



Remarks

by

H.E. Dr. Zacarias Albano da Costa
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Timor-Leste

at

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On the Least Developed Countries

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Check Against Delivery

President of the United Nations General Assembly,
Secretary General of the United Nations,
Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset let me express our appreciation to the Government of Turkey for its generosity in hosting the Fourth Least Developed Countries Conference here in Istanbul, as well as its contribution to ensure our participation. It is my pleasure to be here for such an important event, in a country that has been both gracious and committed to the LDCs, and we welcome the initiative shown on Monday to host the midterm review of the new programme of action in 2015.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Delegates,

As we enter into a new development decade for LDCs, our hope is for a strong outcome document that is focused on deliverables and action oriented. Having reviewed the Brussels Programme of Action, it is clear that the new programme must fill existing gaps and reflect new realities. This is the first programme of action Timor-Leste has actively participated in, since our independence in 2002. It must be a document that serves the long-term interests and aspirations of the LDCs.

The goal of the LDCs is that at least half of the group will meet the criteria for graduation by 2021. To achieve this, development must be accelerated at all levels.

Development, growth and progress have one purpose. Socio-economic development aims to build capacity and reduce poverty and economic vulnerabilities. To this end, financial resources and policies must be specifically targeted and delivered.

As a result of the multiple crises this challenge has grown more complex in recent years, as evidenced by the more than 1 billion people currently living in poverty. Climate change has further exacerbated the vulnerabilities of the LDCs.

Mr. Chairman,

Conflict affected countries comprise nearly half the LDC group with specific challenges and vulnerabilities that must be addressed. As a young post-conflict country, Timor-Leste has weak institutions. Nine years to build a country from scratch is insufficient for institutions and human capacities to strengthen and mature. Since independence our efforts have been focused on creating strong democratic institutions and a culture of good governance, and respect for human rights, to fulfill the aspirations of our people for a better life.

The recent World Development Report notes that no low-income, fragile or conflict-affected country has yet achieved a single MDG. To streamline efforts and resources Members of the g7+ including Timor-Leste, adopted the Dili Declaration in April of 2010. This Declaration provides a basic framework to streamline aid in conflict-affected countries ensuring political dialogue and the mechanisms created are in line with national priorities and strategies.

Despite the overall negative picture presented in the World Development Report, Timor-Leste has made progress and achieved some success. We have reduced poverty, the infant and under five mortality rates, improved antenatal coverage, and increased net school enrolment. As a result our ranking in the Human Development Index has improved.

As you all are aware, oil and gas reserves is the main source of income for Timor-Leste. Most LDCs are dependent on the export of natural resources. Our economies need to be expanded and broadened for our growth and development to be sustainable. International support and resources must assist in building the capacity of our people and economies.

The private and public sectors in Timor-Leste employ less than 20% of the labor force. That means the vast majority have no choice, but to participate in subsistence agriculture.

As a consequence we must rapidly develop and diversify the agriculture and trade sectors in partnership with all stakeholders.

Economic development, and opportunities in education are critical to the LDCs. It is clear that a strong knowledge base and access to science and technology are valuable assets to every country.

Achieving sustainable and inclusive development requires creating employment opportunities for youth, who comprise a large percentage in the LDCs. Youth need to be actively engaged and contribute in all aspects of society to ensure stability and security.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Delegates,

Gender equality and the empowerment of women are also critical to the development of LDCs. We are proud to have 29% representation of women in our parliament, one of the highest in region. In this regard, it is necessary to highlight the important role parliamentarian's play in the implementation of such programmes. We are pleased to note the support received from parliamentary representatives at this conference.

In Timor-Leste women's participation in the labour force is about half that of men, with concentrations in agriculture, forestry or fisheries.

Better access to education for women and girls will lead to greater prospects. At the primary school level, enrolment between girls and boys is nearly equal, however, more girls than boys drop out at the secondary level, and even fewer girls enrol in University. Despite this, the number of women registering in vocational training has increased, but very few are able to find work after their graduation.

Empowering girls through education has an exponential effect on society, because after all these girls will grow up to be agents of change, growth, peace and development.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Delegates,

The Least Developed Countries cannot face these challenges on our own, but we as a group can use our common voice and united position to effect change and improve the plight of our people.

We must take ownership and responsibility in steering international support to meet our priorities and development objectives. A one-size fits all approach will not reap sustainable results.

Timor-Leste is taking ownership of its development agenda. We have undertaken reforms of the public financial management sector and established the Anti-Corruption and Civil Service Commissions. To promote the Government's commitment to transparency and accountability the Transparency Portal was launched earlier this year. Timor-Leste has been granted full compliance status with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, these are some measures in our efforts to fight corruption and ensure good governance.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman,

We are committed to making this new development decade a success, and hold strongly to the graduation goal that has been set. In working towards this goal we look forward to an enhanced relationship with development partners, as well as the new possibilities for South-South cooperation. As the South grows and develops, the ability to increase cooperation with emerging economies is evident. We are mindful that such cooperation is in accordance with the capabilities of developing countries, and complimentary to North-South.

There is much work to be done in the coming years, and we urge all partners to look beyond 2015.

Thank you.