

Statement of WASME at ~~69th~~<sup>69th</sup> Session of UN-ESCAP  
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We, on behalf of President, Members of the Governing Body and Management of the World Association for Small and Medium Enterprises popularly known as WASME, wish to present greetings to you Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates of the Member-Countries, Noeleen Heyzer, The Executive Secretary of UN-ESCAP and her Team Members. We propose to place on record WASME's high appreciation for the initiative taken by ESCAP in the Region to fight poverty, natural calamities and promoting inter-regional cooperation for globalization through trade and investment and now through promoting the use of ICT.

WASME recognizes the significant role being played by ESCAP in helping member-countries to redesign the approach for the development of SMEs, particularly in rural and underdeveloped areas for addressing the twin problems of poverty and unemployment. WASME and ESCAP have had a long relationship aimed at promoting growth and development of SMEs in the Region. WASME as the world Body for SMEs and Micro enterprises having memberships from over 112 countries, wishes to express its resolute mission to stand by UN-ESCAP in pursuit of providing competitiveness to the SME sector at large. At this juncture, when SMEs are facing various challenges, let us not forget and under-mind the capacity of this sector to bring about economic miracle in developing economy. All they need is hand-holding in the initial stages and harnessing their latent force for sharpening competitive edge.

WASME has successfully coped with various emerging social and economic issues in the recent past. But for this intervention, developing Asian and the Pacific countries would not have emerged as the fastest growing economic block in the world. But, WASME derives a sense of pride and satisfaction by being a joint partner of ESCAP in implementing some of the important programmes, as per the MOUs, especially relating to SMEs and Micro enterprises sectors in past. Despite these impressive economic growths as a block, wide socio-economic disparities exist among and within the member countries. Development programmes for sustained economic growth with greater regional integration would need to be introduced. In this Endeavour, role of SMEs and Micro enterprises becomes very critical.

WASME has recently developed several novel programmes and services to strengthen SMEs and their support institutions so that they could remain in business and grow. These programmes, organized independently and jointly with other reputed national and international partners, include capacity building of SME support institutions; skill development/up-gradation of SMEs in specific industrial sectors; application and utilization of intellectual property rights (IPRs) and ICTs; and entrepreneurship development. In particular, it is worth drawing the attention of this august house that

WASME has established a Rural Small Business Development Centre (RSBDC) four years ago, with the objective of generating income opportunities for weaker and disadvantaged sections of the society, especially rural women. WASME-RSBDC is engaged in creation of new enterprises in rural areas through organization of counseling and motivation camps, training courses, skill development programmes and marketing activities.

Distinguished Members of the Commission may be well aware that SMEs of the Region suffer mainly from shy entrepreneurship, technology obsolescence, lack of modern infrastructure, hostile market and financial system. Availability of innovative finance is absent and above all, many of the governments have yet to put in place a receptive enabling environment and get rid of procedural delays.

Against this background, WASME jointly with ESCAP proposes to address certain emerging policy issues which are critical to the existence of SMEs in global market. They are:

1. Creation of suitable enabling environment and legal system which may create sufficient confidence for promoting investment climate including foreign direct investments.
2. Increasing international finance and regional technical and economic cooperation for vibrant international trade and investment climate.
3. Capacity building programmes for institutions and the private sector for creation of necessary awareness and competitiveness.
4. Inter regional exercise for promoting Multi lateral economic cooperation.

In recent years, various agencies in the UN System have designed several new and innovative programmes to develop and support new enterprises, increase the competitiveness of SMEs, to integrate them into the global value chain, WASME, as has been in the past, is always ready to collaborate with ESCAP for conducting various programmes that would address the concerns of SMEs in the Asia Pacific countries.

**These specific areas, some of which may include:**

- (a) Capacity building of SMEs and SME support institutions, including effective usage of ICT;
- (b) Trainers' training programme on entrepreneurship development;
- (c) Sensitisation programmes on implications of WTO;
- (d) Women and micro enterprises' development;
- (e) Comparative studies on the best practices for SME development; and
- (f) Forging linkages between trans-national corporations and SMEs.

WASME with its deep involvement and long experience is fully aware that this task of converting the potential of small and medium enterprises into actuality is as much difficult as it is urgent and important. UN organisations like ESCAP, UNIDO, ILO, UNCTAD as well as a number of governmental and non-governmental organisations have investigated and published valuable studies on the success stories as much as the

failure in the operations of small and medium enterprise both country wise and sector wise. To transplant conditions which would breed successful SMEs from one country to another or one sector to another will require sustained efforts at micro and macro levels of decision making process, large financial and technological inputs and, if we may add, strong political will.

The road ahead is long and arduous for SMEs. There are host of basic issues to be resolved. It is well accepted that SMEs and large enterprises are interdependent. But what are the nature and contours of this interdependence? It is often argued that SMEs should not look for support and incentives for ever and should become self-reliant. WASME accepts this but we must also ask: Have large enterprises always been self-reliant and have not sought support and assistance from governments? Defining, what are small and medium enterprises also needs to be deliberated and discussed with a view to evolving comparable and standard yardsticks.

I thank for your giving us this opportunity to address this august assembly and for your forbearance. In conclusion, on behalf of WASME, I assure you of our continued cooperation in fulfilling your valuable and yet most onerous responsibilities.

Let WASME and ESCAP jointly resolve today to accomplish these tasks to achieve common goal of poverty reduction through income generating activities of SMEs and micro enterprises. We need to identify the "Mission", "Means" will certainly follow. SME sector is vulnerable to market fluctuations and needs utmost care to be nurtured with "Lion's heart, Eagle's eyes and Ladies hand".

#### **Distinguished Participants,**

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend to you our invitation to participate in '19th ICSME', to be held in international award-winning Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre, Durban, South Africa, from 18-21 September 2013.

To conclude, WASME urges that non-governmental organisations should be enabled to play a more meaningful and active role in many of the SME promotional activities such as providing consultancy services, setting up database, conduct training programmes, operate testing and development centres, run sub-contracting exchanges, devise credit guarantee schemes and generally work as powerful advocacy groups to create an environment in the countries which would be favourable to the genuine interests of SMEs.

Thanks

*P. M. M. M. M.*  
*25/4/12*