

THE COMMITMENT



NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES
9-13 May 2011, ISTANBUL

INSIDE:
A New Vision, A New Strategy
with New Solutions for the
Development of the LDCs

**Reasserting the Role of Parliaments
in the New Programme of Action**



United Nations

UN OFFICE OF THE HIGH
REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE LEAST
DEVELOPED COUNTRIES,
LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND
DEVELOPING STATES

Contents



3

3 | A New Vision, A New Strategy with New Solutions for the Development of the LDCs



8

4 | Reaffirming the Commitment to Address the Special Needs of Least Developed Countries

5 | Turkey Declares LDC-IV Outcome and Declaration a Complete Success

6 | Reasserting the Role of Parliaments in the New Programme of Action

7 | Elevating the Role of the Private Sector in LDC Development

8 | Developed Countries Should Help the Least Developed Countries: Indian Ambassador Puri

9 | Switzerland Focuses on “Developing Partnerships” with the Least Developed Countries



14

10 | Civil Society: Changing the Paradigm of Development

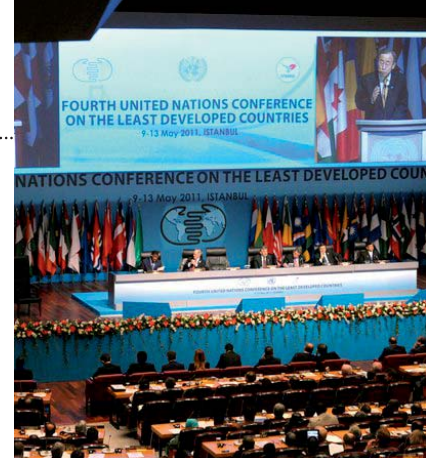
11 | Oxfam Calls for Transformation to End Injustice that Results in LDCs Suffering from Poverty

12 | Promising Deliverables at Istanbul Conference Special Events

13 | UNDP Emphasizes Good Governance as a Key Factor for Success of LDCs

14 | Solomon Islands Increasingly Face the Impact of Climate Change

15 | Istanbul Declaration



The Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries in session in Turkey in May.



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On the Cover

The Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries in May this year concluded on a high note with the adoption of a comprehensive, ambitious and result oriented 10-year Istanbul Program of Action. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses the gathering. To his left, Cheick Sidi Diarra, Secretary-General of the Conference, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and to his right, the President of Turkey, Dr. Abdullah Gül.

A New Vision, A New Strategy with New Solutions for the Development of the LDCs

Message from **Cheick Sidi Diarra**, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

The Fourth United Nations conference concluded on a high note on 13 May 2011 with the adoption of a comprehensive, ambitious and result oriented 10-year Istanbul Program of Action. The conference was a huge success; more than 8,900 accredited participants attended the conference including heads of states, parliamentarians, heads of UN agencies and other international organizations as well as civil society representatives and business leaders. However, the ultimate success of the conference will rest on the full and effective implementation of its outcome.

The challenges faced by the least developed countries (LDCs) today are real, they are serious and they are many. The new programme of action charts out a new vision, a new strategy with new solutions for the development of the LDCs for the next decade. It is a mutually agreed compact between LDCs and their development partners as well as parliamentarians, private sector, civil society and international financial institutions, with the ambitious goal to graduate 24 LDCs (half the number of total LDCs) out of this category by 2020 by focusing on the following eight priority areas: **(1) productive capacity, (2) agriculture, (3) trade, (4) commodities, (5) human and social development, (6) multiple crises and other emerging challenges, (7) mobilizing financial resources and (8) good governance at all levels.**

Now, how do we do this?

To me the answer is clear, by reaffirming and strengthening our commitments to the LDCs. Now more than ever, the state of the LDCs economies calls for action, not only to create new jobs, but to lay the foundation for growth. We have all agreed on the necessity of a strong partnership to assist LDCs, strengthen their domestic productive capacity, diversify their economies, enhance investments, develop their infrastructures, develop their resilience to external shocks, promote inclusive and equitable growth and generate employment and decent work for all, especially for the youth.

For everywhere I look, there is work to be done. This is the journey we must embark on today. ■



Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

“ *We have all agreed on the necessity of a strong partnership to assist LDCs, strengthen their domestic productive capacity, diversify their economies, enhance investments, develop their infrastructures, develop their resilience to external shocks, promote inclusive and equitable growth and generate employment and decent work for all, especially for the youth.* ”

Reaffirming the Commitment to Address the Special Needs of Least Developed Countries

Delegations attending the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (UN LDC IV) in Istanbul last month reaffirmed the overarching goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action: to enable half of the LDCs to achieve the conditions for graduation within the next decade. The ultimate aim is to secure the phasing out of the LDC category — an objective that reflects all stakeholders' shared responsibility to build a more inclusive, sustainable, equitable and just global society.

UN LDC IV took place May 9-13 this year and featured statements from Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey, President of the Conference; Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General; Joseph Deiss of Switzerland, President of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly; Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin; José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission; Jhala Nath Khanal, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal and Chair of the Global Coordination Bureau of the Least Developed Countries; Pascal Lamy, Director-General of the World Trade Organization; and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Managing Director of the World Bank, and a number of other dignitaries.

Over the course of the five-day conference, delegations reviewed progress made in implementing the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA) over the last decade, identifying key challenges and setting forth proposals to address them. They called for a renewed and enhanced partnership to help LDCs achieve sustainable development. Many also called for the conference to become a “watershed event” that



Mr. Jose Manuel Barroso, President of European Commission and Mr. Ahmet Davutoglu, Foreign Minister of Turkey at the 1st Plenary Meeting on the Occasion of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (Istanbul, Turkey 9 May 2011)



Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister of Turkey receives Hamid Karzai, President of Afghanistan at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

finally enables a large number of LDCs to achieve the conditions for graduation in the next decade. After all, support for the poorest and most vulnerable countries is a moral obligation of the international community, the delegations agreed.

A total of 142 statements were delivered at eight plenary meetings attended by 19 Heads of State and Government, 10 Vice Presidents and Deputy Prime Ministers, 60 Ministers and Vice-Ministers, 33 Chiefs of Delegations, and 21 other observers and UN entities.

Many speakers emphasized that the initiatives under the new Istanbul Programme of Action should reflect, not new ideas, but new priorities, and that the commitments should seek to refine past approaches, using as guidance the experience of the last 10 years. To produce real and valuable innovation and improvements, existing institutions and support mechanisms should be adapted to new requirements that have emerged establishing a global centre for science, technology and innovation to facilitate knowledge-sharing among stakeholders and improve productive and administrative capacities, disseminate best practices, and support commercial collaboration and investment. Drawing upon the experience of the BPoA, many delegations called for a new programme of “Aid for Investment” that would complement the successful initiatives on “Aid for Trade.”

Delegations also asserted that LDCs need targeted, timely and adequate support in building their institutional capacities and in enhancing resources to withstand and mitigate the impacts of exogenous shocks arising from the global food, energy, and financial crises. Furthermore, robust monitoring and evaluation of the new Istanbul Programme of Action was cited as an essential tool to ensure rapid learning and diffusion of best practices so that the new Programme of Action achieves maximum effectiveness.

Overall, the conference addressed six main themes:

- Enhancing productive capacities and the role of the private sector in LDCs;
- Mobilizing resources for development and global partnership;
- Harnessing trade for LDC development and transformation;
- Improving governance at all levels;
- Reducing vulnerabilities, responding to emerging challenges and enhancing food security in the least developed countries;
- Facilitating human and social development, gender equality and empowerment of women.

At its closing plenary meeting on May 13, the Conference adopted the Istanbul Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for 2011 to 2020. ■

Turkey Declares LDC-IV Outcome and Declaration a Complete Success

Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations in conversation with MediaGlobal's Nosh Nalavala

Photograph and Transcription by Pamela Thomas

NOSH NALAVALA: *Ambassador, you were at the Istanbul conference. Are you happy with the outcome and declaration at the conference?*

AMBASSADOR ERTUGRUL APAKAN: We are satisfied with the Istanbul Programme of Action, in particular the Istanbul Declaration. This is the outcome of almost 4 months of discussions and negotiations in New York.

Who were the participants in the discussions?

These were between LDCs, G7 group, development partners and some UN agencies. The Istanbul Programme of Action is an important document. It is an important document for the international community, for the LDCs, and for the global economy, because there are aspects of it that may be described as lessons learned.

Lessons learned from the shortfall of BPoA?

Yes, from the Brussels Programme — mainly when it comes to implementation, and also the current questions facing the least developed countries and the international economy. The document a) addresses LDCs themselves, b) the development partners, c) the UN, and international agencies, all of them working towards the revitalization of the development process. We need a strong development agenda. I believe Istanbul conference made a big contribution to the revitalization of the development process.

BPoA was for various reasons not considered a complete success, particularly since developed countries did not make the 0.7% of GNP commitment that they had promised. Did you get a feel at the Istanbul conference that the developed countries were serious about continuing with the commitment they made long back?

If you look at the big picture, there have been new additions to the Brussels Programme of Action. The BPoA was very much focused on the aid for trade. In Istanbul the focus was on aid for

trade plus, in order to enhance productive capacity and investment in the least developed countries. At any rate, the development partners reconfirmed their commitment to revisit the subject of ODA in 2015, with a view to enhancing these figures.

Are you saying that they would increase the 0.7% commitment?

There are two different aspects here. First, the quality of ODA. Secondly, what is the actual percentage allocated to LDCs? We need to put these in proper perspectives for development partners to re-evaluate these figures in 2015.

Were there any new developments at the Istanbul conference?

This time, the role of parliaments and the presence of the private sector was new. Close to 600 CEOs were present in Istanbul. This is something new for a global UN conference. And parliamentarians from development partners and LDCs have committed themselves to monitor the results and the future implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

What about the role of women?

It is a good point. The role of women in the development process was emphasized in Istanbul, and in that context, Madam Michelle Bachelet of UN Women spoke to the delegates and there were several side events on the topic of gender equality and women empowerment.

Ambassador, I wanted to focus on Turkey's commitment of \$200 million annually to the LDCs starting in 2012. Your country strives to increase direct investment to LDCs to \$10 billion by 2020. In what particular sectors in the LDCs do you see Turkey invest in? Are you talking about direct investment, or contributing to certain specific sectors?

Of course, we are going to proceed in consultation with the LDCs. We will sponsor private sector partnerships between Turkey and the LDCs. Our private companies have



Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations.

expressed an interest in LDCs and are very active in most African countries. It is also important to note that in Istanbul, very useful meetings took place between the Turkish private sector and the private sectors of the LDCs. They know each other better. Tourism has been one of the new areas of focus.

Talking of new areas, what role is Turkey playing in assisting LDCs with climate change mitigation?

We are also going to increase our investments in LDCs, and at the same time every year, beginning in 2012, we will be able to extend \$200 million dollars to LDCs, without any pre-condition for projects and programs.

Would LDCs be able to use these funds for climate change mitigation?

We will discuss all of these things

Are you joining hands with any other countries towards monitoring the implementation of the IPOA?

We also extended as an initial statement of \$5 million dollars for monitoring and I know that India did the same. Countries are thinking about an effective implementation mechanism for the Istanbul Programme of action.

Implementation and delivery?

Yes, delivery. We are working on a roadmap with the LDCs. ■

Reasserting the Role of Parliaments in the New Programme of Action



Anders Johnsson, Secretary General of the IPU speaks at the Parliamentary Forum on the occasion of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

The May 8 Parliamentary Forum in Istanbul represented the culmination of UN LDC IV's parliamentary track, which brought together some 160 parliamentarians from 55 countries, including 10 Speakers of Parliament.

The Forum keynote Speakers were Hon. Mehmet Ali Sahin of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and Anders Johnsson, IPU Secretary-General, who welcomed participants along with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Nepalese Prime Minister Jhal Nath Khanal, Chair of the LDC Group. Their introductory remarks underscored the importance of involving parliaments in implementing the nascent Istanbul Programme of Action. They also acknowledged progress made in the negotiation of the conference outcome document which includes an agreement on the role of parliaments.

The Forum was convened by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey under the aegis of the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS).

The first working group session was devoted

to addressing the shift from commitment to action and mobilizing parliamentary support for the IPOA. The session concluded with each group presenting the most useful pieces of advice, identified during their discussion related to improving the capacities most urgent to help parliaments oversee the IPOA.

Feedback received from the groups included strengthening the research, monitoring and reporting capacities of parliament on the IPOA; ensuring greater access of parliaments to relevant information and documents concerning the IPOA; improving mechanisms for sharing of information and coordination between the specialised parliamentary committees concerned with different aspects of the IPOA; strengthened relations with the executive and to ensure complementarity of each other's work in the implementation of the IPOA; increasing awareness by parliamentarians of the IPOA and their own national development problems.

Further general comments received from the working groups referred to the importance of parliaments, with their budgetary, legislative, representative and oversight function, as fully-fledged partners at the national and global level

in the implementation of the IPOA. Participants also see a need to create mechanisms within parliaments to oversee and monitor implementation of the IPOA.

Alessandro Motter, IPU Senior Advisor for Economic and Social Affairs and Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Acting Director (OHRLLS) and Executive Secretary of UNLDC IV, elaborated on a joint IPU-OHRLLS project proposal and the accompanying parliamentary action plan to get parliaments actively involved in the future implementation of the IPOA. Saber Chowdhury, Member of Parliament (Bangladesh) provided views from the national focal point perspective.

The IPU-OHRLLS project is aimed at strengthening parliaments' role in the implementation, follow-up, monitoring and review of the IPOA and its activities are outlined for the initial period of five years, from 2011-2015. At the country level, the project revolves around the creation of focal points in both LDC and non-LDC parliaments to help review the parliament's working methods and structures (committees etc.), liaise with UN and government focal points on the ground, and generally assist with the mainstreaming of the IPOA through the entire policy spectrum. At the regional and global level, the project seeks to plug MPs into future reviews of the IPOA, foster cooperation and technical assistance between parliaments, stimulate the sharing of best practices and policy advice between parliaments, and enhance UN cooperation with the LDCs parliaments. ■



Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations and Mr. Jhal Nath Khanal, Prime Minister of Nepal, Chair of the LDC Group and Mr. Anders Johnsson, Secretary General of the IPU and Mr. Mehmet Ali Sahin, Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey at the Parliamentary Forum on the occasion of the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

Elevating the Role of the Private Sector in LDC Development

To explore the potential for private sector investment in LDCs, the Private Sector Track (PST) of the UN LDC IV Conference convened more than 500 chief executives and senior business representatives and leaders from government, civil society and the United Nations.

The PST marked an important milestone for the UN: it was the first time that the private sector was fully integrated into the programme of a major UN Conference, allowing for direct deliberations between the public and private sectors. The events provided an important opportunity to identify concrete, action-oriented proposals to address LDC-specific challenges through sustainable private sector solutions.

Key challenges explored include good governance, peace and stability, productive capacity and entrepreneurship, access to finance and markets, climate change and infrastructure. Many of the PST events also examined sustainable development through the prism of key economic sectors, such as agriculture, tourism, telecommunications, energy services, water and extractives. Business and investment opportunities were identified for both multinational enterprises (MNEs) looking to support LDC development and for domestic LDC businesses seeking growth and development.

The PST mobilized engagement between LDC private and public sectors with their non-LDC counterparts, built around three interlocking components:

1. GLOBAL BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP FORUM (MAY 9-12): A four-day multi-stakeholder, working-level platform for dialogue among business, investors, government officials and other stakeholders. During more than 35

workshops and plenary sessions, participants identified various solutions for scaling up private sector investment and creating conditions for domestic LDC businesses to develop in a sustainable manner. New commitments that emerged from the Forum also addressed broadband and digital development, support for LDC stock exchanges, sustainable tourism and the provision of LDC investment guidance.

Led by the UN Global Compact and International Chamber of Commerce, the Forum produced a Private Sector Statement, offering recommendations to governments for promoting opportunity, growth and development in the LDCs. According to the Statement, the private sector is poised to build on the strong economic growth in many LDCs over the last few years and is convinced that substantial private investment will flow to the countries that establish conducive business environments and a level playing field.

A substantial number of actions and new initiatives were also announced during the forum, including support for stock exchanges and business organisations in LDCs as well as initiatives to enhance agricultural productivity, rural electrification, inclusive tourism, gender sensitive social protection floors, broadband and digital development. The initiatives involve private sector organisations, South-South cooperation and various UN agencies and also public-private collaboration.

2. HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON INVESTMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS (MAY 9): A high-level luncheon hosted by the Prime Minister of Turkey that convened Heads of State and Government, chief executives and other top leaders. The event enabled the private sector to



An Event From Private Sector Track Forum at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

engage with high-level government officials from around the world. The Prime Minister announced a comprehensive package for economic and technical cooperation with the LDCs over the next decade, including increased investments, technology transfer programmes (including the establishment of an International Science, Technology and Innovation Center and International Agricultural Center), scholarships, training activities, and an exchange of best practices in various areas.

At the meeting, the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Coca-Cola Company announced a US \$2 billion investment in the world's poorest nations over the next 10 years. In addition, the company aimed to empower more than 5 million women entrepreneurs across the value chain through training, mentoring and other programmes.

3. TRADE FAIR (MAY 9-13): A unique event for business-to-business transactions and dialogue, showcasing export and other commercial opportunities available in the LDCs. Organized by Tuskon in collaboration with the UN Global Compact Office, the Trade Fair featured more than 160 private sector exhibitors, including 23 from LDCs. LDC representatives showcased locally produced goods and services and participated in matchmaking exercises with non-LDC private sector participants to establish investment and collaborative opportunities.

Observations and informal reports made during the course of the trade fair indicate that a number of transactions and collaborations are in progress, including import and export opportunities for some LDC products. Companies from non-LDC countries also expressed interest in entering markets in some LDCs (e.g., machinery, materials, construction, and tourism). ■



Mehmet Zafer Caglayan, Turkish Foreign Trade Minister at the Trade Fair Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.

Developed Countries Should Help the Least Developed Countries: INDIAN AMBASSADOR PURI

MediaGlobal's Nosh Nalavala interviews
Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent
Representative of India to the United Nations

Photograph and Transcription by Pamela Thomas

NOSH NALAVALA: *Ambassador Puri, are you pleased with the outcome of the Istanbul Conference?*

AMBASSADOR PURI: The issue is not whether I'm pleased, the issue is whether the conference produced an outcome that will serve the development interests of the least developed countries. I must say that the least developed countries are putting up a brave front; they have not been critical of the outcome, but civil society has been more critical, and rightly so.

In what way are they critical?

There are two issues involved here: One is the low level of attendance by heads of state, government, or senior ministers from the developed and industrialized countries at the conference, and the second issue is the lack of new ODA commitments. If you look at what exactly happened in Istanbul, you will find that countries from the South are the ones which have stepped up with assistance.

Are you referring to financial assistance?

Turkey announced \$200 million annually. India had announced a \$500 million dollars line of credit in New Delhi in February this year. The Prime Minister of India during his recent visit to Africa for the second India-Africa Summit put on the table \$500 million dollars in lines of credit. India has also made substantial bilateral commitments with neighboring LDCs — Bangladesh for instance.

Is Bangladesh trying to graduate out of the LDCs Group.

I am sure it wants to, but it's still an LDC. In the last 10 years only 3 countries have graduated. In the next 10 years will 24 countries graduate? It seems a tall order. I would say that the important thing is to step on the gas between now and the next 5 years and see what best the international community can do in the overall interest of the least developed countries. Which means implementing measures which will help in

increasing their productive capacity, making them more competitive. Countries like India are doing that. We are providing lines of credit, conducting trade with the least developed countries and showing impressive improvement. In 2008-9, aid went up from \$16.7 billion dollars to \$20.5 billion dollars, but private Indian investment has gone up to \$35 billion dollars.

With the LDCs?

Yes, with the LDCs. You have a situation where the foreign direct investment is increasing, but ODA is not. The overall message that comes through from Istanbul is that we got a good outcome, but it shows that the level of commitment from the industrialized, traditional trading partners and development partners, need to be more.

I was amused with Minister Krishna mentioning support to the LDCs "a moral argument". Developed countries failed to honor their commitment after the Brussels Program of Action. Do you see the BPOA as a failure, as a moral failure?

I believe that the message in Minister Krishna's statement is that this is a moral imperative. I think what needs to be pointed out is that developed countries should help the LDCs not because it's something that should be done, but because it's in their own interest. There is a total of 192 countries in the world with South Sudan joining the international community in the UN to become the 193rd member. If you look at the overall sectoral profile 48 of them are least developed countries, then if you add the landlocked, small island developing states, and you remove the overlapping, that makes it about 90 plus countries. You have all these countries struggling with their development. The future for the remaining 100 can't be that bright, because after all, this is an interdependent, interconnected community of nations. There is an old saying, "poverty anywhere, is a threat to



Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations.

prosperity everywhere." Its not just a moral imperative, it's an economic imperative. Unless we get these countries back on track, unless they become major producers, exporters and consumers, where will the products of the exporting world go to?

What is India bringing to the table for LDCs besides what has been given in the past?

India was one of the major players in terms of putting something on the table. Let me recall for you when this whole LDC IV process commenced, we offered \$250,000 to enable LDC delegations to participate in the Conference. Then in Delhi we offered \$500 million dollars in lines of credit for the least developed countries. Then we also provided 1240 additional fellowships under the ITECH program. And another \$5 million for post-conference follow up activities. Then in Istanbul, we said that as soon as this \$500 million dollars is over, we will give another \$500 million dollars. ■

Switzerland Focuses on “Developing Partnerships” with the Least Developed Countries

Ambassador Paul Seger in conversation with MediaGlobal’s Nosh Nalavala on Switzerland’s role with LDCs

Photograph and Transcription by Pamela Thomas

NOSH NALAVALA: *The Swiss delegation at the LDC-IV Conference emphasized the importance of encouraging greater private sector involvement in development cooperation. Were you looking towards public private partnership in reference to working with the LDCs?*

AMBASSADOR PAUL SEGER: The private sector is very important in three areas: First, it makes investments and makes new jobs that are really crucial for development. Secondly, it develops and applies new technologies. And third, the private sector is the source of growth — sustainable and inclusive growth. LDCs are strongly dependent on public aid, or public support, and this is of course necessary and absolutely crucial, but to have growth in a sustainable way, at one point the goal of the LDCs should be to graduate from their current status . . .

Only 3 LDCs have graduated so far.

Yes, but the goal is to keep them out of poverty and not as an LDC, but to lift them out of their situation.

And how does Switzerland assist in that regard?

We, in Switzerland believe that while development aid is important, we should also look at the private sector. What we need to do is engage in a dialogue with LDCs and raise awareness for the private sector, to raise awareness to create the necessary framework, to create investments, investments not only at national levels, but on international levels as well. But it’s not a one way street, it’s really an interaction between all sides.

The Economic Cooperation and Development Division at the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) is responsible for the planning and implementation of economic and trade

policy measures with developing countries. SECO organised an event devoted to the topic of trade and local production capacities. Was Switzerland happy with the outcome as reflected in the Declaration?

It was not a Swiss showcase event. We were not promoting Swiss products. The idea was to see that the private production capacities of LDC countries are being improved. One can only grow when a country has some kind of production, be it industrial, or agricultural, or whatever, production is central for growth. In addition, experience shows that production capacities in LDC countries are quite often lacking. It’s a question of capacity, of knowledge, of education. So our goal is to assist these countries in improving these capacities that then can lead to more commerce and more trade. These countries can start to export more, generates income, generate resources, and also generate international currency. So the idea was to see how we could assist those countries in promoting their national products.

The Swiss representative at the Conference, Martin Dahinden said that in order to have more LDCs graduate from the LDC status, we need to improve the resilience of LDCs against multiple crises and to develop and strengthen LDCs’ trade and productive capacities for inclusive growth. What is Switzerland’s contribution to strengthening trade capacity in LDCs over the years.

To benefit from trade, developing countries must improve their competitiveness and meet the criteria required by international markets. The aid-for-trade initiative aims to support developing countries’ efforts to develop trade capacities. SECO has progressively increased its trade-related cooperation since the beginning of the Doha Round in 2001 and today invests \$120 million on trade issues relevant to



Swiss Ambassador Paul Seger.

developing countries. Switzerland grants developing countries significant reductions in customs duties on goods in the agricultural and textile sectors and even a zero duty on all other industrial goods. LDCs also benefit from duty- and quota-free access to the Swiss market.

The United Nations has made climate change its priority. The small island developing states, who don’t have a category at the United Nations, are being left out — they don’t seem to get a platform at any of these climate change conferences. Two part question: is Switzerland facing climate change issues, and to what extent? And, is Switzerland making any tangible contribution in terms of funding towards adaptation, especially towards the small island developing states?

Yes, we too face climate change effects. The glaciers in the Alps are receding, forests are getting drier, water is getting scarce, the summers are becoming harsher. Climate change issue is affecting Switzerland as well. Maybe not as much as the small island developing states. We are not threatened by the rise in sea level as some of the islands.

What will help not only small island developing states, but everyone, is a clear and binding agreement on emissions and reduction of CO2 and that’s something absolutely crucial.

Regarding funding towards adaptation measures, Switzerland has proposed a global CO2 taxation and redistribution mechanism which to date has not been taken up in negotiations. ■

Civil Society: Changing the Paradigm of Development



Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the United Nations General Assembly and Mr. Dr. Arjun Karki, Chairman of the CSO and Mr. Ahmet Davutoglu, Foreign Minister of Turkey and Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations and Mr. Jhala Nath Khana, Prime Minister of Nepal at Civil Society Forum on the Occasion of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.



The development paradigm must be changed, according to civil society leaders who participated in the Civil Society Forum at UN LDC IV in Istanbul. LDCs should move away from market-driven policies and implement people-centered development policies that require governments to ensure sustainable livelihoods and uphold human rights and gender equality, the leaders said.

The leaders spoke over six days of meetings (May 7-13) as part of the Civil Society Forum, which was officially launched May 8 in the Istanbul Congress Centre. The meetings presented an opportunity for dialogue between Member State negotiators and the civil society participants. Among the speakers were UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, Nepalese Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khana, Former

Foreign Minister of Guinea-Bissau, Antonietta Rosa Gomes, Dr. Arjun Karki of LDC Watch, and Dr. Ihsan Karaman of Doctors' Worldwide.

Civil society demanded preferential treatment for LDCs to ensure fair trade and debt cancellation and real and substantive increases in official development assistance guaranteeing effective and sustainable development in LDCs.

The Civil Society Forum attracted 1,500 participants from 270 organizations representing

women's movements, youth movements, trade unions, peasant federations, media and human rights defenders. The Civil Society Global Report was also launched during this Forum.

At the conclusion of the Forum, LDC IV Secretary-General Cheick Sidi Diarra, Ahmet Davutoglu, Nepalese Deputy Prime Minister Upendra Yadav, Dr. Arjun Karki, and Dr. Ihsan Karaman made concluding remarks. ■

“ The Civil Society Forum attracted 1,500 participants from 270 organizations representing women's movements, youth movements, trade unions, peasant federations, media and human rights defenders. ”

Oxfam Calls for Transformation to End Injustice that Results in LDCs Suffering from Poverty

Yiying (Elle) Wang of UN-OHRLS interviews **Barry Coates**, Executive Director of Oxfam New Zealand on the civil society perspective in relation to LDCs



Barry Coates, Executive Director of Oxfam New Zealand.

YIYING (ELLE) WANG: *As a member of the civil society steering committee, what is your overall assessment of the IPoA? More specifically, how would you evaluate the participation and output from the civil society forum?*

BARRY COATES: While the overall outcome of the Fourth Conference on the LDCs was disappointing, there was strong engagement by civil society, with good quality of discussions and good attendance from across the LDCs. The Civil Society Declaration was strong and there was feedback from many LDC delegations that they agreed with the spirit of the declaration even if they were unable to express these views in the context of the negotiations. The declaration was sharply critical of the outcomes of the conference and in particular the unwillingness of the traditional donor governments to live up to the UN mandate for the conference in increasing international support for LDC development. However, the Civil Society Declaration went beyond the call for more funds to call for a more fundamental transformation to end the injustice that results in the citizens of LDCs suffering from poverty and external shocks.

From the civil society perspective, what are the main priority issues that should be most underscored in LDCs' development policies at country-, regional-, and global level?

It is important to continue to engage civil society in the follow up actions. The momentum gained from learning, engagement and commitment of civil society from around the world during the 4th LDC Conference should be a building block for the future. As a priority, civil society needs to be supported in building capacity at the national level in LDCs. Few parliamentarians, media or active citizens are aware of the commitments undertaken under the Istanbul Programme of Action and the call for fundamental reform embodied in the Civil Society Declaration. This awareness raising needs to be the key building

block for follow-up, not only in LDCs but also amongst the traditional aid donors and other development partners. This is a major challenge. Donors need to be engaged, not only in the delivery of the IPoA commitments, but also in the delivery of assistance to enable continued support for the LDC agenda at the national and international levels.

Looking forward, what is your vision in the follow-up mechanism of LDC IV? Any strategies that you would like to elaborate?

It will be crucial to identify and prepare for a few key events that will allow civil society to mobilise and hold governments accountable. We need opportunities to raise the political level and importance of LDC development, the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Civil Society Declaration. The focus provided by a few major events is necessary to lift the issues affecting LDCs from "business as usual" to a matter of international urgency. This could be supported by the preparation of a number of key messages from the Istanbul Programme of Action, highlighting some of the significant commitments made at the conference and a clear set of measures that can form the basis for monitoring and mobilisation.

In which way could civil society organizations best collaborate with international organizations like the UN system, Bretton Woods Institute? What lessons can we learn from the previous experiences? Any new initiatives?

There are a number of measures at a national level to engage with civil society and other stakeholders and mechanisms like follow up to the MDGs, climate change dialogues, trade forums and other international processes that could be used for follow up. It would be helpful if the greater partnership between the UN and civil society, evident in the LDC conference,

could be incorporated into other engagements with UN processes. If civil society is to be fully involved, it is crucial that they are engaged as central actors, not just as marginal participants. A lesson learned from implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action is that a specific high-level process is needed to avoid the neglect of LDC issues. Specific, high level monitoring is needed with the involvement of a broad constituency in order to generate momentum for political action throughout the next decade. This is likely to need new initiatives focused more closely on the concerns of LDCs, where the development of LDCs is the major focus, not a secondary issue.

Oxfam is one of the leading civil society organizations in the world. Could you help introduce some of the work Oxfam does on LDC issues as an example?

Oxfam works in 36 of the 48 LDCs, and is active on the key advocacy issues affecting LDCs. We are proud to partner with many of the civil society organisations in LDCs and those operating at the regional and global levels that are committed to ending poverty and injustice. Oxfam's agenda aligns closely with many of the priorities identified by civil society and governments, including a focus on food justice (particularly through the newly launched 'GROW' campaign), trade justice, climate change, building resilience and responding to disasters, gender justice and supporting citizen movements to hold governments and corporations to account. This process of the 4th Conference on LDCs has enabled us to focus more as an NGO on LDC issues and we look forward to further strengthening our contribution in the future. ■

Promising Deliverables at Istanbul Conference Special Events

The forty-five Special Events that took place at UN LDC IV in May served not only as discussion forums, but also as critical venues for announcing concrete deliverables supporting LDC development goals, including those identified in the newly adopted Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA).

The deliverables range from targeted financial pledges and measures to investment promotion to concrete technical cooperation and capacity-building proposals in the area of education and training and skills development.

Organized by Member States, UN agencies and other related organizations, the Special Events covered a wide range of subjects of interest to LDCs. The events were attended by high-level officials including Heads of States and governments, Heads of agencies, Ministers, Ambassadors, other senior government officials, renowned experts, CEOs and civil society representatives.

The largest number of concrete deliverables was announced in the area of technical cooperation and capacity building, including the creation of numerous student scholarships and fellowships for researchers from the LDCs. Technical training will also be provided for civil servants and negotiators, including women leaders and government officials.

On the institutional level, capacity-building programmes will be initiated to improve public administration, governance and transparency. More specifically, programmes and projects were announced in investment promotion, tax collection and capital market regulation, social protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and strengthening of MSMEs and the private sector, among others.



An Event at World Export Development Forum at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Istanbul.

Financial pledges were also made to support the IPoA implementation and ensure effective follow-up. Development partners and UN agencies likewise announced new funds and continued support for existing LDC Trust Funds, including for sustainable tourism, reforestation and climate change adaptation programmes, and ICT development in LDCs.

To promote investments in LDCs, development partners promised to encourage the private sector to increase foreign direct investment in LDC economies. To this end, an “Aid for Investment” Initiative and new financing instruments were proposed, targeting public-private partnerships for infrastructure investment, in particular.

A large number of initiatives will also support the agricultural sector and increase

nutrition and food security. Commitments were made to strengthen LDCs’ emergency food reserve systems and to increase the productivity of farmers in LDCs by providing capacity-building and technical assistance on agricultural production, mechanization, aquaculture food processing, mechanization and standardization.

Technical assistance and capacity-building measures will target improved trade policies and export capacities, complemented by a renewed commitment to improved market access for LDC products. New initiatives will also enhance human and social development and support mitigation and adaptation efforts of LDCs with regard to climate change, by transitioning to a low-carbon growth path through investments in clean technologies.

To monitor the progress of IPoA implementation, follow-up and review, delegations announced a visualization tool called the LDC Mapper and a project to more actively engage parliamentarians. To strengthen information collection and statistical tools, LDCs will have access to an online Information Portal, to access information on existing LDC-specific international support measures. In addition, national databases on various subjects will be launched, including traditional knowledge, genetic resources and folklore, and climate change and adaptation activities. ■

“ *The largest number of concrete deliverables was announced in the area of technical cooperation and capacity building, including the creation of numerous student scholarships and fellowships for researchers from the LDCs.* ”

UNDP Emphasizes Good Governance as a Key Factor for Success of LDCs

Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, United Nations Development Program Practice Director, Democratic Governance Group, in conversation with MediaGlobal's Nosh Nalavala

Photograph and Transcription by Courtney Brooks

NOSH NALAVALA: *UNDP played a major role in working with the UN during the preparatory process and later in Istanbul. Could you parse the before and after of the Conference and underscore the outcome of the prep meetings and then the outcome itself?*

GERALDINE FRASER-MOLEKETI: Yes, indeed, UNDP did play a role in the pre-conference preparations but we should see it in the context of the universal presence of UNDP. I would argue, especially across LDCs, that we very clearly identified our work in LDCs amidst country typologies that we should be working in. That's first and foremost. But secondly and specifically, in the area of governance itself we looked at the Brussels Programme of Action, and we did an assessment and came out with a paper that was actually circulated at the conference. We did an analysis of achievements by the LDCs, insofar as it related to democratic governance. It's called the good governance component.

And did you find it wanting?

We did. We found it wanting from the perspective of attainment of the clear goals that were identified in the programme of action. We also looked at it from the perspective of what should then be done for the Istanbul Programme of Action because this is what we thought was quite important in support of LDCs. A meeting took place in Geneva at the end of last year. And at this meeting we had the permanent representatives and representatives from our country offices . . .

. . . best practices of these countries?

Yes, we looked at best practices in countries and we looked at what could be shared across, and it was a fascinating discussion. We looked at countries like Butan, Nepal, and we covered Africa and Asia. We had input on Haiti, and we also had members from the steering committee for the Istanbul conference . . .

The steering committee, the UN Ambassador of Turkey . . .

. . . Yes, the UN Ambassador of Turkey was



Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, United Nations Development Program Practice Director, Democratic Governance Group (right) in conversation with MediaGlobal's Nosh Nalavala

present in our meeting. We also had the ambassadors from Nepal and Bangladesh, and so on. In the substantive debates they all said that the one topic that they thought was lacking, amongst others, was the question of global governance, which brings into play the question of mutual accountability. Because it is one thing beating up LDCs and saying you didn't meet the programme of action, it is another thing looking at everyone and saying to the partners, 'what have you done?' They identified areas like anti-corruption and so on.

Were you only limited to the LDCs or did you also touch upon small island developing states?

We covered LDCs and the small island developing states.

Are you pleased with the outcome of those issues that you had worked towards in the preparatory sessions?

To a large degree as UNDP our role is not to say this is what we want and this is a blueprint. We support countries and we support the LDCs. I am pleased that Istanbul had an outcome. That's what I'm pleased about.

So now the question is: are the LDCs looking for either the same official development assistance, or perhaps an increase in official development assistance, or a renewed commitment of what was promised at the Brussels Programme of Action and if the

developed countries were not active participants in the final outcome at the declaration of the Istanbul conference, would this still fall into the same trap as the BPOA?

The fact that we didn't have the kind of participation from developed countries as expected doesn't mean that there should be any lowering of expectations on what their contribution should be. Istanbul must be seen in conjunction with the Brussels Programme of Action.

Somehow the perception is that BPOA was considered a failure. And that the Istanbul conference ten years later was meant to put new vigour and life into it.

I think it did put new vigour into it in the sense that you saw commitment from India and Turkey in a way that was never there before.

Referring to these two countries, do the LDCs need monitoring at this point in time for Turkey and India to have committed five million dollars towards monitoring?

There was one issue which came up consistently from the LDCs themselves. And they identified the need for a monitoring mechanism. So the fact that it came from them means that clearly they see that as a necessity. And monitoring is not just monitoring of LDCs, and it's important to monitor because you want to monitor impact, you want to be sure that there's accountability for the resources, for commitments. ■

Solomon Islands Increasingly Face the Impact of Climate Change

In an interview with MediaGlobal's Nosh Nalavala, Ambassador to the Solomon Islands Ambassador to the United Nations, **Colin D. Beck** shares his concerns on the issue of climate change

Photograph and Transcription by Courtney Brooks

NOSH NALAVALA: *Your government has indicated that the human institutional, technological and systemic capacity for sustainable land management (SLM) in Solomon Islands, is very low. This pretty much is the whole range of basic infrastructure in Solomon Islands. It also includes aspects of the MDGs. Do you have a national plan of action and how is the Solomon Islands dealing with these capacity issues?*

AMBASSADOR COLIN BECK: We are dealing with these issues from a national perspective. We have a ministry dedicated to looking at the issue of capacity, trying to meet our development needs. And the state institutions actually need to keep up with these development challenges; otherwise they could come to a stage when we cannot manage them.

What would happen if these challenges were not met?

Then certainly we would slide back into a conflict situation.

Can you zero in on a development challenge that you feel is growing?

At the moment our country is actually progressing — it is progressing on all fronts. But we're doing it basically with the help not only of the international community, but we rely a lot on both multi-lateral institutions and on international frameworks. And this is where the Istanbul Programme of Action and other development strategies will come into play.

Will you fulfill your MDGs by 2015?

At the moment our goal is to try to graduate, and we speak of graduating because for us a vehicle of achieving the MDGs is actually through the Istanbul Programme of Action. One of the aspects of the MDGs is that these are social goals. It does not look at the sustainability of how to achieve them. And this is where the Istanbul Programme of Action, will prioritize structural

transformation, and ensure that these goals will be met.

The least developed countries and small island developing states are most vulnerable to the impact of climate change. Would you say that Solomon Islands would be impacted by rising sea levels to a point where the country might face extinction? Do you feel that the Solomon Islands are in bad shape when it comes to climate change?

This is one of the reasons why we have this chapter on sustainable development and dealing with crises, and one of the crises besides the economy is climate change. Climate change for us is yesterday's issue that we're dealing with today.

Why would it be yesterday's issue?

Everybody knows about it. It's yesterday's issue basically because we have raised this issue 20 years ago. And today we're still talking about it as though we do not know what to do. I think that everybody needs a political will to do something. The science says everything. In terms of when you speak of Solomon Islands, we are already relocating populations from our low-lying areas...

... where are you relocating them?

We are relocating from some of the low-lying areas right to the mainland, internally. But we're dealing with it internally. Now you must look at it in a framework in which we are doing what we can within our capacity. But over time the land that has been given becomes infertile. Once it becomes infertile where people have relocated, they will have to move into the land of the surrounding populations, and these are triggers of conflict. At the moment we are not talking just sea level rise — we're talking water, food security, biodiversity. We have lost fishing grounds; the problem just grows. The issue for us now is adaptation, which is a temporary solution. It's something that we need to adapt to immediately but we need a long-term solution — we need hope.



Solomon Islands Ambassador to the United Nations, Colin D. Beck.

Are you looking at any other countries where the people of Solomon Islands would end up as "environmental refugees"?

For us it's unthinkable — if we now do away with multilateralism, then I think that will be an option. For us, we are just on the frontline. We should not start to think who should leave and who should survive. Otherwise, we are really questioning humanity, and this is why I am saying, let us not look at a Plan B.

But is there a contingency plan?

At the moment we are trying — we have pinned all our hopes, all our diplomatic capital, all the little investment we have, in having an agreement, a second commitment in Durban.

I presume you are spending a lot of funds toward mitigation?

More on adaptation.

How aggressive are your adaptation measures?

The fact that we are relocating population, means that we have not been able to cope with the challenges of climate change. On some of the islands they have relocated people from the settlements to where they grow food, which is going to impact the food industry because they're taking the land used to grow food to now settle them.

Is there a climate change fund — there is a big \$100 billion climate change fund — but are there any monies coming to you for adaptation needs from the international community?

Since Copenhagen commitment was made but never delivered. We don't see where the money is, and this is the question. That's why it is an agenda item now, and everybody's asking, we need clarity, where is the money. Show us the money. ■

Istanbul Declaration

Renewed and strengthened global partnership for the development of least developed countries

We, the Heads of State and Government and Representatives of the States participating in the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries,

Gathered here in Istanbul from 9 to 13 May 2011 to reiterate our commitment to the collective and shared responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at all levels,

Stressing that the least developed countries continue to confront high levels of poverty and hunger, and reaffirming that solidarity and partnership with the poorest, weakest and most vulnerable countries and their people are not only moral and ethical imperatives, but also economic and political ones, which correspond to long-term interests of the international community and serve the cause of peace, security and prosperity for all,

Emphasizing that enhancing good governance at all levels, the rule of law, respect for all human rights, including the right to development, gender equality, justice for all, democracy and peace and security are essential for sustainable development,

Underscoring the fact that while each faces specific challenges, all least developed countries share much in common,

Recognizing the progress made by least developed countries since the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held in Brussels in 2001,

Recognizing that not all the objectives and goals set in the Brussels Programme of Action have been fully achieved and that least developed countries remain marginalized in the world economy and continue to suffer from extreme poverty, inequality and structural weaknesses,

Expressing deep concern that many least developed countries, particularly those that are affected by conflict and criminal activities and transnational organized crime, including piracy, which, among other things, can threaten trade routes, and smuggling of and trafficking in human beings, narcotic drugs and small arms and light weapons, are lagging behind in the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and recognizing that these challenges require concerted efforts to address them,

Underlining that limited productive capacity and financial resources, and weak and poor infrastructure, continue to pose serious obstacles to the development efforts of the least developed countries,

Reiterating our deep concern that the ongoing impacts of economic and financial crisis, combined with volatile energy and food prices, problems of food security, rising unemployment and increasing challenges posed by climate change, natural disasters and the loss of biodiversity, are threatening the development gains that least developed countries made arduously over the years,

Recognizing that least developed countries deserve particular attention and special and well-targeted support in line with their development strategies to address their development needs and specific challenges in a coherent

manner in trade, investment, finance, including official development assistance (ODA), technology and capacity-building,

Expressing our full support for least developed countries' development efforts to achieve people-centred sustainable development,

Underscoring that least developed countries represent an enormous untapped human and natural resource potential, in particular their young populations, to contribute to national development, poverty eradication, and job creation, as well as global economic growth and welfare,

Recognizing the need for enhancing the voice and participation of least developed countries in relevant multilateral institutions and international forums,

Emphasizing the importance of the outcomes of all major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, including the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development, the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development ("Johannesburg Plan of Implementation"), the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development and the outcome document of the High-Level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, which play a vital role in shaping a broad development vision of the United Nations and constitute complementary frameworks for the development activities of least developed countries,

Having adopted a Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2011-2020,

Declare that:

1. We collectively commit to finding lasting solutions to the complex and mutually exacerbating challenges and problems of the least developed countries. We are committed to assisting the least developed countries with an overarching goal of enabling half of them to meet the criteria for graduation through the eradication of poverty and the achievement of accelerated, sustained, inclusive and equitable growth and sustainable development. Thus, we solemnly commit ourselves to implementing this Programme of Action throughout the coming decade.
2. We are convinced that the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and the Istanbul Programme of Action provide positive momentum for the sustainable development of least developed countries by enhancing solidarity with the cause of least developed countries and increasing awareness of their specific conditions. Our renewed and strengthened global partnership will make a significant contribution to the common endeavours towards the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.
3. We stress that the goals and targets of this Programme of Action can be achieved with renewed and strengthened global partnership, enhanced commitments, increased mobilization of resources for



A view of the plenary session inside the Lufti Kirdar Convention Centre at the Fourth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries held in Turkey in May.

least developed countries' development and greater aid effectiveness. We commit to further strengthening our support to least developed countries in creating a favourable environment for sustainable development, increasing productive capacities, the diversification of economies and building necessary infrastructure.

4. We underscore that the ownership, leadership and primary responsibility for development in least developed countries rests with the least developed countries themselves. Good governance, inclusiveness and transparency, as well as domestic resource mobilization, are central to the development process of the least developed countries. These efforts need to be given concrete and substantial international support in a spirit of shared responsibility and mutual accountability through renewed and strengthened global partnership.

5. We recognize least developed countries' efforts to make progress in human and social development, including providing access to essential services such as education, health, water and sanitation, and shelter, as well as promoting participation in social, economic and political life. We encourage further progress in these areas.

6. We underline that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are central to achieving better development outcomes, including all internationally agreed development goals as well as the Millennium Development Goals, and are essential to making progress towards social and human development and the eradication of poverty in least developed countries.

7. We affirm that ODA has a key role to play in support of least developed countries' development. In this regard, donor countries take upon themselves to fulfil all the ODA commitments to the least developed countries. They should review their ODA commitments in 2015 and consider further enhancing the resources for the least developed countries.

8. We recognize that productive capacity-building is a development multiplier and that the renewed and strengthened partnership should give priority to this issue in the next decade in a coherent manner. In this regard:

(a) We underscore that reliable and affordable infrastructure services such as electricity, transport,

continued on page 16

information and communications technology and water, as well as institutional capacity, are critically important for building viable productive capacity in the least developed countries;

(b) We underline that a dynamic, well-functioning and socially responsible private sector, small and medium-sized enterprises in particular, and an appropriate legal framework are crucial in promoting entrepreneurship, investment, competition, innovation and economic diversification as well as achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all; are committed to creating conducive domestic and international environments in which the private sector can invest and contribute more to economic growth and sustainable development; and take note of the contributions of the High-Level Meeting on Investment and Partnerships, the Global Business Partnership Forum and the Trade Fair at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries;

(c) We recognize the importance of the mobilization of domestic and external financial resources, including ODA, foreign direct investment, concessional lending and private flows such as remittances, as vital parts of national and international development efforts; and underline the need for enhanced support for investments, including capacity-building, to improve the environment for investment in productive sectors and infrastructure that would help the least developed countries in diversifying their economies;

(d) We undertake to promote access of least developed countries to knowledge, information, technology and know-how and to support the least developed countries in improving their scientific and innovative capacity needed for their structural transformation; agree to undertake a joint gap and capacity analysis with the aim of establishing a Technology Bank and a science, technology and innovation-supporting mechanism dedicated to the least developed countries' building on existing international initiatives; and welcome the generous offer of the Government of Turkey to host an International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre and encourage commitments in this regard;

(e) We underscore that integrated and sustainable agriculture and rural development policies and practices, focusing particularly on small-scale farmers and agribusinesses, as well as increased investments in least developed countries, are essential to the eradication of poverty and hunger and the achievement of food and nutritional security;

(f) We acknowledge the great potential of regional economic integration and cooperation in creating new opportunities for trade, investment, production, supply chains, and markets through improved infrastructure and connectivity; and underscore that regional integration and cooperation efforts involving least developed countries should be further enhanced and supported with the contributions of relevant regional organizations and institutions.

9. We reaffirm that international trade remains a key driver of economic growth and sustainable development in least developed countries. We strongly call on all World Trade Organization members to intensify their negotiating efforts to bring the World Trade

Organization Doha Round to a successful conclusion. We commit to the realization of the timely implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access, on a lasting basis, for all least developed countries, consistent with the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration adopted by the World Trade Organization in 2005. We commit to ensuring that preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries are simple, transparent and predictable and contribute to facilitating market access. We emphasize the need for implementing effective trade-related technical assistance and capacity-building to least developed countries on a priority basis, including by enhancing the share of assistance to least developed countries for aid for trade and support for the Enhanced Integrated Framework, as appropriate, to help least developed countries to build their supply-side capacity, trade-related infrastructure and trade facilitation. In this regard, we emphasize the role of all relevant international agencies and organizations. We also underline that the accession of least developed countries to the World Trade Organization should be encouraged and facilitated.

10. New innovative finance mechanisms have potential to contribute to the development of least developed countries. Such voluntary mechanisms should be effective and should aim to mobilize resources that are stable and predictable, which should supplement and not be a substitute for traditional sources of finance and be disbursed in accordance with the priorities of least developed countries and not unduly burden them.

11. We are concerned that many least developed countries still struggle with a high debt burden. This situation demands the continued implementation of bold and comprehensive measures with a view to addressing the debt challenges of least developed countries effectively and equitably. Long-term sustainability of debt depends on, inter alia, responsible lending and borrowing by all creditors and debtors, sustainable economic growth, structural transformation in least developed countries and enhanced market prospects for least developed countries.

12. We emphasize the urgent need to strengthen the capacity of least developed countries in building long-term resilience to mitigate crises and effectively respond to economic shocks. We underline the need for appropriate regional and international support to be deployed in a timely and targeted manner to complement least developed countries' efforts to this end, such as the support mechanisms designed and implemented by international financial institutions,

including regional development banks and others.

13. We acknowledge the adverse impact of climate change on least developed countries and share the aim to strengthen their capacity to adapt to and mitigate climate change, bearing in mind the provisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The mobilization and provision of additional, adequate and predictable financial resources are necessary to address least developed countries' adaptation and mitigation needs. We welcome the decision to establish the Green Climate Fund and are looking forward to its full operationalization. We also acknowledge the need to reduce their vulnerability to natural disasters through disaster preparedness and risk reduction, as well as resilience-building. We also underscore the need for access of the least developed countries to appropriate, affordable and clean technologies that foster their sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

14. We recognize that the graduation process of least developed countries should be coupled with an appropriate package of incentives and support measures so that the development process of the graduated country will not be jeopardized. In this context, we will work on the development and implementation of smooth transition strategies for graduating and graduated least developed countries. We look forward to the establishment of an ad hoc working group to further study and strengthen the smooth transition process.

15. In view of the increasingly important role of South-South cooperation in least developed countries' development, we underline the need to fully harness the opportunities offered by South-South cooperation as a complement to, but not a substitute for, North-South cooperation. We are convinced that least developed countries benefit from enhanced and mainstreamed triangular cooperation. We seek to achieve specific development results as articulated in least developed countries' national development plans and priorities, based on solidarity and partnership within the context of South-South cooperation.

16. We acknowledge the important role of parliaments in debating development strategies, as well as in overseeing their implementation. The engagement of parliaments will ensure effectiveness, transparency and accountability in the design, the implementation and the review of the policies and programmes in the context of the Istanbul Programme of Action. We take note of the Parliamentary Message to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

17. We call on civil society, including non-governmental organizations, voluntary associations and philanthropic foundations, the private sector, academia and other relevant stakeholders at all levels to enhance their roles in the development efforts of least developed countries, as appropriate. We also take note of the Civil Society Forum Declaration of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

18. We reaffirm the critical importance of effective and efficient follow-up and monitoring mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels to assess progress in the implementation of commitments and actions contained in the Programme of Action, including by conducting a high-level comprehensive midterm review. We invite the Secretary-General of the United Nations to ensure that the Istanbul Programme of Action is followed up in an effective, efficient and visible manner. ■



President of the United Nations General Assembly, Joseph Deiss addressing the Fourth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries in Istanbul, Turkey.