

Press Release no. 10/11

Sri Lanka hosts the Third Meeting of UNESCO Forum of Ministers on Social Protection Policies in South Asia

New Delhi, 15 Feb. 2011 - On the occasion of the World Day of Social Justice, celebrated on 20th February since 2009, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Ministry of Social Services of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka are jointly organizing the Third Meeting of the UNESCO Forum of Ministers in charge of Social Development from South Asia on Social Protection Policies in South Asia (20-22 February 2011), in Colombo (Sri Lanka), at Cinnamon Lakeside Hotel.

The Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Hon'ble D. M. Jayaratne, will address the Inaugural Session on Sunday 20 February 2011 as the Chief Guest and Hon'ble Felix Perera, Minister of Social Services and Ms. Pilar Alvarez-Laso, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences, will deliver a speech as Guests of Honour. This will coincide with the celebration of the World Day of Social Justice, recognizing the importance of promoting human dignity, harmony and equality of opportunity.

The participants of the meeting include, Ministers from Afghanistan (Hon. Ms Amina Afzali), Bangladesh (Hon. Mr Enamul Haq Mostafa Shahid), Sri Lanka (Hon. Mr Felix Perera) and High-level Representatives from Bhutan (Mr Tshewang Tandin), India (Dr Narendra Jadhav), Maldives (Ms Mariya Ali), Nepal (Ms Bindra Hada) and Pakistan, as well as over 50 researchers and scholars, social activists, representatives of UN agencies and international organizations from across South Asia, who will engage in social policy dialogue over social protection measures designed for the benefit of the poor, the vulnerable and the excluded.

It is hoped that this initiative will raise awareness and foster commitment towards the development of social protection policies based on high quality research. This is especially important given the findings of the UNESCO World Social Science Report 2010, revealing the marginal presence of South Asia in the domain of international social science research and its limited impact on policy making. Ministers and high-level officials of SAARC countries are expected to sign a Declaration at the end of the Forum, solidifying their commitment to expanding the scope and outreach of social protection policies and programmes and advancing the agenda for a universal social protection floor initiative for the South Asia region.

The Regional Forum of Ministers in charge of Social Development was launched by UNESCO, within the framework of its Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme, in South Asia in 2006. The first Forum in Bhurban, Pakistan focused on Governance and Public Accountability and the second Forum in 2008 in New Delhi, India focused on Transparency, Right to Information and Social Development.

UNESCO works to create conditions for dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, based upon respect for commonly shared values. UNESCO's mission is to contribute to the building of peace, eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information. The Forum is supported by numerous partners such as the Indian

Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Development and Research Centre (IDRC), International Labour Organisation (ILO), Social Protection in Asia network (SPA), Institute for Human Development (IHD), Sri Lankan National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO, National Science Foundation, International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW), Centre for Study of Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru Institute (CSR – JNU), and Sri Lankan Airlines.

Interested media wishing to cover the event may please contact:

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