... as of last month 800,000 some people in Bangkok alone were still living in flooded homes.

**Remember** that some 4.8 million people are still affected by the floods, with many communities still isolated from much of the relief effort.

**Remember** that almost 1 million people are now out of work and competition for factory jobs is stiff. As we take our ideas and knowledge from here and turn it into real world actions on the ground.

The World Bank said damages will result in a 1.2% decrease in GDP. That means that there are a lot of restaurants out there with no one dining in them. A lot of people aren't in their shop houses or in their taxicabs. If you are one of those people currently unemployed, that means there's no money to go to movies or have a bowl of noodles with friends.

We're here to discuss and reflect on how we intervene for economic recovery in a post conflict or post disaster environment—to think about where we put our energies, where we need to be sensitive, and how we can be inclusive

of the poor and make sure that women are represented in our discussions. Too often I think, we look at things in a clinical, analytic manner and we forget WHY we do our work. Let the events of the past few months here in Thailand be a stark reminder.

I'm pleased to be here among friends and fellow colleagues. The UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre is a capable, versatile office that provides advisory services to country offices in support of development goals. One of its strengths is knowledge management and sharing of experiences within the region. This workshop is a good example of that.

Here in this room we have representation from across national and local government, private sector, civil society and academia, as well as the UN and other international partners.

Our region provides a lot of history from which most of are intimately familiar.

The region has experienced unprecedented levels of economic growth and significant declines in overall poverty, inequalities across and within a number of countries are increasing. But overall, conflict has increased. In 2009, there were a total of 365 conflicts in the world, but one-third of those were in the Asia-Pacific Region.

According to a recent UN Report, nearly 75% of all lives lost due to natural disasters occur within the Asia Pacific region. In addition to disasters like the 2004 tsunami, the South Asian earthquake in 2005, the 2008 cyclone in Myanmar, last year's floods in Pakistan, and the Japanese earthquake and tsunami. Natural disasters impact our region almost every year. In 2011, extreme weather events brought damages to a number of Asian countries--China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Lao PDR, where communities are still in the process of recovery from the effects of floods during the previous years.

These conflicts and natural disasters, coupled with low national capacities and scant resources have increased the

risk and vulnerability in all of our countries. As we have witnessed, disasters can reverse developmental gains and impede the achievement of the MDGs. Recovery in post crisis situations can be especially difficult, as vulnerabilities heighten and lives and livelihoods come under threat. Economic recovery then should be a process of building back both better and differently which requires reforms across economic, institutional, legal and policy areas to encourage sustainable development.

I'm not an expert. I'm just a development worker. I've been doing that all my life. In times like this, I find it helpful to think about how the work I do impacts people on the ground. In thinking about this workshop, I wonder how we can answer some serious questions. How can we address challenges facing our region in a way that is inclusive and reaches the most vulnerable among us? How can address fundamental issues like climate change to make local communities disaster resistant? We cannot afford to go for the quick fix. We have to empower local people to help themselves.

Let's use this workshop as an opportunity to reflect on our past experiences about economic recovery. There are people out there who could use a few bright ideas. Let's put our heads together and get to work.

I wish you a successful workshop.

Thank you.

\* \* \* \* \*