

4th UN Conference on LDC

Plenary Session

Speech

by

Her Excellency

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Turkey

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

**Mr. Chairman,
Hon'ble Heads of State and Governments,
Secretary General of the United Nations
Secretary General of the Conference,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Assalamu Alaikum.

I am happy to be in the historic city of Istanbul. I express my deep appreciation to the Government of Turkey for the generous hospitality and the excellent arrangements. I thank Hon'ble President/Prime Minister for his powerful statement which, I believe has set the tone of the conference. I also commend the UN Secretary General for voicing a realistic approach to the cause of the LDCs. The conference is thus all set to formulate a new era of cooperation between the LDCs and the global community.

Ten years ago we crafted and prepared the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA) for the development of the LDCs. I say with some conviction that it was a well balanced programme as I had participated in the UN Conference on LDCs which adopted the BPoA in Brussels. Today, we see that the outcome of BPoA has been mixed. LDCs achieved good progress in areas such as trade and investment and social development. It looks that some of them will attain the MDGs. However, LDCs could not make similar progress in developing productive capacities, infrastructure building and upgrading the human and social capital.

Their efforts were further affected by sudden increase in oil and food prices, climate change and the global financial meltdown. Moreover, the failure of development partners in meeting their commitments for enhancing support also impeded their growth prospects. Thus, some LDCs lost their early gains, and some faced stagnancy.

The gap between the LDCs and the rest has been widening. The fragility of the LDCs, their structural weaknesses and constant economic marginalization are retarding their development and prosperity. Thus, per capita income of LDCs fell from 18% of the global average in 1971 to 15% in 2008. Though poverty reduction shows some progress, people living on less than USD 2 a day remains almost unchanged at 75%. In attaining the MDGs, LDCs have been falling behind other developing countries. They also experience the same lag in technology and connectivity, and therefore face the challenge of increasing isolation.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Bangladesh our aim is to convert our huge population into human asset. So far we have been able to reduce hunger and poverty to some extent. Good progress has been made in net enrollment in primary education, gender parity, infant and child mortality, immunization coverage, supply of drinking water, and sanitation. Since entering office in 2009, we have been refocusing on the pro poor programmes taken up during our earlier term from 1996 to 2001. We are investing heavily on agriculture and rural development, physical infrastructure, education, transport and communication, energy security and ICT. We intend to maintain sustained and stable economic growth so that we can graduate from

our present economic status to a prosperous and happier level and transform our country into a “Digital Bangladesh” by 2021.

We are proud of our social safety nets. In our tenure from 1996 to 2001, we had introduced old age and distressed women pensions; Shanti Nibash for aged people; Karma Sanghtan Bank for assisting youth employment; Ashrayan or homes for homeless with opportunities for income generation; and “One home-One Farm” programme in support of self sufficiency efforts of small land owners. In our present tenure, we have initiated cash and food transfer programmes; special programmes for minorities, marginalized people, disabled, physically challenged and the underprivileged. Our new policy also includes providing employment to one member of each poor family.

Mr. Chairman,

Last year in Dhaka we hosted the Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the Brussels Programme of Action and we discovered gaps and lapses in and deviation from the seven commitments inscribed in the framework of partnership. Sadly, the very important seventh commitment to mobilize financial resources through meeting the target of 0.15% or 0.20% of GNI has virtually been ignored thereby largely frustrating the BPoA. The Secretary General’s Report indicates that ODA had remained stagnant at around 0.09% for the last two decades.

Indeed, time is running out for uplifting the living conditions in The LDCs while new challenges are emerging with globalization and climate change. If we wish the Istanbul Conference to be our last attempt to correct the situation, we must give up rhetoric and honor

the commitments we make here. Commitments must be accompanied by country-specific development strategies as well as system-wide development programme and over-all recasting of cooperation mechanism and aid criteria.

This Conference would, therefore, need to craft a balanced, ambitious and comprehensive Istanbul agreement. It will have to prioritize human resource development at the top of its list emphasizing quality education and vocational training, universal health service and population management. Next in the priority list should be investment for productive capacities and employment generation focusing especially on rural and agricultural development, infrastructure development and creation of wage employment along with self-employment. I would not like to submit a long menu of priorities but food security, social safety net, trade advantages and protection of environment must feature in any programme.

The international support architecture would have to be reconstructed. It should reflect the spirit of a renewed and enhanced partnership and a broad consensus to ensure graduation of a significant number, possibly half of the LDCs, out of their poverty level. The assistance of the development partners would, therefore, need to be enhanced to at least 0.2% of their GNI. Vulnerability of LDCs to external economic shocks as well as natural disasters also demands additional support in time of crises. Further, we need to agree on additional compensatory support to the LDCs to meet the challenges posed by climate change and external threats.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me touch upon some specific areas that merit special focus in the Istanbul outcome documents.

(1). TRADE-It is essential to permit duty and quota free market entry for all products of all LDCs to all markets and accept flexible rules of origin to ensure a meaningful market access.

(2). ENERGY-LDCs need cost effective, diverse, clean and affordable energy supply, including new and renewable energy. Here, we would welcome support from our development partners, including FDI with new and efficient technology. At global level, appropriate mechanism should be provided for to respond to energy price instability.

(3). ODA-The practice of ODA concentrating in social sectors and extractive industries must be modified to include development of infrastructure, agriculture and education. ODA allocation must strike right balance among various sectors based on the priorities defined by the LDCs. Criteria for ODA allocation needs to be changed to ensure enough flow to LDCs and it should be equitably distributed among the LDCs, free from political and strategic considerations .

(4) DEBT-LDCs fragile economies need continuance of debt relief. Those LDCs which repay debt, and is not HIPC like Bangladesh, should continue to be encouraged with alternative resource flow measures.

(5) TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER-Multilateral institutions must facilitate affordable technology transfer to LDCs. The Istanbul Programme of Action should pave the way for LDCs to receive from all sources affordable technology which is important for changing their economic and social conditions.

(6) CLIMATE CHANGE-LDCs affected by climate change must receive additional funds on top of ODA. Already LDCs' development gains is being eroded and MDG targets becoming elusive. Our demands also include legally binding emission cuts based on the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibility. Further, commitment is called for additional assistance, easy technology transfer, and adoption of a new legal regime under the UNFCCC Protocol ensuring social, cultural and economic rehabilitation of climate change displaced persons.

(7) FREE MOVEMENT OF LABOR-Removal of present impediments to free movement of labor to the extent possible. A practical solution of the issue should be agreed to and implemented in a gradual manner.

For the LDCs to attain sustained economic growth, it is also necessary to have the support of developing and emerging economies that belong to the South. Investment and technical assistance from the South enjoy possibility of easier replication and absorption by LDCs. Such South-South Cooperation should be complementary to similar assistance from our traditional development partners in the North, and not a substitute.

Mr. Chairman,

Global progress will only be complete when 880 million plus people, engulfed by poverty and underdevelopment, achieve decent and dignified lives. This is only possible with unity and determination of all nations to reverse the process of marginalization of the LDCs. This calls for genuinely addressing their human development gap and overcoming their structural weaknesses. Istanbul gives us the opportunity to try out

the option. Let us all seize this defining moment and pronounce our collective determination and will. Let us agree on an enhanced, ambitious and do-able global framework for helping LDCs to graduate out of their poverty and misery. I have full faith in our capacity to respond to this challenge and measure up to the cause of the LDCs

I thank you.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu.
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

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