



PRESS RELEASE



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

UN envoy urges American lawyers to give support to Least Developed Countries

WASHINGTON, 4 May 2007: The United Nations envoy for the world's most vulnerable countries has called upon the American Bar Association to assist in building capacity for the rule of law in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

The High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Mr. Anwarul K. Chowdhury, also urged members of the American Bar Association to provide LDCs with pro bono legal services in global trade negotiations, negotiations for Foreign Direct Investment and litigation.

Mr. Chowdhury told members of the American bar association at their annual spring meeting that pervasive poverty is closely connected with the absence of the rule of law.

“The majority of the 760 million people in the LDCs live outside the reach of the rule of law. They often lack basic legal protection, including property rights, labour rights and access to justice. As a result, the constantly marginalised, which only serves to deepen their poverty,” he said.

Mr. Chowdhury noted that the University Declaration of Human Rights assures all people of security of person, social and economic rights, but the people in the LDCs are often deprived of these rights by entrenched poverty and conflict. He highlighted the importance of inclusive democratic governance in advancing the rule of law in the LDCs.

The UN envoy raised concern about the costs to LDCs of litigation arising out of debt relief. Four of the seven countries against whom court judgements have been made in litigations brought by creditors are LDCs – Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia. Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia have already paid an estimated 30 million United States dollars to litigating creditors.

“This is a major area of concern, as such litigations could significantly reduce the potential benefits of debt relief and affect poverty reduction efforts in the LDCs. I encourage the American Bar Association to provide assistance to the LDCs affected to overcome this problem,” he said.

Mr. Chowdhury called upon the American Bar Association and the International Bar Association to expedite the implementation of the Global Challenge, an initiative launched in 2001 in Istanbul, Turkey, by international lawyers to support poverty reduction efforts in the LDCs.

He urged the lawyers to collaborate with Bar Associations in the LDCs to strengthen the rule of law and build capacity in those countries.

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