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Ad Melkert to the Commission on Sustainable Development

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on the Thematic Cluster of Energy for Sustainable Development, Industrial Development,
Air/Atmosphere Pollution and Climate Change*

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the abundance of energy resources available to us, access to energy remains as elusive as ever before. At present, there are nearly 2 billion people without access to modern energy services – a number which has hardly changed in the past twenty years and is likely to grow if current policy trends continue. This entrenches billions of people in poverty, particularly women.

Reducing our impact on the environment, and in particular the climate, is another important energy challenge. Roughly three quarters of human-originated greenhouse gas emissions are due to the burning of fossil fuels. Climate change is undeniable as is the need to mitigate and adapt to it.

Fortunately, these challenges are not insurmountable. We know, for example, that providing access to basic energy services to the poor is possible to finance and can be delivered with negligible impact on the climate. We also know that with stronger political commitments, we can harness technology and financing to accelerate the transition to a cleaner, more efficient and sustainable energy future.

To realize these possibilities, however, we need to deliver on our promises, in particular our commitment to increase development aid in support of the Millennium Development Goals.

On our part, we at UNDP, supporting UN Resident Coordinators in over 160 countries, are dedicated to helping countries turn their commitments into action while at the same time coordinating and bringing coherence to UN country teams' activities. Let me highlight UNDP's three priorities with regards to energy.

Our first priority is to help countries mainstream the energy needs of the poor in their national development plans and poverty reduction strategies. In doing so we support developing countries' efforts to establish and meet national energy access targets. UNDP will be working toward this end in over 60 countries with support from a wide range of partners and partnerships, including the recently established UNDP/UNEP Poverty Environment Facility.

Second, we are supporting developing countries to align their budgets and development assistance to the energy needs of the poor, as well as to mobilise financing to transition to cleaner energy systems using resources such as the Global Environment Facility but also those beyond ODA. To this end, UNDP is expanding the operation of our MDG Carbon Facility to help catalyse carbon financing, particularly in least developed countries.

Thirdly, to translate resources into results, developing countries need to intensify their efforts to strengthen the local institutional capacity to scale up energy service delivery for the poor. Our work is especially growing in Africa where we help the Economic Commission of West African States and the East African Community develop national and regional capacities to implement their ambitious policies for providing access to energy services to over 200 million rural poor. UNDP is in the process of establishing an Energy Access Capacity Development Facility to provide such needed support, particularly in LDCs. In doing so, we leverage the experiences and best practices of numerous partners, including the GEF Small Grants Programme, which has over 1,000 community level energy projects in over 90 developing countries.

Furthermore, we are committed to strengthening cooperation with the World Bank to develop joint actions and deliver more coordinated results on the ground, particularly in the area of energy access in Africa.

At the mid-point of the MDGs - seven and a half years from the start and seven and a half years to go to 2015 - it is imperative that we all take concrete steps to fight poverty and promote sustainable development. Let me repeat the suggestion on the future agenda of the CSD I put forth this morning in the closed ministerial session: Let us map each and every developing country situation in terms of: (i) access to energy targets for the poor; (ii) institutional capacity requirements and gaps; and (iii) access to - or the lack of- financing mechanisms. We have to translate general concerns into tangible action. UNDP stands ready to support you in this endeavour.

Thank you.