

Speech

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Excellencies, Media Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to extend my warm thanks and appreciation to the AIBD for this opportunity to speak here today.

Let me start by touching a little on the Rio+20 meeting that took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil last year, when governments, civil society the private sector got together to look at how we can reduce poverty, advance social equity and ensure the protection of the environment.

Admittedly there was a certain level of unhappiness and frustration at the process, but Rio+20 achieved an agreed outcome document and saw new initiatives being launched.

Rio+20:

- Paved the way for a transition to a Green Economy
- Set up a plan for developing Sustainable Development Goals
- Agreed to work towards developing a new global indicator or wealth which goes beyond the current GDP measure
- Identified priorities in a wide array of areas ranging from energy, food security, climate change, oceans, cities, water, and more
- Went ahead with a 10 Year Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Several weeks ago, UNEP released a new report on material flows that found that Asia Pacific now surpasses the rest of the world in consumption of materials. What does this mean for our region?

It means that the way we consume has a negative impact on our environment, and that at this rate of consumption; we are going to be increasingly dependent on imports and cannot sustain our economies and lifestyles.

More importantly, it means is that we need to increase resource efficiency rapidly to offset material growth. If current trends continue, if current patterns of production and consumption of natural resources prevail and cannot be reversed and 'decoupled', then we will be looking at unprecedented levels of damage and degradation.

The UNEP Global Environment Outlook report found that the region is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions globally. Of the ten countries in the world that are most at risk from climate change impacts, six are in Asia-Pacific. Of 12 seas surveyed between 2005 and 2007, the South-East Pacific, North Pacific, East Asian Sea and Caribbean contained the most marine litter.

But it is not all bad news.

Many countries in the region are increasingly adopting low-carbon and green growth policies to mitigate GHG emissions: the Republic of Korea and China are two countries which have adopted national strategies; China, India and Indonesia have reduced or removed fossil fuel subsidies and many other countries are exploring such policies while ensuring safeguards for the poor.

Innovative financing mechanisms such as payment for ecosystem services which have been implemented in Viet Nam and China provide incentives for communities to be engaged in conservation. Since 1999, China has been implementing some of the largest payment for ecosystem services schemes in the world with more than US\$15 billion spent.

Essentially, we are living in a time where climate change can, almost overnight, disrupt supply chains across the globe. Where natural resource declines threatens prosperity and our ability to overcome poverty.

There are many positive signals emerging and many inspiring actions by governments, cities, companies and investors-the challenge is to bring these from the fringe into the mainstream. And this is where the media matter.

All of us rely on you to keep us abreast of the important issues of the day. At UNEP, we see you as a key partner and a central catalyst to spread ideas, stimulate debate and empower action, action that can effect positive change.

Similarly, you can analyse trends and issues to help decision-makers like parliamentarians, government officials, business leaders, NGOs become more aware of the complexities of a problem and come to a more reasoned conclusion.

You can warn for extreme climatic events, explain complex policies, highlight coping strategies that work on the ground and promote the necessary actions from consumers, businesses and governments.

In a world of noise and competing interests-from blogs and Facebook to twitter, TV, radio, the internet and print media - honest, factual, stimulating and reliable reporting of events, opinions and new concepts is a vital service for seven billion people.

The last decade has brought remarkable improvements in people's lives. But this progress has been uneven, and we need to continue our work with urgency. Lifting people out of poverty and protecting the planet's resources are two sides of the same coin. Both must be at the heart of our work.

You as members of the media have an important role to play in communicating these challenges and opportunities to policy-makers and the people of this region. You can help assist development by disseminating information, and in turn, becoming an agent for positive change.