



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

STATEMENT BY

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Mr President

Let me first thank the Turkish Government for hosting the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. This conference is welcome and timely.

The eradication of extreme poverty requires a global effort that focuses on the least developed countries. At this conference, we have an opportunity - and a responsibility - to renew our global partnership in favor of the development of the LDCs and their peoples. The Political Declaration and Programme of Action for the next decade must make a real difference in the quality of lives of the women, men, youth and children in these countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank all of you for your confidence and support to Finland and to our Ambassador who has been acting as chair of the conference preparations. We will do our best to ensure a successful outcome. As a UN Member State, Finland allocates more than a third of its public development aid to the least developed countries, and is committed to increasing this share. Five out of Finland's eight long-term partner countries are LDCs. Our bilateral aid to the least developed countries has grown fourfold in the last ten years. We have achieved the ODA target of the Brussels Programme of Action and we will continue our support for the LDCs.

In addition, much of our regional and thematic cooperation, as well as humanitarian aid, goes to areas that specifically benefit the LDCs. For example, an important share of Finland's support for Aid for Trade is directed to the least developed countries. Finland channels development aid through multilateral channels and the EU. We have also provided financial support for the participation of LDC representatives, including civil society organizations, in this conference and in its preparatory process.

Mr President,

The LDC group itself has set a very ambitious goal: half of the 48 LDC countries are to start graduating from their LDC status within the next 10 years. To achieve this goal, it is necessary for them to have good partners. As members of the international community, we should all do our share.

The world has changed in the 10 years since the adoption of the Brussels Programme of Action in 2001. Evidence shows that many of our jointly agreed activities and common development efforts have brought results. But we could do even better. More than half of the population in the LDCs still live below the poverty line.

New economic powers have emerged on the world scene since Brussels in 2001, including large, fast growing and influential developing countries whose actions can have a key development impact on the LDCs. This is especially valid in the field of trade.

Sustainable development is crucial for the whole global community. When promoting and supporting the LDCs, the principles of sustainable development must be honored. I am happy that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has appointed the Global Sustainability Panel. The aim of the Panel is to provide new solutions on how to achieve a more sustainable model of growth for the world. As co-chair of the Panel, together with President Zuma from South Africa, I am committed to complete this challenging task. I very much appreciate the contribution by all panel members (including Deputy Prime Minister of the host country Mr Ali Babacan who is present here today).

We must reach a balance between economic, environmental and social pillars of sustainable development, so-called modern trinity. This means giving more emphasis to the social pillar in order to reduce inequality and enhance social justice. Empowerment of women is also crucial in order to build

sustainable development. Women are the half of the world's population. However, their resources are often misused or unused. The international community can never achieve the goal of sustainable development without making full use of all the available resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The LDCs have identified development of productive capacity as the number one priority area for action during the next decade. A stronger productive, entrepreneurial and trade capacity is important to the LDCs' development.

But this is not enough. Growth must be green, equitable and inclusive. It must promote opportunities for decent work and a better life for everyone. Democracy, human rights, the rule of law and good governance are essential. Special attention must be paid to women and youth.

During the recent years there has been a significant increase in the support to agricultural and rural development. Addressing the question of food security supports our intentions of eradicating poverty and attaining the MDGs.

The LDCs themselves are the most important experts when it comes to their own development. Their ownership and the full utilization of their own resources are crucial. They have firsthand experiences of successful actions and policies.

Official development aid is, of course, one element in promoting sustainable development. But ODA, even at its best, can only be one source of financing. Its primary function should be to support domestic resource generation in the LDCs, both from public and private sources, for the benefit of these countries' own development.

ODA at its best facilitates the flow of other financial resources such as those stemming from investments and trade. Fair market access is also crucial for the LDCs. The EU has been at the forefront of these efforts since its "Everything But Arms" initiative. Very often the most natural trading and investment partners can be found in the neighboring countries. Obstacles for South-South cooperation and trade should be reduced and their potential should be fully utilized.

The LDCs as a group are defined by their common vulnerability. At the same time, all the LDCs have their own particular characteristics and challenges

Situations of fragility and conflict are common challenges for many LDCs. Studies show that poverty rates are around 20 percentage points higher in countries with conflicts and violence. Conflicts often stem from poverty, unemployment, inequality as well as from lack of human rights and democracy. This issue requires special attention, both in national policy making in the LDCs, but also at the international level in better addressing the interlinked objectives of security and development.

Continued poverty and hunger in the LDCs not only hampers their own development but presents a risk to peace, stability and well-being worldwide. The indivisibility of development, peace and security is a simple but very meaningful truth.

Further examples of particular challenges are the situations in the Small Island LDCs, and the Landlocked LDCs. These situations also require specific, but differentiated, attention and action.

Mr President,

The world is confronted with many challenges - climate change, financial and economic crises, food and energy crises. These challenges have threatened to reverse important development gains. We promised to make every effort to achieve the MDGs by 2015. It is time to keep our word and renew our partnership for the LDCs' development.

Our collective global aim – ecologically, socially and economically sustainable development – must be implemented in practice through our work. Guided by our Programme of Action, increased efforts are needed by us all in order to achieve social justice and concrete improvements in the lives of the 880 million women, men, youth and children in the LDCs. Only this will enable these countries to ultimately leave their LDC status behind.

All of us – the LDCs, development partners, donor countries, the UN system, civil society, parliaments, the private sector - will have to make this change happen.

Thank you.