



PRESS RELEASE

Environmental risks could jeopardize high achievement in human development

Skopje, 2 November, 2011 – People around the world, including here, have seen remarkable progress in terms of health, education and wealth over the past 40 years. But growing social and economic inequalities, as well as environmental challenges, threaten to undermine these hard-won gains, reveals a global report released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) today.

UNDP's 2011 *global Human Development Report, Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All*, reveals that urban air pollution and rising carbon emissions are some of the leading threats to sustainable progress in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

This Region is still heavily reliant on fossil fuels and coping with the harsh environmental legacy of the socialist era, the Report states. The Report urges nations, especially in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, to reconsider fossil fuel subsidies and to invest in renewable energy.

In this country, the government is already drawing on UNDP's support and expertise to help address a range of pollution and emission challenges. For example, UNDP is working with the Government to make public buildings energy efficient and to safeguard biodiversity and natural resources.

On a global scale, the Report reveals that worldwide progress in human development cannot continue without bold steps to reduce both environmental risks and deepening inequalities. Failure to reduce these may even reverse progress for the world's poor majority, the Report argues. It calls attention to the 'great development challenge of the 21st century: to safeguard the right of generations today and in the future to live healthy and fulfilling lives'.

In Eastern Europe and Central Asia human development continues to rise with greater equality than in other regions, but income and opportunity gaps are widening

Throughout Eastern Europe and Central Asia, people's human development continues to rise with greater equality than other areas of the developing world. Most notably, education inequality (measured by average years of schooling) has declined most in this region (almost 76 per cent).

People here are following this trend. They can expect to live 5.2 years longer than in 1980, spend 2.4 more years at school, and have nearly 40 per cent more income than in 1995. These figures land the country in the high human development category – ranking it just below Ukraine, and above Turkey.

In 2011, the country is ranked 76 out of 187 countries. **However, it is misleading to compare values and rankings with those of previously published reports**, because the underlying data and methods have changed, as well as the number of countries included in the index.

But, the Report reveals that progress on many fronts in the region has not spread equally to the disadvantaged and disenfranchised, and Groups, such as the Roma, are likely to be much more deprived than national poverty measures would suggest.

Disadvantaged people suffer more from environmental degradation

The Report shows how the world's most disadvantaged people disproportionately lack political power and suffer the most from environmental degradation, including in their immediate area.

If change is to occur, the Report contends, governments must be more transparent, with strong independent watchdogs – news media, civil society, and the courts – helping to encourage great public involvement in environmental policymaking.

The Report argues that there are alternatives to inequality and unsustainability. Investments that improve equal opportunities – for example, in access to renewable energy, water and sanitation and reproductive healthcare – could advance both sustainability and human development.

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ABOUT THIS REPORT: The annual Human Development Report is an editorially independent publication of the United Nations Development Programme. For free downloads of the 2011 Human Development Report in ten languages, plus some additional reference materials on the indices and the specific regional implications, please visit: <http://hdr.undp.org>.

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