



PRESS RELEASE



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

**UNITED NATIONS OFFICIAL CALLS FOR GREATER ACCESS TO THE US MARKET
FOR ASIAN AND PACIFIC LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES**

Bangkok, 10 May 2005: At the Opening Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific' Special Body for Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Anwarul K. Chowdhury called for greater access to American markets for the Least Developed Countries in Asia and the Pacific.

The United States African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) provides selected sub-Saharan African LDCs with preferential access to American markets, fostering new trade and economic opportunities.

“The United States should also extend a similar scheme like the AGOA to the Asian and Pacific LDCs as well. What I am proposing is an Asia-Pacific counterpart scheme for LDCs similar to AGOA – a kind of ‘Asian AGOA’,” he said in Bangkok today.

“In the international context,” Mr. Chowdhury explained, “736 million people or 11.5 per cent of the world’s population live in these 50 LDCs. By 2015 this population is estimated to rise by more than 200 million reaching 942 million or 13.1 per cent of the global population.”

The tragic part is that about half of this population could be living in dire poverty.

PAGE 2

Analyzing the developments of the past several years, Mr. Chowdhury attributed the dismal situation to “slow economic growth, poor trade performance, debilitating HIV/AIDS pandemic, a not-so-encouraging foreign investment compounded by a host of new challenges in a globalizing world economy”

Mr. Chowdhury said that in terms of market access, the Least Developed Countries have been provided almost full access by major trading nations, but the benefits of this access has contributed little to the development prospects of these countries due to intractable supply-side constraints. “The proposed changes in the preferential rules of origin applicable to LDCs’ exports by the European Union and much-needed decision for reduction of subsidies on agricultural products would boost the trade opportunities for these countries,” he suggested.

The High Representative hailed last month’s agreement for the \$34 billion increased replenishment of the resources of the International Development Association (IDA) that has opened up increased opportunities for LDCs and most vulnerable countries. “This represents the largest expansion of IDA resources in two decades and LDCs should gear up to take full advantage of this increase.”

Mr. Chowdhury briefed the delegates on the preparations conducted by the Office of the High Representative for the mid-term review of the Brussels Programme of Action for LDCs. The review is scheduled to take place at the 61st Session of the General Assembly in 2006.

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