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PRESS RELEASE

INVESTING IN POOR WOMEN IS KEY TO REACHING THE MDGS

UNDP and Japanese Government host international gathering to promote gender-sensitive budgeting

Tokyo, 31 July 2006: An international symposium on gender sensitive budgeting (GSB) was held today in Tokyo, Japan, jointly organized by UNDP, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Cabinet Office of Japan, and in cooperation with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC).

The Symposium discussed ways to promote gender perspectives into macro-economics and budgets as powerful tools in achieving gender equality and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The key questions examined are the following:

- Are macro-economics and budgets gender-neutral?
- If not, how do they affect men and women differently and why?
- How can we make strategic use of public resources to achieve gender equality and the Millennium Development Goals most effectively and equitably?

The symposium was opened by Shoji Nishimoto, Director, Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP, followed by opening remarks received from HE Dr. Kuniko Inoguchi, Minister of State for Gender Equality and Social Affairs (Member of the House of Representatives), and Mr. Shigekazu Sato, Director-General, Economic Cooperation Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

“The promotion of GSB is a useful tool in mainstreaming gender, especially in the macro and microeconomic framework. It aims to achieve gender equality and in spending public resources most effectively. It also enhances good governance by bringing in women to the decision making arena,” said Minister Inoguchi.

The world renowned expert on gender-sensitive budgeting, Professor Diane Elson, University of Essex, U.K. and Co-director of the Levy Institute's Program on Gender Equality and the Economy, made a key note speech on the linkages between gender and macro-economics and budgets, and on how to make strategic use of GSB in the world's efforts in achieving the MDGs.

Concrete, field-level experiences were shared by Dr. Selim Jahan, Senior Advisor and Cluster Leader, Strategies and Policies for Poverty Reduction, Poverty Group, BDP, as well as representatives from the Philippines, Senegal, and Georgia. It wrapped up after a panel discussion on “How does gender sensitive budgeting contribute to the achievement of MDGs?: Concepts, strategies, and initiatives” moderated by Dr. Yoriko Meguro, Professor of Sociology, Sophia University, Tokyo, Japan and Representative of Japan to the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

The panel discussion reviewed key issues including conceptual linkages between MDGs, budgets (including national budgets and ODA), and women’s equality; GSB as a tool to promote gender equality and social equity in the development process and outcome; and finally, GSB as a tool to enhance development effectiveness in the light of recent discussions on MDG financing.

The symposium was supported by UNDP/Japan Women in Development Fund, as part of its ongoing project titled “Gender Sensitive Budgeting: Investing in Poor Women to Achieve MDGs.” It is one of the 71 projects that have been funded by the UNDP/Japan Women in Development Fund, which was established in 1995 as a follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action.

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