



**Statement**

**by**

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and High Representative for the Least Developed  
Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small  
Island Developing States**

**at the**

**Thirty eighth session of the Conference of African  
Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic  
Development on the theme “Achieving the Millennium  
Development Goals in Africa”**

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Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, let me extend my warmest greetings to the participants of the thirty eight session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in Abuja. I wish you all very fruitful deliberations on the theme “Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa” and the successful outcomes of the Conference.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) remains a daunting challenge for many Least Developed Countries (LDCs), including 34 LDCs in Africa. Recent reports of the United Nations Secretary-General suggest that despite significant progress of some LDCs on separate goals and targets the overall progress of the LDCs group on MDGs has been extremely slow. Furthermore, if the current trend persists the number of people living in extreme poverty in the LDCs will increase from 334 million in 2000 to 471 million in 2015. In short, the LDCs could miss the opportunity to reach the MDGs by 2015 unless there is significant breakthrough in debt relief, aid, trade and technology transfer that could leverage investments in human capital, infrastructure and governance, stimulate production, sustained and inclusive growth and sustainable development as a means of poverty alleviation.

Lifting out of poverty more than 700 million people by halving the proportion of people leaving in extreme poverty and hunger by 2015 has been the overarching goal of the Programme of Action of LDCs for the Decade 2001-2010 adopted at the Third United Nation Conference of the Least Developed Countries in 2001 in Brussels. The Brussels Programme was adopted after the Millennium Declaration and before the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and therefore is intrinsically linked both to the MDGs and the NEPAD, good governance being a cross cutting issue that runs across all seven commitments of the LDCs and their development partners. These existing linkages between the Brussels Programme, the MDGs and the NEPAD make them mutually supportive and complementary when progress on goals of one programme contributes to the progress on goals of other programmes, and vice versa.

The upcoming 2005 High-Level Plenary of the General Assembly on the review of the outcomes of the Millennium Declaration provides us with an opportunity to prepare thoroughly and comprehensively for the midterm review of the Brussels Programme to be held, pursuant to General Assembly resolution in 2006. The midterm review of the Brussels Programme by the General Assembly in 2006 will fall on the heels of the regular annual review of the Programme by the Economic and Social Council, regional, sectoral and national midterm reviews. The outcomes of all these reviews will flow into the outcome of the midterm review by the General Assembly, like springs into the river.

In addition, last year the 2004 high-level segment of ECOSOC also undertook in-depth and comprehensive review of the domestic and external resources mobilization under the theme “Resources mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the

context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010". The three-day of multistakeholder deliberations culminated in the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration in which the LDCs and their development partners reaffirmed their commitment to the goals and targets of the Brussels Programme and undertook to make increased efforts to achieve them in a timely manner. In this regard, I sincerely hope that this session will also reaffirm the commitments made at the thirty fifth session of the African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development on 20 October 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa to support the full implementation of the Brussels Programme and to further enhance the synergy between the NEPAD and the Brussels Programme of Action of the LDCs. It would be also useful to include in the outcomes of this Conference the decision on holding the regional midterm review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme in Africa.

Remarkably, one of the roundtables of the 2004 high-level segment of the ECOSOC that undertook in-depth and comprehensive assessment of resources mobilization in the LDCs was organized on the workers' remittances that have emerged in recent years as an innovative source for financing for development. Given increased attention to remittances and as a follow-up to the ECOSOC high-level segment, Benin, as the Chair of the LDCs group has proposed to organize the Ministerial conference of the LDCs on workers remittances. We would be certainly interested in organizing such a conference, in collaboration with the International Organization of Migration, if you support this proposal.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to conclude by quoting Nelson Mandela who addressed thousands of people gathered at the Trafalgar Square in February 2005 for the Make Poverty History Rally with the following words: *"Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by actions of the human beings. Do not look the other way, do not hesitate. Recognize that the world is hungry for action, not words. Act with courage and vision"*. This is what we all need to do in order to achieve MDGs, nothing less nor more.