

Statement by
Hafiz Pasha, UN Assistant Secretary General, UNDP Assistant Administrator
and Regional Director of the Bureau of Asia and the Pacific
at Preparatory Meeting for the Tokyo Donor Conference for Sri Lanka
Washington DC, 14 April 2003

- The steady progress of the peace process has started transforming the lives of people and paving the way for potential economic recovery in Sri Lanka.

- In March 2002, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka asked the Secretary General for the UN System's support. An Inter-Agency Needs Assessment Mission, led by UNDP, including UNICEF, UNHCR, OCHA, WFP, DPA, OHCHR, was fielded. It's mandate was to explore avenues – in the context of the peace initiative - for efficient mobilization of funds and technical assistance in support of the Government's socio-economic development efforts.

- One of the outcomes of this Mission was the formulation of a Joint Government-UN Strategy to address the Immediate Needs of Returning IDPs. It was launched in July 2002, and served as a useful resource mobilization instrument.

- The second phase of the Secretary General's response is underway now. It involves a number of national and international stakeholders in an in-depth Needs Assessment for the country's conflict affected areas; the whole UN Country Team, together with the World Bank, IMF and the Asian Development Bank, have united to jointly prepare the Needs Assessment Report under the auspices of a joint Government/LTTE Sub-Committee. A truly participatory consultative process has been adopted with involvement of all concerned. This Needs Assessment will be one of the key inputs for the Tokyo Conference in June.

- The importance of the Tokyo Conference lies in ensuring that this process receives the solid backing of the international community, both politically and financially. The resources thus mobilized will help to bring to the people of Sri Lanka the dividends of peace as quickly as possible. Receiving these dividends will be one of the most effective ways of ensuring their continued support for the process as it forges ahead. Apart from continuing to support humanitarian efforts, funds raised will provide immediate support to displaced people as they resettle, and facilitate a programme of recovery over the medium to longer term for the whole country, and in particular for the conflict-affected areas of the North and the East.

- UNDP – in close coordination with the rest of the UN System and the IFIs - plans to use the Needs Assessment as a basis for preparing its own strategy of support for future reconstruction and rehabilitation assistance. So far, we have been engaged in projects in direct support of the peace process, ranging from policy support to assistance at grassroots levels. Looking ahead, UNDP hopes to be able to contribute to the capacity development requirements necessary to ensure smooth transition and sustainability over the longer term. Such capacity development support will encompass a variety of sectors and levels, including initiatives in the area of human rights, support to displaced population in their transition to development, mine action, promotion of livelihood opportunities, building effective governance institutions, rule of law and access to justice.

- An area of support where UNDP and the Government have already moved forward as a parallel initiative, is the promotion of private-sector investment through the Invest-in-Peace initiative. It was recently launched in New York jointly by the Sri Lankan Prime Minister and the UNDP Administrator, focusing on attracting potential investors towards peace-related business opportunities, assisting in streamlining regulatory institutions to expedite business entry, and channeling private investments to help the war-affected areas.

- The transition from conflict to peace in Sri Lanka is underway. The path from relief to development is beginning to open up. We are fully committed to support the Government – along with other partners – on this important journey, and wish the Government and the LTTE success in the peace talks.