

# The Daily Star

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## Keep your aid pledges

*Govt and development partners urge developed nations as assistance is on the decline*

Star Business Report



*From left, United Nations Resident Coordinator Neal Walker, Planning Minister AK Khandker, Finance Minister AMA Muhith and Economic Relations Division Secretary Abul Kalam Azad attend the opening ceremony of an international workshop on development cooperation at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka yesterday. Photo: Star*

Ministers and development partners yesterday called upon developed nations to keep their aid commitment as recent figures show a gloomy decline in the official assistance flowing to the poor countries for helping them achieve development goals.

Neal Walker, resident coordinator of United Nations, said development financing has been declining with OECD figures showing a 4 percent drop in 2012 — a decline that follows a 2 percent decrease the year before.

“This marks the first drop in aid levels over two consecutive years. It is not acceptable, and the global financial crisis is not an excuse,” he said at the inaugural session of the three-day “Asia workshop on global partnership for effective development cooperation: links to the post-2015 development agenda” at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka.

The Economic Relations Division under the finance ministry has organised the event with the support from the United Nations Development Programme.

“Let’s recognise that the traditional ODA (official development assistance) can and should continue to play an important role in development, building on and complementing national investments.”

“I implore our development partners to uphold the commitments you have made both on the quantity of aid and the quality of aid.” Walker said, despite the global trends in ODA, it remains an important source of untied aid.

“The UN remains committed to pushing for the maximum allocation of ODA, for wealthy countries to meet the target of 0.7 percent of their GDP in the ODA.”

Walker also called for the best use of the ODA funds and enhancing national spending. "First, we must use what ODA is available as effectively as possible. Second, let's emphasise the need to strengthen government investments in development against criteria of effectiveness and impact," he said.

He also urged the developing countries to use ODA to effectively complement their investments in the crucial battle to build sustainable and equitable development.

Walker praised Bangladesh for its engagement with the global debate on the Millennium Development Goals and mobilising funds in difficult times.

"Bangladesh has actively been engaged in the global conversation on what comes next."

"In this difficult context, Bangladesh has successfully mobilised resources from its own internal revenues, from new donors and has benefited, both ways, from South-South Cooperation."

He said results are dependent not on frameworks, actions plans, and agreements, but on the hard work of committed individuals, working in a spirit of collaboration and focused on the outcomes the countries and the development partners are trying to achieve.

The UN official was backed by Planning Minister AK Khandker, who said developed countries spent only 0.29 percent of their gross domestic product last year instead of 0.7 percent promised.

"Only strong voice of the developing nations is needed on their financing needs to strengthen the implementation of the post-2015 agenda," he said, urging the rich nations to look beyond the MDGs.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith stressed the need for addressing the problems regarding poor people, very poor people and unemployed people, especially in Asia, in forging effective development partnership in the post-2015 development agenda.

"The task is gigantic. Even in Asia, it still remains a serious problem," he said.

Muhith said special focus has to be put on enhancement of productive capacity and maintaining economic stability.

He said public-private partnership has emerged as an important tool in recent years to advance development agenda.

The aim of the workshop is to assist the Asian countries to enhance development cooperation, particularly in the context of transitioning from the MDGs to the post-2015 development agenda.

Government representatives from 26 countries in the Asia Pacific region, including Indonesia, South Korea, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal, Mongolia, Myanmar, Afghanistan, the Maldives, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and East Timor, are attending the programme.

ERD Secretary Abul Kalam Azad and Additional Secretary Arastoo Khan also spoke.

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