

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

Support to NEPAD

Period of report: July 2006 to June 2007

The Office of the High Representative focuses its advocacy work to support NEPAD, as 34 out of the 50 Least Developed Countries (LDCs), 15 of the 31 Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and six out of the 34 Small Island Developing States (SIDs) are in Africa. This geographical reality poses as a unique challenge the vulnerability of the LDCs in Africa. NEPAD and the Brussels Programme of Action are intrinsically linked and they both have fully integrated the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Brussels Programme of Action

The Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 has outlined strategic measures in mobilizing resources for achieving its objectives, goals and targets. The LDC Ministerial Conference, which was held in Cotonou, Benin, from 7 to 8 June 2006 focused on the Midterm Comprehensive Global Review of the Implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action during the period 2001 to 2005. The conference considered the outcome document of the regional meetings of African LDCs held in Addis Ababa (February 2006) and of the Asia-Pacific and Middle East LDCs held in Bangkok (March 2006). The meeting was significant for Africa as it constitutes 68% of all LDCs globally. The meeting also considered the LDCs national review reports, as well as the reports submitted by the UN Regional Commissions, namely, ECA, ESCAP, ECLAC, ESCWA. The conference assessed the progress made and constraints encountered during the first five years of implementation, and formulated recommendations with a view to ensuring the full and timely implementation of the seven commitments of the Brussels Programme of Action. The outcome of the conference was a Ministerial Declaration and the Cotonou Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Brussels Programme.

The meeting provided an opportunity for African LDCs to share best practices and lessons learned. For the past five years, African LDCs have adopted a number of policies and measures to mainstream the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action in their national development strategies.

- Economic growth and macroeconomic performance have improved in African LDCs, particularly in oil-exporting countries.
- 17 African LDCs have acceded to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). Other new African institutions have been instrumental in improving governance in Member States.

- African LDCs have been instrumental in the development of the following instruments: the programme of Action for the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Action Plan for the Environmental Initiative of NEPAD, the Sirte Declaration on Integrated on Development of Water and Agriculture in Africa and HABITAT Agenda.

In spite of the progress made in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, there are still daunting challenges and constraints. Growth has not led to improvements in living standards even in oil-exporting countries where growth has exceeded 7%. Growth has not translated sufficiently into poverty reduction, and the benefits of growth have not been equitably distributed among the populations.

Civil Society Hearings: In its resolution 60/228, the General Assembly requested the President of the General Assembly to organize one-day informal interactive hearings with the representatives of NGOs, civil society organizations and the private sector, in preparation for the high-level meeting on the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs for the Decade 2001-2010. The hearings were conducted in New York on 22 June 2006 and included participants from African civil society umbrella organisations, as well as others from the private sector.

The objective of the one-day hearings was to give an opportunity for NGOs, civil society and the private sector to interact with Member States and offer input on the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme. The President of the General Assembly established a taskforce of representatives of NGOs, civil society organizations and the private sector to assist him in preparations for the informal interactive hearings and identifying speakers and active participants. UN-OHRLLS served as the substantive secretariat for the preparations. The hearings were held under the theme “forging partnership with civil society and the private sector for poverty reduction in the LDCs”. Statements made noted that the partnership should be built on trust between development partners and governments in the LDCs, as well as between NGOs and governments. The role of the civil society and NGOs must be recognized by the private sector and the government, so as to become true partners in development efforts. NGOs, civil society and the private sector were urged to create and maintain a dialogue with the government in order to share experiences and generate innovative ways for sustainable development. The summary of the hearings was presented at the high-level meeting of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly on the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs.

Declaration of the high-level meeting of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly on the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs held on 18 and 19 September 2006 reaffirmed that the Programme of Action constitutes a fundamental framework for a strong global partnership whose goals is to accelerate sustained economic growth, sustainable development and poverty eradication in the LDCs and also noted that, while the Programme of Action has, since its

adoption, registered some progress in its implementation, at the same time the overall socio-economic situation in the LDCs continues to be precarious.

Advocacy work

During the period under review, UN-OHRLS embarked on major advocacy work and published key reports that focused on LDCs and have direct relevance to Africa and NEPAD's work, including:

- a) *Breaking the Barriers, Gender Perspectives and Empowerment of Women in LDCs*. Gender inequality has serious social, political and economic implications. The plight of women in LDCs is particularly dire as they are commonly marginalized in societies that are already overwhelmed by poverty, underdevelopment and frequent unstable security conditions. The Brussels Programme of Action involves seven commitments and five key implementation objectives. Gender is addressed specifically under Commitment 3, building human and institutional capacity. Gender is also one of the ten cross-cutting themes prevalent across all of the Brussels Programme commitments.
- b) *Governance for the Future: Democracy and Development in the Least Developed Countries*. The report launched in May 2006 contains governance profiles of all LDCs, including the 34 African LDCs which were thoroughly reviewed and analysed. Basic findings of the report noted that peace and security are necessary to achieve poverty reduction and sustainable development. Conflicts take a heavy toll on human lives and have a devastating impact on the economy and development efforts. The African Peer Review Mechanism, which has been acceded by 17 African LDCs, has duly acknowledged the governance dividend in stability and development. The Brussels Programme of Action calls upon the LDCs to pursue national policies and strategies to promote confidence-building and conflict prevention, and in countries affected by war, to promote peaceful settlement of disputes, reconciliation and post-conflict peacebuilding.
- c) *Breaking the cycle of poverty: Challenges and Opportunities of LDCs*. The report notes that almost half of the population of LDCs lives in extreme poverty. High population growth, rapid urbanisation and environmental degradation further aggravate extreme poverty. The poverty trap is further tightened by the asymmetric nature of current globalization. Breaking the vicious cycle of poverty requires beneficial integration of LDCs into the world economy by improving their access to external finance, international markets, ICT and technology. It also requires building the productive capacities of LDCs, promoting trade, investment and employment.