

Umnugobi aimag Governor S. Erdenebat's Opening Speech at the round-table discussion on urban development, water resources, environment, and social issues of Southern region

September 25, 2008

Dalanzadgad Town

Good morning to everyone,

It is a pleasure to inform you that relevant Government officials and representatives of neighboring Dornogobi and Dundgobi aimags are attending today's round-table discussion organized by the Government of Mongolia and the World Bank with the support of the Umnugobi aimag government. First of all, let me extend warm and sincere greetings to you dear guests on behalf of the aimag people and myself and thank for accepting our invitation and visiting our beautiful Southern Gobi.

The Gobi region is distinguished by the fact that it is a home to such large mineral deposits as Tavan Tolgoi, Nariyn Sukhait, Oyu Tolgoi, and Tsagaan Suvarga earmarked as the large strategic deposit. In this sense, I believe that no one will argue with the statement that "Mongolia's development future – Gobi region". We are now in an important juncture, which will determine Mongolia's rapid development depending on how well minerals in the country's subsoils are exploited.

However, in order to escape sad experience of some countries in the world that failed its development in an environmental destruction, we must aim at securing sustainable development and developing responsible mining. It is paramount to apply environmentally-friendly technology in mining operations, conduct environmental rehabilitation in compliance with international standards, allocate some portion of mineral revenues to rural areas in which the operations take place, in sharing mining benefits, give preference to local people, and pursue local development policy.

It is no doubt that, as the above-mentioned mineral deposits on stream, many positives, such as new large settlements, concentration of people, and infrastructure development through construction of roads, railways, and power generators, as well as adverse developments, i.e. environmental impact, will take place. Therefore it is important that these developments and changes are foreseen and reflected thoroughly in future policies and plans to pave the condition for sustained development in the long run.

I would like to emphasize that today's discussion is very timely and vital. The World Bank has offered its arms of financial support and gathered us here to present findings of its in-depth study by highly qualified experts on urban development, water resources, and environmental and social issues of the Southern region.

Mongolia lacks an experience of implementing large-scale mining projects. Thus it is essential that we recall a Mongolian proverb saying "The counsel of many is better; two heads are better than one" and be prudent for the interest of future generations to learn lessons from others.

Finally, I would like to thank, on behalf of all guests, World Bank Country Manager Mr. Arshad Sayed and his team for arranging this extensive round-table discussion for all stakeholders to discuss most pressing issues pertaining to urban development, water resources, environmental, and social development of the Southern region, that is going to be the pillar of Mongolia's development, and for providing an opportunity to incorporate shareholders' views in future policies of the Government.

Good luck in the discussion.

Thank you for your attention.