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'MDG Country Report 2014 highlights need for national policies'

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By Hasitha Ayesmantha

'Having national policies for key areas, such as, education, private sector and women's empowerment is one of the lessons that Sri Lanka has to learn from the MDG Country Report 2014, Deputy Minister of Economic Planning and Policy Studies Harsha de Silva said yesterday at the launch of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Country Report 2014, by the government of Sri Lanka and the United Nations, at the Sports Ministry auditorium, Colombo.

'A highly competitive financial background and a competitive local market will be two of Sri Lanka's main targets moving on to the coming year. On the one hand, we are being blamed for not having a healthy environment for businesses to grow and the government not supporting enterprise; it is rightly so, the Minister said.

The minister mainly focused his attention on some key points which were mentioned in the MDG Country Report, which were under the 'unachieved' category. The minister gave comprehensive solutions to the concerns which were raised in the Report. He added that good sustainable governance will be the ultimate solution to the country's immediate concerns in many frontline sectors.

'I am not happy about the procedure for poverty measurement which is currently being used and I strongly think that the measurement should focus on all key areas also before giving out figures to the public. Things such as floods and landslides create rapid fluctuations in poverty and therefore the figures produced cannot be accepted as they state the level of poverty has decreased in the past year or so, de Silva said.

Meanwhile, focusing his attention on women's empowerment, de Silva said that the MDG Report clearly states that the bulk of Sri Lanka's foreign income comes through female workers. He added that more employment opportunities should be created in the local business sector for women and explained that most of the new employment opportunities should be opened up for women. He added that awareness also plays a major role when it comes to gender differentiation in the financial sector, but expressed his pleasure over more women entering the corporate sector.

In the year 2000, the leaders of the world signed the Millennium Declaration, which was followed by eight of goals which were called Millennium Development Goals (MDG). These goals were to be completed by September 2015. The above mentioned eight goals range from halving extreme poverty rates to minimizing the spread of HIV/AIDS and facilitating universal primary education. The goals formed a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and leading development institutions, to tend to the needs of the world's poorest.

Sri Lanka's MDG Country Report 2014 is the third country report which was submitted by the country to the United Nations and also the first report from Sri Lanka which covers the entire country. As all the countries are nearing the closing date in the Declaration, they are now reviewing their progress over the past 15 years and compare the MDG's which they were able to achieve individually.

However, when it comes to Sri Lanka, the MDG Report was compiled by the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS) on behalf of the Sri Lankan government. The work in this regard was coordinated by the United Nations in Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, addressing the launch of Sri Lanka's MDG report 2014, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Representative Subinay Nandy said that Sri Lanka's report shows that the country has performed well within the given time frame and that the findings of the report clearly indicate that the country's investment in sectors, such as, education, health and poverty has enhanced the robust performance of the country over the past few years.

He added that there are areas where more attention should be directed and expressed UN hopes that Sri Lanka would move forward with a steady momentum while resolving these issues.

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