Statement by

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Director General

at the

Interactive Panel Discussion ‘Applying the human security approach and its contribution to priority areas of the international community and the United Nations system’

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Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my sincere pleasure to address you today as one of the opening speakers at the “Interactive panel discussion on the application of human security approach”; and I would like to express my appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Mr. Yukio Takasu, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Human Security, for inviting me to deliver these opening remarks and for giving UNIDO the opportunity to help make this event possible.

Indeed UNIDO has played a longstanding and active role in promoting human security, and it is therefore a particularly great pleasure for me that such an event on the promotion of the application of the human security approach is held in Vienna for the first time. I have greatly appreciated the opportunity given to UNIDO to collaborate in the organization of this event on behalf of Vienna-based organizations, together with the Human Security Network and the Permanent Missions of Austria and Japan.
Ladies and gentlemen,

While I am certain that most of you are familiar with the concept of human security, let me recall what human security actually means. In the words of the Heads of State and Government that concluded the 2005 World Summit Outcome (A/RES/60/1) it is “the right of all people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair”.

In the same resolution it was also recognized that “all individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential”.

For national governments and international policy-makers it is the impact of natural and climate-related disasters, armed conflict and subsequent migration, but also chronic and persistent poverty in many parts of the world that remains a major concern. These old and new challenges seriously threaten the lives and livelihoods of millions of people around the world.

Every year, hundreds of millions of people around the world are affected by natural disasters and man-made disasters related to wars and civil unrest. Calculations by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction tell us that 4.4 billion people, equivalent to 64 per cent of the world’s population, have been affected by natural disasters since the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992. In 2012 alone, over 106 million people in 115 countries were affected by natural disasters.
Natural disasters and armed conflicts have resulted in vast numbers of refugees and internally displaced people, a large majority of whom are forced to subsist on less than two dollars per day. Last year has been a particularly challenging year with an expanding crisis in Syria and Iraq but also the outbreak of the deadly Ebola Virus Disease in West Africa. The most recent disaster of such magnitude is the tragic earthquake in Nepal.

Natural and man-made crises strike the developing world with a disturbing regularity. They undermine socio-economic progress in many ways. They destroy both human and physical capital. They disrupt livelihoods, economic activity and the functioning of markets. They trigger massive dislocations of populations. They exacerbate vulnerabilities and food insecurities amongst the most vulnerable groups of society.

Under such circumstances, there is a strong call for the restoration of livelihoods and productive capacities devastated by natural disasters and armed conflicts, as well as a call to build resilience by creating economic opportunities and fostering self-reliance of the affected people, so that they can be able to live with confidence and in dignity.

The human security approach, as we will surely hear during today’s panel discussion, is a comprehensive framework for addressing exactly this kind of widespread and cross-cutting threats.
It recognizes that threats to individuals and communities vary considerably across and within countries, and at different points in time, and calls for a response that is people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented. It is one way to unite the interconnected pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, development and human rights.

For UNIDO it is clear: the fate of recovery efforts in post-crisis situations is largely determined by the degree of success in making the transition from the initial stage of emergency aid to rehabilitation and reconstruction and ultimately to development. While peace-keeping interventions or humanitarian relief actions play an critical role in post-conflict or post-disaster environments, the major challenge — and the only reliable means of securing lasting peace — is the social and economic stabilization achieved by the restoration of livelihoods and the rebuilding of the social and economic fabric of communities.

UNIDO has thus been assisting various national partners in mobilizing and applying the means necessary to meet these challenges.
Originally mandated by a General Conference resolution back in 2003 and fine-tuned over the past ten years by successive United Nations General Assembly resolutions, including the milestone resolution 66/290 of 2012, UNIDO’s role in post-crisis interventions is “to secure, restore and develop productive capacities through mitigating risks, threats and vulnerabilities in livelihoods and productive activities”.

On an institutional level, it was also in 2003 that UNIDO established a Post-Crisis Unit, which was renamed to “Human Security Coordination Unit” in 2006 and is known as the “Rural Entrepreneurship and Human Security Unit” since 2010. It is in this unit and the Agri-business Development Branch where many of the human security and post-crisis interventions of UNIDO are being implemented.

With the funding of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, UNIDO has implemented projects in over 15 countries in the course of the past ten years.
UNIDO’s interventions in post-crisis countries have also received support by the Canadian International Development Agency, Danida, the European Union, the German BMZ, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Indonesia, the Italian Development Cooperation, the Government of Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Sida of Sweden, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, Yemen, as well as several funds such as the One UN Fund and the Iraq Trust Fund.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

While I recognize that this event is not exclusively focused on UNIDO, and after having covered UNIDO’s past engagement in the field of human security, allow me to nevertheless conclude by looking at the present and future prospects of UNIDO’s role in applying the human security approach.

UNIDO’s mandate of inclusive and sustainable industrial development, ISID in short, renewed through the Lima Declaration in 2013, clearly determines the role of the Organization.
The declaration makes it clear: in order to eradicate poverty and to allow a better life and prosperity for the billions who remain excluded from a dignified human existence, the world needs to grow its economies and industries in an inclusive and sustainable manner. Job and income creation, sustainable livelihoods, food security and equitable growth are the main ingredients for stable and prosperous societies.

Inclusive and sustainable industrial development promotes shared prosperity for all segments of society, including youth, women, marginalized and vulnerable groups of society, both in rural and urban areas. ISID should be inclusive in the sense that the fruits of growth should be shared by society as a whole, leaving no one behind. It should be sustainable over generations and in harmony with the environment and climate. And it should be resilient, thus able to withstand and recover from economic crises, natural disasters or other shocks.

By generating employment and income opportunities, inclusive industrial development contributes to human dignity as well as social equity and cohesion, allowing the development of stable societies, and the achievement of the many developmental objectives that the international community is seeking to achieve, foremost of which is the eradication of poverty and lasting peace.

Inclusiveness has also another dimension. It also means that all stakeholders should engage cooperatively in the development process.
We will achieve our development objectives only if national governments, bilateral and multilateral development cooperation agencies and finance institutions, as well as academia and civil society, act together.

It is against this background that I hope that the panel discussion today will serve as a useful forum to exchange views on the application of the human security approach as an important tool to address the wide-spread and crosscutting threats and challenges of today.

I wish you all the best for this important event.

Thank you.