

Introductory observations by Mr Dirk Meganck, Director for Asia and Pacific, DG DEVCO, to the session "**Challenges for the Vulnerable**"

- The densely populated coastal regions and islands in South and South East Asia are among the most climate vulnerable zones in the world. There has been an increased frequency of extreme weather phenomena such as droughts and floods. The devastating floods last year in Thailand and the Mekong Basin were a clear reminder of this.
- Over the past few decades the Asia-Pacific region made **impressive progress in terms of economic growth**, but the **incidence and absolute level of poverty still remains unacceptably high**. The poorest people are also the most exposed to climate related risks and have the least capacity to cope. Moreover, they are the least responsible for the underlying causes of climate change.
- This is the perspective in which the EU has launched initiatives such as the **Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA)** that is focused on the most climate vulnerable population in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Since the start of the GCCA in 2007 there has been solid progress to initiate action in many countries across Asia and the Pacific. I am pleased to say that in this area the EU moved rapidly from talking towards action.
- In the **Asia region** we started GCCA support action focused on climate adaptation in **Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Maldives and Nepal**. We are presently looking also to intervene in **Myanmar** to complement other recent initiatives to support the transition in that country. In other words we are active on climate change in all Asian LDCs except for the moment in Afghanistan.
- **Mountain ecosystems** demonstrate very specific climate vulnerabilities like melting of glaciers, which can cause floods, but which over the long run also threatens major agricultural systems that depend on a regular flow of water from the glaciers. We have just finalised a climate adaptation programme involving the Himalaya states that are members of the **International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)**, based in Kathmandu. Another regional programme focussed

on climate adaptation is dealing with the 4 countries of the **Mekong Basin Commission**.

- Climate change is the single greatest threat to **Pacific Islands** and considerable adaptation finance is needed in that region. We initiated country support in **Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu** and we are preparing actions in **PNG and Timor Leste**. Moreover we also are engaged in **two major regional level activities** in the Pacific; hence we are engaged on this subject with all the Pacific States. I am pleased to add that the renewed **EU-Pacific Development Partnership** puts a strong emphasis on climate change.
- There is no time in these short remarks to provide further details on the programmes I just mentioned. Let me now briefly introduce the themes of our session. Under the **first theme "adapting to the inevitable – climate effects in the Asia and Pacific region including challenges in the Asian Coastal Megacities "** we shall hear views from Bangladesh and Bhutan. I am confident to say that both countries have made impressive development progress, but this progress is now made more difficult by the effects of climate change and we must re-double our efforts to prevent reversals. We shall also look at the situation of the Pacific.
- The many **Asian mega cities in coastal areas** are facing particular climate risks. There was a strong warning about such risks in the Bangkok area last year and we shall hear more about the response to this crisis, which contains important lessons for future disaster risk reduction.
- The **second theme** deals with the **experience gained from international cooperation**. Here we shall hear more about the situation in Samoa. We shall further look at the experience of the Red Cross & Red Crescent and the World Bank in particular about disaster risk reduction.
- I would like to conclude these brief remarks underling that climate **adaptation can and must be integrated in the future development strategies** and that **we must fully apply the principles of aid effectiveness for maximum results** and best value for money.