

Helen Clark: Speech at Briefing on the Russia-UNDP Strategic Partnership

23 February 2016

I am very pleased to participate in this important event hosted by the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation on the Russia-UNDP Strategic Partnership, and to discuss the importance of Russia's fast growing contribution to international development.

For UNDP, our strategic partnership with Russia is part of a broader effort to transform our relationships with new and emerging donors which are playing an increasingly critical role in international development co-operation. Our partnership with Russia is very important to us, and it has already started delivering concrete results.

The Russian Federation-UNDP Trust Fund for Development Agreement which was signed in June last year is an important element of the partnership. I was pleased to sign the agreement with Foreign Minister Lavrov during my visit to Moscow last year. The Trust Fund's focus includes rural development, disaster risk reduction, and energy efficiency. Through it, contributions will be made to progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

With Russia's support, UNDP has been able to launch innovative initiatives in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Belarus, and, soon also, in Armenia. These projects address critical dimensions of sustainable development – including stimulating growth and work opportunities and addressing the needs of vulnerable groups. These projects are focused on achieving results, and are anchored in strong national ownership.

Russia is also making a major contribution of \$7.5 million through the joint Trust Fund to a project on disaster risk reduction in Small Island Developing States in the Pacific. This project was approved in December last year.

The devastation wrought by Cyclone Winston in Fiji in recent days is a stark reminder of the importance of strengthening disaster preparedness, response capacity, and risk reduction in the Pacific. Russia's contribution will help UNDP and partners in the region in their ongoing efforts to build greater resilience to disasters.

Looking ahead, including in the run-up to the World Humanitarian Summit in May, Russia and UNDP can work together to help bridge the humanitarian-development divide. As we heard from the Deputy Minister's presentation, Russia has supported several initiatives which do precisely that – for example, in the Philippines, in Cuba, and in Syria. We look forward to continued co-operation in this regard.

We also see good potential to strengthen our co-operation on knowledge sharing and capacity building. Much has already been done. For example:

- In 2013, UNDP supported the G20 Russian Presidency in its outreach with Civil Society. The “Civil 20” produced a report titled “Sustained and Balanced Growth Requires Equitable

Policies”, which examined the negative economic, social, and political risks of growing inequality.

- In 2014, UNDP, together with Russia’s G8 Presidency and the World Bank Group, held a High-Level Expert Seminar – “The Post-2015 Development Agenda: Towards a New Partnership for Development” – which engaged Russian and other international experts in discussion on the partnership dimensions of the post-2015 Development Agenda.
- In 2011-2013, UNDP partnered with the Ministry of Economic Development in organizing a series of international expert seminars to elaborate on priority areas for co-operation between Russia and other BRICS countries. The recommendations of the final Conference of the series were used for the preparation of the BRICS Economic Co-operation Strategy, which was approved at the 7th BRICS Summit in Ufa in July last year.
- UNDP and the Russian Ministry of Economy in 2014-15 also held a series of international expert seminars on the economic, trade, and development issues of interest to the Shanghai Co-operation Organization.
- Last year, during Kyrgyzstan’s accession to the Eurasian Economic Union, UNDP assisted the Government of Kyrgyzstan to gain access to crucial Russian expertise on strengthening its sanitary, phytosanitary, and veterinary controls.

Building on this solid foundation, UNDP and Russia have discussed a regional initiative to share Russian expertise to achieve sustainable, scalable development impact in UNDP programme countries. Such an initiative could include secondments and internships of Russian specialists and students in UNDP programme countries. We are also very open to discussing a Russian Junior Professional Officer programme, and Russian support for UN Volunteers.

With all these elements in place, and with the clear vision just expressed by the Deputy Minister, I am confident that this important strategic partnership between Russia and UNDP will grow and continue to deliver important development results for many years to come.